

SALVATION IS BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST WITHOUT WORKS.

Lesson Aim: We must not add anything to faith in Jesus Christ to be saved, not even baptism.

Suggestion: Have the students read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the student lesson; then ask the following questions for class discussion.

What law did the Pharisee-believers try to impose on the believers in Antioch? 15:1, 5

These Judaizers told the Gentile believers in Antioch that they needed to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses to be saved. The law of Moses included more than circumcision; this law was merely the first of many laws that these Pharisee-believers would try to press on these Gentile believers. The law of Moses was for the Jews under the old covenant; it was a mark that proved they were Israelites. Babies were circumcised on the eighth day to mark them as citizens of Israel and made them eligible for the promises of the old covenant by faith, but they were never saved by circumcision. Salvation is given by faith in God's promise. Abraham was the father of circumcision, but he was saved by faith in God's promise before he was circumcised. Circumcision was a sign of his faith, but not a means of his faith. Since he was saved by faith before he was circumcised, he also is the father of those who are uncircumcised (Rom 4:9-12). Reformers kept the Catholic doctrine of regeneration by baptism and justified it by saying circumcision was replaced by baptism under the new covenant. Since circumcision was done to babies under the old covenant, so baptism is done to babies under the new covenant. This doctrine is dangerous because many people trust their baptism to save them rather than trust in Christ.

How did Peter's testimony defeat the Mosaic doctrine of the Pharisee-believers? 15:7-11

Peter reminded them that Gentiles believed the gospel of Jesus Christ that he preached (to Cornelius and his family and friends) and they were saved (without circumcision). When they believed, they were given the Holy Spirit, in the same way that they were given the Spirit (on the day of Pentecost). Gentiles were considered by Jews to be unholy and not fit for the Holy Spirit to dwell in them, but they could not argue with Peter's experience. He went on to say that they should not put Gentiles under the law of Moses, which even the Jews could not keep.

How did James use the Scripture to defeat the doctrine of the Pharisee-believers? 15:15-18

James, the pastor of the church in Jerusalem, took Amos 9:11-12 to show that God would return and restore the tabernacle of David. Then the Gentiles would seek the Lord and His name would be on them. The Spirit of God did return at that time in a mighty manner. However, the Son of God will return after the Tribulation to set up the tabernacle of David once again. Then it will be set up for 1000 years in His Millennial Kingdom. The thousand-year reign of Christ on earth for all tribes and nations was not yet clearly revealed when James spoke. That doctrine would be revealed much later by John in the Apocalypse (Revelation).

How did the resolution of James defeat the doctrine of the Pharisee-believers? 15:19-20

James' resolution for Gentile believers did not mention circumcision as a requirement for them. He simply gave four requirements to maintain unity between Jews and Gentiles. These requirements might better be called "directives" rather than "decrees." Decrees give the impression that James was making hard and fast rules for Gentiles to follow. Directives speak of guidelines for Gentiles to show love for the convictions of their Jewish brethren. This resolution freed the Gentiles from the laws of Moses.

What did Paul and Silas say to the jailor and his family in Philippi about salvation? 16:29-34

When Philippi experienced an earthquake and opened the doors of the prison where Paul and Silas were kept, he was ready to kill himself, but Paul told him that they were still in the prison. Then the jailor took them out of the prison and asked them, "What must I do to be saved?" To ask such a question, he must have been listening to Paul and Silas sing praises to God in the prison before the earthquake struck. Paul answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your house." Then they spoke the Word of the Lord to him and his house. He and his house believed the Word of the Lord. He proved it by washing their stripes, by being baptized with his family, by feeding them in his house and by rejoicing with all in his house. Baptism was a sign of salvation, not a means of salvation.