

WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE

YEAR: KNEEL / FOCUS: LIVING ON MISSION / SERIES: ACTS

BIG TRUTH: WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE

Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 15:11; 2 Timothy 1:9

BIBLE VERSE: ACTS 15:10-11

"Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

BIG IDEAS

- We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.
- Our hearts are cleansed by faith, not the law.
- Our belonging is defined by faith, not the law.

BIBLE PASSAGE: ACTS 15:1-35

KNEEL: LIVING ON MISSION

The Kneel Year is an exploration of what it means to worship God with our all (Luke 10:26-28) and to use our influence to lead others to do the same. We know that as we pursue a life of worship, we will pursue a life of both wisdom and mission. Throughout this year we will study and pursue the wisdom of God through the book of Proverbs and the mission of God through the book of Acts, and we will learn how both of these things must inform and shape our influence as Jesus followers!

SERIES AIMS

Every student should know...



- The gospel has the power to turn the world upside down.
- They are empowered and chosen to be a gospel witness in the world.
- Our salvation has come by grace alone.

Every student should strive to...



- Read, study, and meditate on the entire book of Acts.
- Memorize the Bible verse each week.
- Pray consistently for boldness to make Jesus known.

Every student should feel...



- Comfort that the Lord is with them wherever they go.
- Hope in the God of salvation.
- Responsible to use their influence to live for Jesus alone.

Every student should want...



- To pursue faithfulness in living on mission.
- To share the gospel with people in their lives who do not know Jesus.
- To sacrifice their personal freedoms for the sake of the gospel

GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week's Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.

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BIBLE VERSE: ACTS 15:10-11

"Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

Adding to the gospel tests God.

"Now, therefore, why are putting God to the test..."

- When we add anything to the gospel, we test God. To test God is to challenge Him. It means that we are saying we know more and better than He does.
- To add to His salvation is to say that we know better how to save ourselves. This is ludicrous because we cannot save ourselves. God alone is able to save us, and He has declared that salvation is by His grace and requires our faith only.

Adding to the gospel adds unnecessary burden to salvation.

"Now, therefore, why are putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"

- When anything is added to the gospel, a burden is placed on salvation that God did not place. Salvation is from God, and He alone gets to define it and determine what is involved with it.
- God has determined that salvation is by His grace and through our faith in His grace alone. It is not determined by our works or anything else we place on it. When we add to the gospel, by saying that we must do some other thing, we are placing a burden on salvation.

The gospel is a gift.

"But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

- When something is a gift, it cannot be earned. God's salvation is a gift to mankind. It is not something that we can earn. We cannot add to it and make it something that we do that saves us. God gifts us with salvation.
- When we are saved, it is a work of God's grace. When we believe in this salvation it is because God has drawn us to Himself and opened our eyes to believe it. This is the gift of salvation.

WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE

BIG IDEA #1: WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE ALONE, THROUGH FAITH ALONE, IN CHRIST ALONE.¹

[THIS]

In Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas encounter men who added to the gospel of Christ. They added a work of man: circumcision—saying that a person must also be circumcised to be truly saved and set apart for the Lord. Paul and Barnabas take great offense at this and counter this teaching with the truth of the gospel. They do not allow the men who are teaching that circumcision is necessary to be saved to continue teaching unhindered. Instead, they preach the truth. Though the gospel had been preached before, people believed that circumcision was necessary for salvation and entry into God's family. It is not hard to convince someone that a human work is necessary for salvation. Paul and Barnabas continued to preach the truth because salvation is only through grace and faith in Christ. There is no other way to be saved.

[THEREFORE]

Read Acts 15:1-11. Why is it important to know and trust that salvation is by grace alone and through faith alone?

If we do not trust that our salvation is by grace alone, we will try to work for it. Just as these people added to the gospel, we will add to it and then render it void. When we add to the gospel, we make it not the gospel. We add unnecessary burdens to the gospel when we add anything to it.

[THIS]

Christ's work on the cross was and is sufficient for every person's sin. Even before we were born, Christ's death was enough to pay the sin debt we owe. This is because God is the Maker and Creator of all things, and He alone gets to determine the terms of our salvation. It is against Him that we sin; therefore, He determines how we overcome that sin. In Acts 15:1, the men who came from Judea taught that to be saved, people had to be circumcised. This addition to the gospel was an unnecessary burden that actually made the gospel they were preaching not true. When we add anything to the gospel, it's not the gospel. It's not good news. God has said and determined before the foundation of the world that to be saved a person must believe in His Son. The good news is that Jesus lived the life we could not and died the death we all deserve to die. That Jesus came and took our place is the grace of God and that we have faith in Him is a gift of God. It is only through the grace and faith that God allows that we can be saved.

[THEREFORE]

What are some things we add to the gospel today? Why do we tend to do this?

We often add some work or action that we must take to be saved, such as doing good works or being a good person. This leads us to legalism and actually takes away from the salvation God offers. We do this because of our pride and lack of humility. Ephesians 2:8-9 and Matthew 18:4 help us see that humility is necessary to receive the salvation that God offers.

How is salvation a gift of God's grace? Why is salvation not a work of man if it requires our faith?

In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul writes that salvation is a gift from God because of His grace because if it were something we did, we would boast. Even though it requires our faith, our faith is a work of God and not our own work. When we believe, it is because God has allowed us to believe and drawn us to Himself. This is the gift.

