

Theme: We are saved by grace *alone*; we cannot add *anything* to it. But we can restrict our freedom to maintain fellowship.

Background & Introduction

We’ve seen opposition from *outside* the church. Now it rises up from *within*.

I. A Dangerous Claim – v.1, 5

- A. Can you be a Christian without being a Jew? How “Jewish” is Christianity?
- B. Can you be a Jew without the Law of Moses?
- C. Saved by Grace? or Grace *plus*... or Saved by grace....*but*..... The heart of the Gospel is at stake!
- D. Sparks serious debate. Take it up with church in Jerusalem

II. A Covenant Promise (How is it fulfilled?)

A. Christ fulfilled the covenant fully and perfectly

1. Mosaic Covenant - Fulfilled

- a. Jesus fulfilled the Law - Matthew 5:17
- b. He fulfilled the ceremonial law as well. **Hebrews 9:11-15**
Christ is The Mediator of a New Covenant – the Covenant of Grace

2. The Abrahamic Covenant - Fulfilled

- a. “I will be your God and you will be my people.” Genesis 17:7,8; Jeremiah 30:22
- b. God’s covenant with Abraham was sealed with an oath. Genesis 15 – “self-maledictory” oath. (cf. Heb.6:13ff) *It was the only way the Covenant of Grace could be fulfilled!*

B. Saved by Grace – not by law!! v.11 (The *heart* of the passage!)

III. A Powerful Testimony

A. Peter

- 1. Defends God’s choosing of the Gentiles
- 2. Don’t put a yoke on their necks

B. Paul and Barnabas

- C. James - “A people for His name” v.14. Greek OT “Nations/gentiles” = *ethne*; “People/people of God” = *laos*; Words stand in contrast to each other in the OT. Deuteronomy 14:2. Here, God doesn’t take to Himself a people in *contrast* to the Gentiles/nations – but *from* them!! The scriptures agree! Amos 9:11,12

IV. A Peaceful End

- A. Don't burden our Gentile brothers. v.19. **Grace alone – thru Faith alone - in Christ alone – revealed in Scripture alone – to the glory of God alone**
- B. Don't needlessly, callously offend your brothers. v.20
 - 1. Serious concerns of the Jews
 - 2. These prohibitions would allow the believers to come to the fellowship table together.
- C. From Turmoil to Peace vv.28,29
 - 1. No *small* dissention and debate. Gathered with wise counsel present – and worked it out.
 - 2. vv.22-35 - Sent back with encouragements and instructions.

V. Dangerous Additions

- A. Two important principles emerge
 - 1. We are saved by grace – *alone!*
 - a. We can't make our preferences our convictions – then presume that everyone around us must conform to them.
 - b. We must fight when conditions are added.
 - c. Anything we *add* to the gospel *detracts* from it. It undermines God's authority, power, grace.
 - 2. I will restrain my freedom to maintain fellowship. (Are rare to medium rare steaks offensive? Cook it.) Questions to ask in exercising my Freedom in Christ: (From Jerry Bridges *The Pursuit of Holiness*, p.91)
 - #1 1 Cor.6:12 “Is it helpful - physically, spiritually, mentally, *relationally*” (my addition)
 - #2 1 Cor.6:12 “Does it bring me under its power?”
 - #3 1 Cor.8:13 “Does it hurt others?”
 - #4 1 Cor.10:31 “Does it glorify God?”
- B. Seek Godly counsel when you can't settle a serious question.
- C. When do we fight? When the issue strikes at the vitals of the gospel.