Acts Chapter 15 Verse 1

* Wow! Paul had given ***pure and perfect*** direction at Antioch in Pisidia back in Chapter 13 Verses 38 and 39, *“Let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins and by Him, everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.”* And yet here come a group of men, believers, Christians…they’re talking about salvation…and they have it ***all mixed up…***
* Anytime you hear this, (and sometimes I hear it from my own mind), ***“Unless you are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,”*** enter **tradition** here, enter something to ***“do”*** here….Unless you are ***circumcised***…Unless you ***speak in tongues***…Unless you are ***baptized***…Unless you are a ***Catholic***…Unless you are ***Calvary Chapel***…***Unless your hand is bigger than your face***…actually, you know what…if someone is giving you a hard time, try that one…and when they put their hand on their face….you just haul off and….**PRAY FOR THEM!** HA!!!
* What did Jesus say!? John Chapter 3 verse 5, *“Most assuredly, I say to you!”* I know that *many men* and *many groups* and *many books* and *many traditions* and *many mommas* have said what we are to do and how we are to be…***but what did Jesus say?*** The Author and Finisher of all faith. The Doorway to eternal life. The King of kings. The Savior who unlocked heaven…I know there is a lot of sayings…even my own…but what did He say!? *“Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born of water AND the spirit* ***(born again)****, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.”*
* Here’s the point and the end of it all. ***The cross really is enough.*** It really is enough! The blood of Jesus really is sufficient to pay for the iniquity and the *“off-ness of mankind!”* And in the light of that truth…what is required of us? *Simply to receive the payment for sin.*
* Circumcision is no more than a *tattoo of belonging*…its meaningless and powerless for salvation! My good works do nothing to **add** to the cross of Christ. My baptism does not add to the cross of Christ. Speaking in tongues does not add to the cross of Christ…could they all be good? Yes!! ***But so is a nice pizza on cheat day…doesn’t make me more saved!*** HA!!
* Jesus paid it all! ALL of it! He alone is the Savior of all men. ALONE. All of our salvation, every bit of it, is because of Him! (Millionaire story) He accomplished everything…His blood paid the entire debt…and so now, any thought or any one that says, *“Well you must be baptized or you can’t be saved…,”* **do greatly err!**
* But…I can sympathize with these certain men from Judea…why? Because in context of the ***original church***, the disciples and their families…they were all first Jews…and so what they ***saw***, what they ***knew*** was that these men and women who had followed the law of Moses their whole lives, including Jesus, are now this new thing…this powerful Christian movement…and so in their minds it began to be, *“Come through Moses, come through the Law…and by that route, you can get to Jesus,”* …and really, they’re thinking is not crazy.
* Even today, we come through the law to faith as well…we come to the realization that we need a Savior…why? How? Through the law…through the agreement with God over sin which is exactly why the law was given in the first place…but to have to DO something other than open your heart to the truth of the Gospel…here is where they were off…here is where there is an opportunity for ***division and dispute*** amongst the church which is an outright run at the church by Satan…perhaps his most dangerous yet…

