Acts Chapter 15 Verse 12

* Paul and Barnabas begin to give their testimony and the room ***goes silent!*** Is God’s Word being applied in your life? If so, you are witnessing God’s faithfulness and the veracity, the accuracy, the trustworthiness of the Word of God and even God Himself. And if you are ***the witness*** rather than the professor, what can folks say? ***Your testimony silences the debate.*** Not only in the room or in the workplace or in the coffee shop…but also in your own heart.
* I like to say, *“You can’t tell a soaking wet man there’s no water.”* From salvation to the promises of God…walk them out and the truth will be memorialized in your own ***heart of hearts***…makes it so much easier to stand in the day of trial, testing, temptation and even theological tiffs across the table during Tuesday tea or taco take out from TGI Friday’s! **Ok that was some phenomenal alliteration!!** **HA!** The power of the personal testimony, the surety and confidence found in the one that trusts God through the consistent faith-filled application of His Word, ***the power found in that person overrules argumentation and walks right into grace, man…***
* And the fact that the debate here was so hot and yet they all were silent when Peter spoke, when Paul and Barnabas spoke and we’ll see in a minute when James will speak…the fact that they are silent gives an ***heir of honor*** to the gathering and to these men. They were willing to listen and to be persuaded if wrong…*how about you?* Especially when it comes to what you think is right or how you have to be because of this thing or that thing in your past or your genes, *(“Ah, I’m just hot headed because I’m Italian!”* – No, you’re hot headed because you’re a sinner! HA), are you willing to be teachable…not if you’re not willing to listen…that’s some good truth right there!

Acts Chapter 15 Verses 13 – 17

* This passage that James quotes is Amos Chapter 9 Verses 11-12 and it speaks directly to salvation coming to the gentiles. Notice, he uses scripture to backup Peter’s conclusion. ***If it is not found in the Word of God then its not good doctrine.*** I want to read this fantastic Spurgeon quote to you, *“I have seen the Spirit of God shamefully dishonored by persons—I hope they were insane—who have said that they have had this and that revealed to them. There has not, for some years, passed over my head a single week in which I have not been pestered with the revelations* *of hypocrites or maniacs. Semi-lunatics are very fond of coming with messages from the Lord to me and it may save them some trouble if I tell them* *once and for all that I will have none of their stupid messages. When my Lord and Master has any message to me He knows where I am and He will send it to me direct, and not by mad-caps! Never dream that events are revealed to you by Heaven, or you may come to be like those idiots who dare impute their blatant follies to the Holy Spirit. If you feel your tongue itch to talk nonsense, trace it to the devil, not to the Spirit of God! Whatever is to be revealed by the Spirit to any of us is in the Word of God already—He adds nothing to the Bible, and never will. Let persons who have revelations of this, that, and the other, go to bed and wake up in their senses.”*

Acts Chapter 15 Verses 18 – 21

* The ceremonial law was not to be asked of the Christians…but…notice, **the moral law remains intact.** Why say this? Instruct them to flee idolatry, impurity…because those are things that are not of God…and *when you’re playing in darkness, you’re separating yourself from the light.* It’s like filling your gas tank with iced tea and then trying to crank the engine…**all it will have is a southern draw! HA!** It’s not going to fire up and it’s definitely going to get you NOWHERE!
* So these things, these directives are not **FOR** salvation, they are ***because of it*** and James includes, *“Stay away from things strangled, and from blood.”* Why? ***Because of love, man!*** The early church, the gentiles, the Christians, you and me even today, we are not bound under the Mosaic Law in any way, shape or form. Romans 6:14, *“Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”* Galatians 2:19, *“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.”* Ephesians 2:14-15, *“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.”*
* We in no way, shape or form…Christians, anyone who claims justification through the cross of Christ (which is what Jesus offers), ***we are in NO WAY under the law***…we are under a much stronger charge, a more powerful calling. Jesus said to His own, *“Hang all of the law and prophets on this…****love****.”* Love is eternally stronger than law. You can tell me not to kill, that killing is bad. *“Matt, don’t kill your daughter…Madison.”* Great law. But love, love makes me not only not kill her, but to provide for her…to take care of her…to think of her needs before my own. Love is much much stronger than law…and that is what has entered through the New Covenant!
* Romans 13:8 says, *“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”* What do we owe now? Mosaic ceremonial law? No. **We owe love.** And God’s Spirit within us is the very spirit of love and so now it’s our core hearts desire…those that have entered into Jesus…and so now church, gentiles, love those that are still under the law. Don’t harm them, don’t stumble them…stay away from blood…from things strangled.
* Quick side note here, **law changes no one**…***it simply educates them as to the consequences.*** If a dog bites and you muzzle it…that does nothing to cure the personality of the pup…just like *that* we cannot change ourselves or folks from the outside in through laws or rules…we must be changed from the inside out. How? Love is the only change agent, man…

Acts Chapter 15 Verse 22

* You know why they were all ***pleased?*** Pleased, that word in the Greek meaning, *“Everything became alright, everything settled,”* *“dokeo,”* sounds like ***“dorky”*** to me…***everyone was free to be dorky again***…you know why? ***Because men that had a difference of opinion allowed the Word of God its rightful place of authority…and there was peace.***

Acts Chapter 15 Verses 23 – 30

* It is made clear by the original church…***the root, the forefathers***…keep the law? Circumcision? **We give no such commandment.** Cannot be clearer! Salvation is not but a provision of God alone, received by man alone, through faith alone. And here with this letter it was established in the church. Righteousness through works, standards of holiness, rites and rituals and repetitions in the church….these are all ***unfortunate man-full misrepresentations*** of God’s plan of salvation. So what do I say to it all, *“Farewell!”* BYE FELICIA! HA!!

Acts Chapter 15 Verses 31 – 41

* Who was ***right*** in this situation between Paul and Barnabas? **It doesn’t matter.** ***Both of them were right and both of them were wrong.*** Barnabas is the type to look past Mark’s failure at his potential…Paul is the type to hold Mark accountable and wait for signals of maturity and growth. Both are needed…and in that, both are right…but *the contention was sharp*…and in that, **both were wrong.**
* *Your testimony will silence the debate*…as theirs did, Paul and Barnabas…theirs did at the beginning of our lesson today but remember this as well, *your flesh will silence the debate too*…turning people away from the Lord. **We owe love.** I am not trying to show up in heaven and Jesus say to me, *“You had one job!”* HA! I want to hear, *well done good and faithful servant* and respond in worship…***because You did well, good and faithful Father.***