

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

September 19, 2025

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This news made all the believers very glad. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

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Too many speed violations, an uncontested accident that required auto repairs and I used up all of my privileges to have a vehicle available for no charge. And don't forget the two towing usages and one time we came and unlocked your car.

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(2) Wife handed a bottle to the baby and turned her head for just a moment, smash. I was honest about the whole thing. Any credit for that?

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The New Testament church was being infected with a cancer that would soon metastasize if the infection was not eradicated so the spread of cancer to other parts of the body could be stopped-the NT church dies!

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This is one of the churches that Paul found a favorable response to Jesus' message of sins forgiven by grace. Do you remember what happened in Iconian? We see this in Acts 14. A healing. Worship and deifying of Paul and Barnabas. Then a stoning. Later Paul went right back into town to disciple those who had come to Christ. This is the region of Galatia.

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God says, "stop it." In fact, the Holy Spirit plans to do a checkup, from the neck up. And if the Holy Spirit finds any cancerous cells, if you let him, God will remove them.

Some were teaching that salvation takes place when you receive Jesus Christ and then YOU go on to be circumcised and keep the law.

This is like trying to mix oil and water. It's well known that water and oil don't mix, and if you put them together, the oil will float on top of the water in a distinct layer.

So, the water and oil are both lost. So, it is so with law and grace. Both are destroyed.

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Like cancer you cannot be casual about addressing these spiritual issues, sometimes radical surgery is required. You can live without a body part surgically removed to stop and remove cancer, but if it metastasizes, and moves into other parts of the body, there is a system wide failure.

Your life span is reduced drastically. Then patients hear from the medical community, you have 1-5 years left to live. Sad! Painful!

One of the reasons cancer is so deadly, is because the medical world knows little about **how it begins** and **why it spreads** as MD, Peter Matia tells us.

Not so with legalism that is attempting to steal your freedom in Christ. We know **how it begins** and **why it spreads**. The prescription for the disease of the cancer of legalism is spelled out in Acts 15. Paul wrote several of his most famous letters to churches infiltrated and inflicted, with the cancer of legalism-Galatians and Romans.

Cancer cells are different than normal cells in two different ways: Contrary to popular belief, cancer cells do not grow faster than noncancerous cells; they just don't stop growing when they are supposed to.

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Traditional chemotherapy occupies the fuzzy world of poison and patient medicine. Mustard gas used as a weapon during World War 1 was a direct precursor to the earliest chemotherapy practices. (pg. 148, Outlive)

Now, all these thoughts and facts are sobering. Startling. Even downright unfair. And that is exactly the reaction I was hoping to enlist in each of you. To disturb you. Maybe even make some mad. Why? Because legalism infiltrates all churches, all believers in Christ want you to enjoy the freedom he purchased on the cross.

As we study Acts 15, we see a **debate**, a **discussion** and even a **disagreement** that arises in the New Testament church about how you define **salvation** for the Gentile.

^{2a} This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. (Acts 15-NIV)

More importantly, how do you define salvation for all mankind since Jesus' atoning death is now available to all. (John 3:16)

To the Jews, circumcision and keeping the law were required for salvation.

What are the requirements for the Gentile/non-Jew to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Is it grace alone, through faith or is it grace, circumcision and works?

I am suggesting to you that the cancer of works, law and circumcision is moving through the body of this new church in ancient times, and maybe modern times, and it is on the verge of metastasizing. It is about 20 years since Pentecost, and the life of the church is about to suffer a premature death. Untimely death. Early death.

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: *“Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”* (Acts 15:1-NIV)

The difference between these two gospels was night and day. Freedom verses slavery. Many will think they are receiving God’s plan for salvation, but they end up swallowing the lie hook, line and sinker. This is the devil’s plan to enslave. These verses in Acts 15 introduce us to **How Do You Get Saved?**

*What is the difference between a lost person and a saved person?

*How do you have your sins forgiven?

*How does a person receive eternal life?

*How do you get to heaven?

This theological conflict identified in Acts 15, is still a problem today with many churches and Christians. So many Christians are trudging through life wearing cemented boots of law. Cemented boots of circumcision. Cemented boots of legalism.

Why? Because people have a hard time with a free gift of grace.

Many are haunted with the question, surely there must be something more I must do to gain God’s forgiveness. To gain God’s favor. Or if not to gain it, maybe to boost it.

Certainly, there is something I must do to gain God’s favor or boost my status with God.

What are you hoping for? God will love you more. God will protect your family. God will bless your finances. God will give you a spouse. God will give you good health. God will keep you out of jail.

