



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

**Salvation by Grace through Faith in Christ Alone!**

MAY 24-26, 2017

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**Acts 15:6-12** *“And the apostles and elders came together to look into this matter. 7) And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, ‘Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the gospel and believe. 8) And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9) and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10) Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11) But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.’ 12) And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.”* (NASB)

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**“FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES: IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD: NOT OF WORKS, LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST. FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS UNTO GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD HATH BEFORE ORDAINED THAT WE SHOULD WALK IN THEM.”** (EPHESIANS 2:8-10)

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Is this the first debate in the Church? Are the Apostles now equal in authority with the elders? How did the Gentiles “*bear the gospel and believe*” ... “*in the early days?*” How and when were the Gentiles given the Holy Spirit? What does it mean “*to put God to the test?*” What was the unbearable “*yoke?*” How did Peter say that they were saved? In what way does Peter place the Gentiles above the Jews? Why are Paul & Barnabas listed in reverse order? How did God’s work advance the argument?

**FOCUS ON FUTURE SATELLITE BIBLE STUDIES:**

- MAY 30-JUNE 2: ACTS 15:13-21 **GOD’S WORD IS THE FINAL AUTHORITY**
- JUNE 7-9: ACTS 15:22-29 **LEADERSHIP IN A LETTER**

Paul had been commissioned by Christ to bear His name “*before Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel*” (Acts 9:15). He had obeyed that commission and evangelized numerous Gentile capitals: Damascus, Tarsus, Antioch of Syria, Salamis, Paphos, Perga, Psidian Antioch, and Iconium. On one occasion he wins the king and on other occasions he seems to win at least half of those in the capital, but whether few or many are transformed by it, his Gospel message is always the same: salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Not only did Paul find that the Gospel “*turned the world upside down*” (Acts 17:6) in his day, but this same Gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone was the foundation of the Reformation in 1517. We celebrate this year it’s 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and rejoice in the restoration of the true Gospel which again “*turned the world upside down.*” Paul and Barnabas were challenged by Pharisaical believers coming to Antioch, acting as if sent by the mother church in Jerusalem and teaching that “*Unless you [Gentiles] are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved*” (Acts 15:1).

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**“THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE WAY OF SALVATION WERE AT STAKE. HISTORY AND EXPERIENCE HAVE PROVEN THAT ANYTHING MADE A CO-REQUIREMENT WITH FAITH SOON SHOVS FAITH ASIDE AND BECOMES THE MEANS OF SLAVATION.”**  
KENT HUGHES

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**I. SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE ACTS 15:6-7**  
It seems that any believer was allowed to enter the discussion, and the verb for “*debate*” primarily speaks of

## BIBLE STUDIES

**WEDNESDAY @ 7:30AM –BIBLE STUDY – FREDERICKSBURG – BOB EVANS ON RT. 3 & 12:00 NOON – OAKTON – BOB EVANS – 10443 WHITE GRANITE DR.  
THURSDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – CHESTER – SHONEY’S AT RT. 10 (IRON BRIDGE ROAD) & 301(12531 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY)  
FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – NORFOLK – GOLDEN CORRAL, 6103 N. MILITARY HWY, NEAR THE NORFOLK AIRPORT**

# Virginia

## Salvation by Grace through Faith in Christ Alone!

questioning. The apostles and elders were equally necessary in attendance while others seemed to come at will. The leaders patiently heard “*much debate.*” Peter then arose and spoke of the initiative of God in His grace, “*you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.*” This electing grace extended to the Gentiles was entirely the choice of God. After a vision repeated three times, refused three times by Peter and rebuked three times, probably about ten years earlier, Cornelius and his companions had believed and “*while Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word*” (Acts 10:44). It was so much God’s choice in opposition to Peter’s choice that his final words of defense were “*who was I that I could stand in God’s way?*” (11:17) There was no law or circumcision mentioned here, only God’s sovereign grace alone prevailed.

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**“FOR THE LAW WAS GIVEN THROUGH MOSES, BUT GRACE AND TRUTH CAME THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.” JOHN 1:17**

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### II. SALVATION THROUGH FAITH ALONE ACTS 15:8-9

Peter continued, emphasizing the fact that God alone looks on the heart. “*And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.*” Peter here makes it clear that Cornelius and his companions had done no good works of the law, had not been circumcised, had done nothing outward which could be seen, they had only believed and were given the Holy Spirit, just as the Jews on the day of Pentecost. God had made Jews and Gentiles equal, removing all “*distinction between us and them?*” because both had equally enjoyed the purifying work done by God alone in the heart, that of “*cleansing their hearts by faith.*” This is a most amazing truth! God requires absolutely nothing by way of works so that His salvation is absolutely free! There is nothing we can do to earn it, and

when we try to do good works to earn salvation, we destroy our opportunity because God says that He is the “*just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By the law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised by faith.*” (Romans 3:26-30). Faith alone in Jesus Christ brings His salvation.

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**“SALVATION IS WHOLLY BY GOD’S SOVEREIGN GRACE THROUGH FAITH, APART FROM ANY RITUAL OR LAW-KEEPING. TAKEN TOGETHER, THESE SPEECHES CONSTITUTE ONE OF THE STRONGEST DEFENSES OF THAT TRUTH IN SCRIPTURE. IT HAS WELL BEEN SAID THAT ACTS 15 IS THE MAGNA CARTA OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.”**  
JOHN MACARTHUR

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### III. SALVATION IN CHRIST ALONE ACTS 15:10-12

Peter ends his speech by reproaching those who try to add works to grace and faith, “*Now therefore, why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?*” Since no one can fulfill the law perfectly, to require fulfilling the law for salvation when God has clearly provided otherwise, is to cast doubt on His wisdom and His Word, thus testing Him. The previous couple who tested God were struck dead (Acts 5:9). Peter concluded, “*But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.*” He holds the Gentile up as the example, rather than their Jewish circumcision, “*we are saved ... as they are.*” But only “*through the grace of the Lord Jesus.*” Jesus is “*the way, truth and life*” (Jn. 14:6). Barnabas and Paul defend the same by rehearsing all of Christ’s miracle working power among the Gentiles.

#### Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Are you willing to proclaim and defend the Gospel even when it is not popular with those around you?
- 2) Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ and His grace alone for your salvation, or are you trusting good works?
- 3) Is your patience sufficient enough to hear all the opposing arguments/questions before you carefully present the truth?