Acts Chapter 15 Verses 2 – 3

* (They caused **GREAT JOY**) **God help me in this.** I’m such a *clock watcher*…I’m such an *easily frustrated, results driven, finisher.* I’m serious…God help me. Many times ***I am so on task that I miss the moment.*** Just lately I’ve been trying to be less *“used to things.”* Not possessions…my family. I’m *used to them* and that makes me far too familiar in my dealings. You ever notice how you can be much nicer to a stranger than you can be to your own friends…or even family!?
* I have such a wonderful family…my best friend…the **goddess** that I live with, April…she is the most amazing woman you’d ever want to know…and we match…she is disciplined, she loves a routine, she is ultra-clean…efficient, she’s a great cook, I’m a great eater! HA! And yet part of my routine ***is my marriage*** with her…an *I love you* each day before I head off to work…a kiss, a hug…I don’t want that to be **“routine!”** So here’s what I say…, *“Kiss me like we just starting dating…”* **Baby!**
* My kids too…they are magnificent. My daughter Madison is the funniest person I know because she mixes real humor with the unexpected practicality of a grown up…she understands so much and ***she’s only 11*** and she also mixes into it *perfect timing*, and *smarts!* And Link! This kid…Friday he was crying after leaving school for the summer because he is going to miss his teacher…he’s got such a soft heart under all that…***OTHER STUFF***…and he says to us, *“My friend at school doesn’t know his phone number.”* So we say to him, *“Do you know yours?”* YEA! He replies…, *“0-4-0-5!”* HA! **That’s the passcode to his iPad!!** HA! Love that kid…I just want to give that kid joy…not originate…that’s not how it works…I want to share…
* This is what Christians should do…cause great joy! Even if they disagree wholesale with you, we can only give what we have…***have you any joy for this world?*** Some of y’all bring joy wherever you go…but others bring joy whenever you go! HA!! This is a true prayer from my heart of hearts…to bring joy…

Acts Chapter 15 Verses 4 - 5

* To say that ***the law must be kept*** **AND** ***Jesus must be received*** is an oxymoron! Salvation by the finished work of the cross ***cancels out*** salvation by the law (if that was possible (salvation by the law) – which it is not). This stuff ***creeps*** too…like hot lava…**the law is lava!!** HA!! It began with circumcision…now look at what is added…the Law of Moses! (Dog story) ***This stuff creeps***…it grows if you let it in and Paul and Barnabas have no intention of tolerating this messed up doctrine!
* Today there are groups out there that hold to an **oxymoronic religious deformity** of Christianity. The Catholic Church teaches that one is saved by grace **AND** good works. Complete oxymoron. Those two things cancel each other out…, *“The official position of the Roman Catholic Church is that a person must believe in Jesus Christ AND be baptized AND receive the Eucharist along with the other sacraments AND obey the decrees of the Roman Catholic Church AND perform meritorious works AND not die with any mortal sins…,”* and it just goes on…(Source: gotquestions.org).
* The Mormons, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Oneness Pentecostals, the Seventh Day Adventists…all have an element of ***merit and works*** that are required for salvation along with claiming *some sort* of allegiance to Jesus. It is entirely oxymoronic and everyone of them need to be evangelized! **Jesus paid it ALL!**
* I heard this this week and I love it. The thief on the cross…his hands were nailed so that he could do no work for the Lord…his feet were nailed so he could go no distance for Jesus…He could not lift a hand or foot toward his salvation and yet Christ offered him the gift of God. ***He threw him a passport and took him to paradise!*** Jesus said to him, *“Today, you will be with Me in paradise.”*

Acts Chapter 15 Verses 6 – 9

* ***Did you hear that?*** I feel like Elf after his 2-Liter burp! HA! Of course you heard that but did you **HEAR** that!! God gives the Holy Spirit - and purity of heart arrives **BY FAITH!!** *Katharizo* in the Greek and it means *to make clean, to cleanse, to cure, to purify, to consecrate, to free from defilement of sins and from fault*…If we are cleansed, cured, purified by the gift of the Holy Spirit given as a result of the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ when we choose to activate faith in the cross of Christ…if we are cleansed and cured at that point then why ***is it that so many try to keep cleaning and curing?*** No…***receive the free gift of salvation and honor what has been done for you already rather than trying to honor yourself by adding to the cross!***

Acts Chapter 15 Verses 10 – 11

* Egging folks around us with some sort of religious trip…that’s what I see in my mind’s eye when I read “Yoke” in this context…an no one can bear a yoke of religion…NO ONE…why? Because none of us can be perfect at anything forever…none of us…and so rules will always fail and ultimately, rules will always lead to discouragement or rebellion…but there is a yoke that we can handle…
* Matthew 11: 28 - 30, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* What’s **required** of me? What’s **expected** of me? All Jesus ever said was this, *“Come to Me…I’ll do the rest.”*