You can’t earn those benefits; blessings you get free as a part of the package of grace. Just ask.

In the back of the mind of well-meaning Christians, is the haunting question, **should I be doing more**. Let's take a survey, now be honest, anybody besides me, ever haunted by this question. Anybody ever taunted by this? Anybody exhausted by this question?

Could I be doing more? Should I be doing more?

If I do more, will that unlock some kind of blessing, I have yet to experience? Is it possible for me to get more blessing and favor of God because I have earned it.

You have all of the love, blessing and favor that an All Loving and Holy God can give.

We have a difficulty with the free and finished work of Christ. And so did the first century church. Ok, time to look closely at the problem of the cancer of legalism attempting to infect those in the Antioch church. Now, the church in Jerusalem had already been infected.

A new group of Gentile-Pagan-Heathen believers, like wild horses were jumping the fence and now were galloping across the landscape of Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconian, Lystra and Derbe. God is at work in non-Jewish people lives.

^{48b} And all who were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:48-49, 52-NIV)

Strict Jews were happy that God was at work in the life of the heathen. As they went to church in regions outside of Jerusalem, many were becoming extremely uncomfortable.

Gentiles were fast outnumbering Jews in the church.

From childhood it had been drilled into the Jew that circumcision and keeping the law was what separated God's people from the heathen. From pagans. From prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners.

So, it was natural for them to think that these new Christ-Gentiles should start acting like Jews. You have a Jewish Messiah offering you forgiveness of sins and eternal life, through his atoning death, so don't forget the surgical activity of circumcision and then start cleaning up your pagan/heathen lifestyle by following the law. All 613 of them.

Could you imagine, the look on the **Gentiles face**, when his family attends the newcomer's class and finds a list of doctors who will do the circumcision for the males in the family. And here is some new curriculum, we call it the **Law of Moses** you need to start abiding by it.

You say that the recidivism rate was really high. Quite a lot of relapses back into heathenism after a few classes on circumcision and law 101. Need some celebrate recovery?

Paul and Barnabas' two-year missionary journey brought Gentiles into the church without requiring them to obey Jewish rules.

Paul and Barnabas 2-year missionary work has brought perhaps 1000's into the kingdom of God. In Turkey on one Sabbath the whole town was present to hear Paul and Barnabas speak.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. (Acts 13-NIV)

Pagans and heathens started new churches or started attending Jewish synagogues. At **no time** did Paul and Barnabas tell them they had to start obeying Jewish rules!

To many Hebrew Christians this was unacceptable. For generations they have kept the law, and now Gentiles can jump on the salvation band wagon, without Jewish past practices.

To watch the end of a movie and think you know the whole movie, those who know the movie will tell you, you don't know all that has come before your entry into the movie. You don't get credit for watching this movie unless you start from the beginning.

So Hebrew Christians were frustrated with new Gentile Christians who enjoyed all of the benefits of sins forgiven and eternal life without **doing the work....**

Two problems arose that many Hebrew Christian could not stomach. **One**, how can these new followers of Jesus be God's people if they don't obey the Law of Moses? **Next**, how can Hebrew Christians break bread with Gentiles unless they followed dietary laws and get circumcised.

So, some self-appointed apologists of the Jewish practice thought, if Paul and Barnabas wont deal with it, they'd have to.

The bags were packed. The GPS route was set. And off these Hebrew Christians trotted in the name of Jesus and Moses as keepers of the Law so they traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch.

They wasted no time once they arrived in setting these new Christians from pagan/heathen land straight. Paul and Barnabas get wind that Gentile believers in Antioch are being taught practices they clearly oppose.

Self-appointed legalists went to Antioch and told the church: "You are not good enough for God unless you are circumcised."

The self-appointed legalists who were associated with the Jerusalem church, were ignorant of the new freedoms that Christ provided. They were ignorant about how law and grace were connected. In their ignorance these well-meaning Hebrew Christians were doing damage to Jesus message by **mixing** law and grace. Let's read on.

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.

⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." ¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. (Acts 15-NIV)

What is at stake.? A gospel of grace found only in Jesus' atoning death. God pronounces his dissatisfaction with anyone who preaches the gospel of grace and law. When any preacher or teacher says, "unless you belong to this group, you cannot have eternal life!" or "unless you add these rules, ceremonies, practices, you cannot be saved."

Salvation is only by God's grace through faith, plus nothing!

What happens when you mix grace and law? (1) Your mind and heart become unsure of how salvation works. You doubt your salvation. (2) The peace you once enjoyed because shame and guilt were once removed, resurfaces.