1. Acts 15:11: God saves by His grace and by giving man faith in the work of Christ.

WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE

BIG IDEA #2: OUR HEARTS ARE CLEANSED BY FAITH, NOT THE LAW.²

[THIS]

In Acts 15, the “circumcision party” were a group of people who were telling the Gentiles that they had to be circumcised to be saved. This practice of circumcision was something that originated with Abraham and the setting apart of God’s chosen people, the Israelites. Before the coming of Christ, God’s people lived under the old covenant and were held to the Law that was given to them. Once Jesus came, these laws were not necessarily thrown out, but were fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus, and a new covenant was instituted for God’s people. Because of this, circumcision was not a part of salvation. The reason it was no longer necessary to be circumcised to be in God’s family was because God had said as much. Paul and Barnabas reminded the “circumcision party” of this and discussed this issue at length with them. It was difficult for some of the Jews to let go of the law. They had followed them for so long and in their hearts held tightly to their own works rather than trusting in the salvation God was offering. Hearts are not cleansed by an adherence to the law. There had never been a time when their hearts had been cleansed by the law. Their sacrifices and keeping of the law had only served as a temporary solution.

[THEREFORE]

What types of temporary solutions to our sin do we look for today?

In Matthew 23:1-7, Jesus gives us a picture of the Pharisees and the type of solution they used for their sin. They placed burdens on people’s backs that they themselves weren’t willing to bear. We often look to our own idea of morality and then try to achieve some idea of it that is really unattainable.

[THIS]

As Paul and Barnabas discussed the issue of circumcision with some of the Jews, Peter reminded them of the truth of the gospel. In Acts 15:6-11, he reminds them that it is faith that cleanses a person’s heart, not adherence to the law. If keeping the law had been enough, then there would have been no need for Jesus, but Jesus did come. Every person is cleansed by their faith in Jesus and the work He did on the cross on their behalf. When we trust that His life and death are enough to satisfy our sin debt, we are washed clean of the sin debt we owe. Our hearts are made new and are no longer enslaved to the sin nature we are born with. Instead, we are redeemed to walk in a new way, living for Christ by obeying God’s commands. We obey His commands not to save ourselves, but out of delight in doing what brings Him glory.

[THEREFORE]

Why do we so quickly resist the idea that we are cleansed by faith alone?

We either think our sin is too great to be forgiven too easily or that our morality is so great we don’t think we need truly faith. Either way we often resist the idea that we are cleansed by faith in the work of Jesus alone. Romans 3:28 and Galatians 2:16 remind us that we are not saved by anything we do.

Knowing that faith cleanses our hearts, how does your daily life reveal that you trust in this faith to make your relationship with Christ right?

Romans 5:10 and Colossians 1:20 teach us that we are reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus. When we have faith in this work, we enjoy a right relationship with Christ. Knowing that this faith has cleansed our hearts allows us to enjoy this relationship daily by studying His Word and growing in our knowledge of Him.

2. Acts 15:9: *Our faith cleanses us from our sin because we are trusting and believing in the work that Jesus did on the cross and not in our own work to keep the law.*

WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE

BIG IDEA #3: OUR BELONGING IS DEFINED BY FAITH, NOT THE LAW.³

[THIS]

Because of those who had added to the gospel, some of the Gentile believers in the early church were made to believe that their faith alone was not enough. They were troubled. The apostles sent men with Paul and Barnabas to these Gentile believers to encourage them and remind them of the truth. In Acts 15:22-35, we read of this journey and the encouragement the Gentile believers felt because the disciples came to them and reminded them to obey God's Word and trust that their faith in Jesus was enough. Their membership in God's family did not hinge on their obedience to these additional requirements given to them by men. They did not have to believe in Jesus and be circumcised or believe in Jesus and do anything else to be saved. They just had to have faith that Jesus' death on the cross paid their sin debt. Their belonging to the family was defined by the veracity of their faith and not by the keeping of the law.

[THEREFORE]

Why is it important to note that keeping God's law does not make a person a part of God's family?

If keeping the law makes a person a part of God's family, then there would be no need for Jesus. Every person could just keep the law as best as they could and hope to be a part of the family of God. Romans 4:5 and 5:1 help us understand that our works and keeping of the law do not justify us or make us right in the eyes of God.

[THIS]

Our belonging in God's family is not determined by our adherence to the law. When we have faith in the work of Jesus, we are cleansed and made new. Because of this work in our hearts, we become part of God's family. We are no longer separated by our sin. Being a part of God's family means that we are His children. The Gentile believers found encouragement and hope in this truth. Because we cannot keep the law perfectly, it is good news that our belonging does not hinge on our keeping the law. If it did, we would never fully belong to God's family. It is our faith in what Jesus has done for us that makes us God's children. When we believe in this work, we rest on a solid foundation that cannot be moved. This foundation isn't built on anything that we do. Instead, it is built on what God has done through Jesus. This gives us security and hope always.

[THEREFORE]

What encouragement do you find knowing that you belong because of faith in Jesus?

We should be encouraged to know that we are God's children. We are His sons and daughters. We are no longer separated from Him. John 1:12, 1 John 3:1-2, and Romans 12:5 help us understand that the God of the universe makes us part of His family forever and always because of the work of His Son on the cross. We can't mess it up.

Read Acts 15:22-35. What purpose does being a part of God's family give you?

The Gentile believers were part of the body of Christ. This meant that they belonged to the other believers. They were part of the body that would offer them encouragement and help. We are part of that body, too. When we suffer, the body helps us. When we rejoice, the body rejoices with us.

3. Acts 15:30-31: The Gentile believers rejoiced that they were counted as part of God's family. We become part of God's family by our faith alone, not because we keep the law.