When you mix grace and law it is like trying to put new wine into old wine skins. Jesus said this does not work.

³⁶ He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old."³⁷ And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸ No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. (Luke 5-NIV)

Jesus is telling us not to put the new salvation of Jesus grace and forgiveness, into old Moses wineskin of law. They were saying that it **is not enough to be forgiven by Jesus, now you must obey Moses.**

When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple that separated the sinner from the holy of Holy was torn. Supernaturally it came apart when Jesus died. This is the first miracle after Jesus' death. And it happened in the holiest of Jewish locations, the temple. Here is the verse.

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. (Matthew 27-NIV)

When Hebrew Christians required salvation in Christ and obedience to Moses, they were stitching up the torn veil. They were asking these new Christ followers to move out of the sunlight, and into the darkness. Nobody knew this better than a Hebrew Christian who miserably failed in keeping the law. It could not be done. It was not a plan of salvation, it was a way of making it clear, you are a wretched sinner.

¹⁵ We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles ^{16a} know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 2-NIV)

God made it easy for people to have salvation, the Hebrews Christians thought, lets stitch that curtain back up and make it hard or impossible to find access to God. Why is this so ludicrous?

Adding to Jesus salvation is like you coming along and trying to improve a Rembrandt or Van Gough Museum. You take out some color pencils and say, "I will fix that." "It is flawed. "

It is incomplete. I can do better. I know best. I am going to add to that masterpiece. Standing in front of a Rembrandt or Picasso, I am thinking he really wasn't on it that day. I can see the limitations or flaws, and I am going to fix the painting. It would be even more shocking for a child with crayons to think that.

That is what happens when you add Moses, Law and circumcision to Jesus' death and invitation to salvation and grace.

The gospel of grace has often been hindered by people who stand in front of open doors and turn many away. Keeping them from entering. What is at stake, teaching Gentiles how to be good Jews or teaching them how to be good Christ followers. The correct message of salvation is paramount to personal growth and evangelism. The gospel has been perverted for centuries. In fact, there are people here today, who are nice people, who think their standing before God is somehow **conditional**.

We only have to look no further then western and world religions to salvation by works. Salvation by works - Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Scientology, works-based Christianity, Seventh-Day Adventist, Catholicism, Pentecostalism that requires speaking in tongues for baptism and baptismal regeneration to name a few.

No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Islam declares that Jesus was not crucified, Christianity say he was. Both can't be right.

Judaism refuses the claim that Jesus was the Messiah. Christians place their eternal hope in Jesus our Messiah. Someone's not right.

Buddhists search for Nirvana after 547 reincarnations. Christians are living for life after life-eternal life.

Secularists, humanists, evolutionists, atheists and agnostics are adamant, there is no creator of life. Christians live with the confidence that God gave them life and placed them into his creation with a purpose for each life. One of the two are fools.

Every religion is a battering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Jesus salvation through grace, has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate.

All of these religions and every other says, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!" On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world.

God accepts the lost based on faith. Any additional work creates a roadblock to faith and fellowship.

What if the conflict over salvation by grace-Jesus or salvation by Law-Moses, what if law and circumcision won that day at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15? Our songs would be altogether different.

What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus or What can wash away my sin, nothing but the law of Moses. Which do you choose, Moses or Jesus.

Oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus it washes white as snow.

O the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, it washes white as snow.

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the blood of the lamb,

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the 613 laws of Moses.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, or Amazing circumcision how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

Ok, God has made his point, you actually get to choose grace or goodness. Law or love. Mercy or merit. Life or death. Moses or Jesus. Circumcision of the personal effects, or circumcision of the heart.

613 laws or as the ruling in Jerusalem council stated: Receive forgiveness of sins through Jesus' atoning death and then abstain from idols and immorality.

²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. (Acts 15-NIV)

In the end the half-brother of Jesus writes a letter that is passed on from the Hebrew Christians at Antioch, no longer insisting that the Gentiles must be circumcised and follow the law of Moses, to be saved.

In the letter the Gentiles are instructed to make it a priority to not engage in sexual immorality, throw out your idols and change your eating practices. The early church did a great deal of eating together.

Who got the better end of the deal?

Father,

Today I accept Jesus Christ's atoning death as salvation for the first time or a fresh time to cover my pile of sins. I walk in the newness of a life of grace that calls for me to flee sexual immorality, cast out my idols and honor my brothers and sisters in Christ as we eat together.

Today I lean into Christ's grace and accept Isaiah 64:6's description that all human efforts are as filthy rags.

The Holy Spirit wants to teach me to walk in the Spirit and become like Jesus. I welcome that commitment.

Thank you that I am free from the yoke of the law, and the circumcision of the body. I am Your child based on grace, not goodness. I am Your servant based on mercy, not grace.

In Jesus' Name, Amen!

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*What is the difference between a lost person and a saved person?

*How do you have your sins forgiven?

*How does a person receive eternal life?

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This theological conflict identified in Acts 15, is still a problem today with many churches and Christians. So many Christians are trudging through life wearing cemented boots of law. Cemented boots of circumcision. Cemented boots of legalism.

Why? Because people have a hard time with a free gift of grace.

Many are haunted with the question, surely there must be something more I must do to gain God’s forgiveness. To gain God’s favor. Or if not to gain it, maybe to boost it.

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What are you hoping for? God will love you more. God will protect your family. God will bless your finances. God will give you a spouse. God will give you good health. God will keep you out of jail.

You can’t earn those benefits; blessings you get free as a part of the package of grace. Just ask.

In the back of the mind of well-meaning Christians, is the haunting question, **should I be doing more**. Let's take a survey, now be honest, anybody besides me, ever haunted by this question. Anybody ever taunted by this? Anybody exhausted by this question?

Could I be doing more? Should I be doing more?

If I do more, will that unlock some kind of blessing, I have yet to experience? Is it possible for me to get more blessing and favor of God because I have earned it.

You have all of the love, blessing and favor that an All Loving and Holy God can give.

We have a difficulty with the free and finished work of Christ. And so did the first century church. Ok, time to look closely at the problem of the cancer of legalism attempting to infect those in the Antioch church. Now, the church in Jerusalem had already been infected.

A new group of Gentile-Pagan-Heathen believers, like wild horses were jumping the fence and now were galloping across the landscape of Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconian, Lystra and Derbe. God is at work in non-Jewish people lives.

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From childhood it had been drilled into the Jew that circumcision and keeping the law was what separated God's people from the heathen. From pagans. From prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners.

So, it was natural for them to think that these new Christ-Gentiles should start acting like Jews. You have a Jewish Messiah offering you forgiveness of sins and eternal life, through his atoning death, so don't forget the surgical activity of circumcision and then start cleaning up your pagan/heathen lifestyle by following the law. All 613 of them.

Could you imagine, the look on the **Gentiles face**, when his family attends the newcomer's class and finds a list of doctors who will do the circumcision for the males in the family. And here is some new curriculum, we call it the **Law of Moses** you need to start abiding by it.

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Self-appointed legalists went to Antioch and told the church: "You are not good enough for God unless you are circumcised."

The self-appointed legalists who were associated with the Jerusalem church, were ignorant of the new freedoms that Christ provided. They were ignorant about how law and grace were connected. In their ignorance these well-meaning Hebrew Christians were doing damage to Jesus message by **mixing** law and grace. Let's read on.

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.

⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." ¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. (Acts 15-NIV)

What is at stake.? A gospel of grace found only in Jesus' atoning death. God pronounces his dissatisfaction with anyone who preaches the gospel of grace and law. When any preacher or teacher says, "unless you belong to this group, you cannot have eternal life!" or "unless you add these rules, ceremonies, practices, you cannot be saved."

Salvation is only by God's grace through faith, plus nothing!

What happens when you mix grace and law? (1) Your mind and heart become unsure of how salvation works. You doubt your salvation. (2) The peace you once enjoyed because shame and guilt were once removed, resurfaces.

When you mix grace and law it is like trying to put new wine into old wine skins. Jesus said this does not work.

³⁶ He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old."³⁷ And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸ No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. (Luke 5-NIV)

Jesus is telling us not to put the new salvation of Jesus grace and forgiveness, into old Moses wineskin of law. They were saying that it **is not enough to be forgiven by Jesus, now you must obey Moses.**

When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple that separated the sinner from the holy of Holy was torn. Supernaturally it came apart when Jesus died. This is the first miracle after Jesus' death. And it happened in the holiest of Jewish locations, the temple. Here is the verse.

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. (Matthew 27-NIV)

When Hebrew Christians required salvation in Christ and obedience to Moses, they were stitching up the torn veil. They were asking these new Christ followers to move out of the sunlight, and into the darkness. Nobody knew this better than a Hebrew Christian who miserably failed in keeping the law. It could not be done. It was not a plan of salvation, it was a way of making it clear, you are a wretched sinner.

¹⁵ We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles ^{16a} know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 2-NIV)

God made it easy for people to have salvation, the Hebrews Christians thought, lets stitch that curtain back up and make it hard or impossible to find access to God. Why is this so ludicrous?

Adding to Jesus salvation is like you coming along and trying to improve a Rembrandt or Van Gough Museum. You take out some color pencils and say, "I will fix that." "It is flawed. "

It is incomplete. I can do better. I know best. I am going to add to that masterpiece. Standing in front of a Rembrandt or Picasso, I am thinking he really wasn't on it that day. I can see the limitations or flaws, and I am going to fix the painting. It would be even more shocking for a child with crayons to think that.

That is what happens when you add Moses, Law and circumcision to Jesus' death and invitation to salvation and grace.

The gospel of grace has often been hindered by people who stand in front of open doors and turn many away. Keeping them from entering. What is at stake, teaching Gentiles how to be good Jews or teaching them how to be good Christ followers. The correct message of salvation is paramount to personal growth and evangelism. The gospel has been perverted for centuries. In fact, there are people here today, who are nice people, who think their standing before God is somehow **conditional**.

We only have to look no further then western and world religions to salvation by works. Salvation by works - Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Scientology, works-based Christianity, Seventh-Day Adventist, Catholicism, Pentecostalism that requires speaking in tongues for baptism and baptismal regeneration to name a few.

No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Islam declares that Jesus was not crucified, Christianity say he was. Both can't be right.

Judaism refuses the claim that Jesus was the Messiah. Christians place their eternal hope in Jesus our Messiah. Someone's not right.

Buddhists search for Nirvana after 547 reincarnations. Christians are living for life after life-eternal life.

Secularists, humanists, evolutionists, atheists and agnostics are adamant, there is no creator of life. Christians live with the confidence that God gave them life and placed them into his creation with a purpose for each life. One of the two are fools.

Every religion is a battering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Jesus salvation through grace, has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate.

All of these religions and every other says, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!" On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world.

God accepts the lost based on faith. Any additional work creates a roadblock to faith and fellowship.

What if the conflict over salvation by grace-Jesus or salvation by Law-Moses, what if law and circumcision won that day at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15? Our songs would be altogether different.

What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus or What can wash away my sin, nothing but the law of Moses. Which do you choose, Moses or Jesus.

Oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus it washes white as snow.

O the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, it washes white as snow.

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the blood of the lamb,

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the 613 laws of Moses.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, or Amazing circumcision how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

Ok, God has made his point, you actually get to choose grace or goodness. Law or love. Mercy or merit. Life or death. Moses or Jesus. Circumcision of the personal effects, or circumcision of the heart.

613 laws or as the ruling in Jerusalem council stated: Receive forgiveness of sins through Jesus' atoning death and then abstain from idols and immorality.

²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. (Acts 15-NIV)

In the end the half-brother of Jesus writes a letter that is passed on from the Hebrew Christians at Antioch, no longer insisting that the Gentiles must be circumcised and follow the law of Moses, to be saved.

In the letter the Gentiles are instructed to make it a priority to not engage in sexual immorality, throw out your idols and change your eating practices. The early church did a great deal of eating together.

Who got the better end of the deal?

Father,

Today I accept Jesus Christ's atoning death as salvation for the first time or a fresh time to cover my pile of sins. I walk in the newness of a life of grace that calls for me to flee sexual immorality, cast out my idols and honor my brothers and sisters in Christ as we eat together.

Today I lean into Christ's grace and accept Isaiah 64:6's description that all human efforts are as filthy rags.

The Holy Spirit wants to teach me to walk in the Spirit and become like Jesus. I welcome that commitment.

Thank you that I am free from the yoke of the law, and the circumcision of the body. I am Your child based on grace, not goodness. I am Your servant based on mercy, not grace.

In Jesus' Name, Amen!

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

September 19, 2025

¹ Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. ³ The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted.

This news made all the believers very glad. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

The letter came from an automobile insurance company. I didn't drop them the owner of the policy said, "they dropped me." The owner of the policy goes on to complain as to why he was dropped. "It just doesn't make any sense, (1)I paid my premiums, on time I might say, I did all of the paperwork asked of me, and yet I am without auto insurance."

The reason I was dropped because I had too many car related infractions.

Too many speed violations, an uncontested accident that required auto repairs and I used up all of my privileges to have a vehicle available for no charge. And don't forget the two towing usages and one time we came and unlocked your car.

Did you get all of those? Violations? Infractions? Charges against your insurance have hit its maximum limits.

What? Isn't that why I have insurance? I am not perfect in the driving category. I bet I am better driver than Pastor Ken.

This is a complete shock to me! I thought the letter was to notify me that I was getting an award for being a good customer. For having the same company for over 50 years.

(1) Late for work. Isn't that a good enough reason for the speeding ticket?

(2) Wife handed a bottle to the baby and turned her head for just a moment, smash. I was honest about the whole thing. Any credit for that?

(3) Towing, I am locked out of car and no more privileges of having a loaner?

What do you mean I will not be reinstated? My policy will terminate on Jan 4 at 12:01a. For your own protection you are urged to obtain insurance from another carrier to prevent a lapse of coverage.

Are you telling me unless I am perfect, and work like the dickens to keep my record clean, only then am I worthy of insurance?

If my insurance company can't cover honest and reasonable mistakes, who is going to cover my intentional rebellion-drag racing on Friday night, driving without fixing required repairs (blinkers out) and changing lanes without signaling?

If I can't keep myself out of trouble by following the law the of insurance land, is there any hope?

I am trying the human achievement route with all my heart. You mean I only qualify for insurance based on **what I do**, or **what I experience** or **what I know**?

I had my first accident at 16. And I forget to set the parking brake properly and my car rolled down the hill at 17. Smash. I have been in need of insurance since the initial days of getting my driver's license at 16.

Those who are trying to please God understand this problem. We all have tried self-salvation (law, circumcision). Isaiah describes all human effort as filthy rages. Is 64:6, says that our pile of righteous acts and religious credentials are like a pile of stink in a cow pasture.

In Acts 15, the church is being infected with cancer.

The New Testament church was being infected with a cancer that would soon metastasize if the infection was not eradicated so the spread of cancer to other parts of the body could be stopped-the NT church dies!

When Paul found out that cancer was beginning to spread from the Jerusalem church to some of the geographical areas that Paul had just completed a two-year missionary journey, Paul came unglued. Paul went bonkers. Paul shot into orbit and then he went right to work to remove surgically the cancer that had shown up in the Galatian church.

Jerusalem church. And was not trying to get a foothold in the Antiochian church.

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — ⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1-NIV)

This is one of the churches that Paul found a favorable response to Jesus' message of sins forgiven by grace. Do you remember what happened in Iconian? We see this in Acts 14. A healing. Worship and deifying of Paul and Barnabas. Then a stoning. Later Paul went right back into town to disciple those who had come to Christ. This is the region of Galatia.

Let's be honest, at times all of us lean on goodness, rather than grace. We love that feeling of merit over mercy. There is a corrupt place in our being, so like Adam and Eve, we still want to hide from God and cover ourselves with manmade clothing.

With one bite by the Galatians of the circumcision/law apple, they were plunged into nakedness and hiding from God.

Someone today, came to church, thinking this is the place (church) that offers forgiveness of sins, Christ offers forgiveness not the church. Someone thinks if I get pastor Ken to pray for me, he is the one that God will use. God can use anyone to minister to you.

God says, "stop it." In fact, the Holy Spirit plans to do a checkup, from the neck up. And if the Holy Spirit finds any cancerous cells, if you let him, God will remove them.

Some were teaching that salvation takes place when you receive Jesus Christ and then YOU go on to be circumcised and keep the law.

This is like trying to mix oil and water. It's well known that water and oil don't mix, and if you put them together, the oil will float on top of the water in a distinct layer.

So, the water and oil are both lost. So, it is so with law and grace. Both are destroyed.

Those spreading this law-grace cancer were Hebrew Christians that were legalists, like Paul before he became converted to Christ. Look at your notes, verse 5.

⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

Many find it difficult to accept that salvation in Jesus Christ is offered by God as a free gift through repentance and faith.

Like cancer you cannot be casual about addressing these spiritual issues, sometimes radical surgery is required. You can live without a body part surgically removed to stop and remove cancer, but if it metastasizes, and moves into other parts of the body, there is a system wide failure.

Your life span is reduced drastically. Then patients hear from the medical community, you have 1-5 years left to live. Sad! Painful!

One of the reasons cancer is so deadly, is because the medical world knows little about **how it begins** and **why it spreads** as MD, Peter Matia tells us.

Not so with legalism that is attempting to steal your freedom in Christ. We know **how it begins** and **why it spreads**. The prescription for the disease of the cancer of legalism is spelled out in Acts 15. Paul wrote several of his most famous letters to churches infiltrated and inflicted, with the cancer of legalism-Galatians and Romans.

Cancer cells are different than normal cells in two different ways: Contrary to popular belief, cancer cells do not grow faster than noncancerous cells; they just don't stop growing when they are supposed to.

For some reason, still unknown to the medical world, these rogue cancer cells stop listening to the body's signals that tell them when to grow and when to stop growing.

When cancer cells move from a manageable local area of the body and travel to another part of the body where they should not be, this creates the potential for a **system wide disease failure**.

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⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.

⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." ¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. (Acts 15-NIV)

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What happens when you mix grace and law? (1) Your mind and heart become unsure of how salvation works. You doubt your salvation. (2) The peace you once enjoyed because shame and guilt were once removed, resurfaces.

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Jesus is telling us not to put the new salvation of Jesus grace and forgiveness, into old Moses wineskin of law. They were saying that it **is not enough to be forgiven by Jesus, now you must obey Moses.**

When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple that separated the sinner from the holy of Holy was torn. Supernaturally it came apart when Jesus died. This is the first miracle after Jesus' death. And it happened in the holiest of Jewish locations, the temple. Here is the verse.

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What if the conflict over salvation by grace-Jesus or salvation by Law-Moses, what if law and circumcision won that day at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15? Our songs would be altogether different.

What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus or What can wash away my sin, nothing but the law of Moses. Which do you choose, Moses or Jesus.

Oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus it washes white as snow.

O the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, it washes white as snow.

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the blood of the lamb,

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the 613 laws of Moses.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, or Amazing circumcision how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

Ok, God has made his point, you actually get to choose grace or goodness. Law or love. Mercy or merit. Life or death. Moses or Jesus. Circumcision of the personal effects, or circumcision of the heart.

613 laws or as the ruling in Jerusalem council stated: Receive forgiveness of sins through Jesus' atoning death and then abstain from idols and immorality.

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In the end the half-brother of Jesus writes a letter that is passed on from the Hebrew Christians at Antioch, no longer insisting that the Gentiles must be circumcised and follow the law of Moses, to be saved.

In the letter the Gentiles are instructed to make it a priority to not engage in sexual immorality, throw out your idols and change your eating practices. The early church did a great deal of eating together.

Who got the better end of the deal?

Father,

Today I accept Jesus Christ's atoning death as salvation for the first time or a fresh time to cover my pile of sins. I walk in the newness of a life of grace that calls for me to flee sexual immorality, cast out my idols and honor my brothers and sisters in Christ as we eat together.

Today I lean into Christ's grace and accept Isaiah 64:6's description that all human efforts are as filthy rags.

The Holy Spirit wants to teach me to walk in the Spirit and become like Jesus. I welcome that commitment.

Thank you that I am free from the yoke of the law, and the circumcision of the body. I am Your child based on grace, not goodness. I am Your servant based on mercy, not grace.

In Jesus' Name, Amen!

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

September 19, 2025

¹ Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. ³ The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted.

This news made all the believers very glad. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

The letter came from an automobile insurance company. I didn't drop them the owner of the policy said, "they dropped me." The owner of the policy goes on to complain as to why he was dropped. "It just doesn't make any sense, (1)I paid my premiums, on time I might say, I did all of the paperwork asked of me, and yet I am without auto insurance."

The reason I was dropped because I had too many car related infractions.

Too many speed violations, an uncontested accident that required auto repairs and I used up all of my privileges to have a vehicle available for no charge. And don't forget the two towing usages and one time we came and unlocked your car.

Did you get all of those? Violations? Infractions? Charges against your insurance have hit its maximum limits.

What? Isn't that why I have insurance? I am not perfect in the driving category. I bet I am better driver than Pastor Ken.

This is a complete shock to me! I thought the letter was to notify me that I was getting an award for being a good customer. For having the same company for over 50 years.

(1) Late for work. Isn't that a good enough reason for the speeding ticket?

(2) Wife handed a bottle to the baby and turned her head for just a moment, smash. I was honest about the whole thing. Any credit for that?

(3) Towing, I am locked out of car and no more privileges of having a loaner?

What do you mean I will not be reinstated? My policy will terminate on Jan 4 at 12:01a. For your own protection you are urged to obtain insurance from another carrier to prevent a lapse of coverage.

Are you telling me unless I am perfect, and work like the dickens to keep my record clean, only then am I worthy of insurance?

If my insurance company can't cover honest and reasonable mistakes, who is going to cover my intentional rebellion-drag racing on Friday night, driving without fixing required repairs (blinkers out) and changing lanes without signaling?

If I can't keep myself out of trouble by following the law the of insurance land, is there any hope?

I am trying the human achievement route with all my heart. You mean I only qualify for insurance based on **what I do**, or **what I experience** or **what I know**?

I had my first accident at 16. And I forget to set the parking brake properly and my car rolled down the hill at 17. Smash. I have been in need of insurance since the initial days of getting my driver's license at 16.

Those who are trying to please God understand this problem. We all have tried self-salvation (law, circumcision). Isaiah describes all human effort as filthy rages. Is 64:6, says that our pile of righteous acts and religious credentials are like a pile of stink in a cow pasture.

In Acts 15, the church is being infected with cancer.

The New Testament church was being infected with a cancer that would soon metastasize if the infection was not eradicated so the spread of cancer to other parts of the body could be stopped-the NT church dies!

When Paul found out that cancer was beginning to spread from the Jerusalem church to some of the geographical areas that Paul had just completed a two-year missionary journey, Paul came unglued. Paul went bonkers. Paul shot into orbit and then he went right to work to remove surgically the cancer that had shown up in the Galatian church.

Jerusalem church. And was not trying to get a foothold in the Antiochian church.

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — ⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1-NIV)

This is one of the churches that Paul found a favorable response to Jesus' message of sins forgiven by grace. Do you remember what happened in Iconian? We see this in Acts 14. A healing. Worship and deifying of Paul and Barnabas. Then a stoning. Later Paul went right back into town to disciple those who had come to Christ. This is the region of Galatia.

Let's be honest, at times all of us lean on goodness, rather than grace. We love that feeling of merit over mercy. There is a corrupt place in our being, so like Adam and Eve, we still want to hide from God and cover ourselves with manmade clothing.

With one bite by the Galatians of the circumcision/law apple, they were plunged into nakedness and hiding from God.

Someone today, came to church, thinking this is the place (church) that offers forgiveness of sins, Christ offers forgiveness not the church. Someone thinks if I get pastor Ken to pray for me, he is the one that God will use. God can use anyone to minister to you.

God says, "stop it." In fact, the Holy Spirit plans to do a checkup, from the neck up. And if the Holy Spirit finds any cancerous cells, if you let him, God will remove them.

Some were teaching that salvation takes place when you receive Jesus Christ and then YOU go on to be circumcised and keep the law.

This is like trying to mix oil and water. It's well known that water and oil don't mix, and if you put them together, the oil will float on top of the water in a distinct layer.

So, the water and oil are both lost. So, it is so with law and grace. Both are destroyed.

Those spreading this law-grace cancer were Hebrew Christians that were legalists, like Paul before he became converted to Christ. Look at your notes, verse 5.

⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

Many find it difficult to accept that salvation in Jesus Christ is offered by God as a free gift through repentance and faith.

Like cancer you cannot be casual about addressing these spiritual issues, sometimes radical surgery is required. You can live without a body part surgically removed to stop and remove cancer, but if it metastasizes, and moves into other parts of the body, there is a system wide failure.

Your life span is reduced drastically. Then patients hear from the medical community, you have 1-5 years left to live. Sad! Painful!

One of the reasons cancer is so deadly, is because the medical world knows little about **how it begins** and **why it spreads** as MD, Peter Matia tells us.

Not so with legalism that is attempting to steal your freedom in Christ. We know **how it begins** and **why it spreads**. The prescription for the disease of the cancer of legalism is spelled out in Acts 15. Paul wrote several of his most famous letters to churches infiltrated and inflicted, with the cancer of legalism-Galatians and Romans.

Cancer cells are different than normal cells in two different ways: Contrary to popular belief, cancer cells do not grow faster than noncancerous cells; they just don't stop growing when they are supposed to.

For some reason, still unknown to the medical world, these rogue cancer cells stop listening to the body's signals that tell them when to grow and when to stop growing.

When cancer cells move from a manageable local area of the body and travel to another part of the body where they should not be, this creates the potential for a **system wide disease failure**.

This is what happens when cancer metastases and moves from the lungs to the liver. From the kidney to the pancreases. From the breast to the bladder. The challenge of treating cancer is that it is not one single, simple, straight forward disease as Dr. Attia, reminds us. It is a medical condition with mind boggling complexity. (pg. 146-Outline)

Traditional chemotherapy occupies the fuzzy world of poison and patient medicine. Mustard gas used as a weapon during World War 1 was a direct precursor to the earliest chemotherapy practices. (pg. 148, Outlive)

Now, all these thoughts and facts are sobering. Startling. Even downright unfair. And that is exactly the reaction I was hoping to enlist in each of you. To disturb you. Maybe even make some mad. Why? Because legalism infiltrates all churches, all believers in Christ want you to enjoy the freedom he purchased on the cross.

As we study Acts 15, we see a **debate**, a **discussion** and even a **disagreement** that arises in the New Testament church about how you define **salvation** for the Gentile.

^{2a} This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. (Acts 15-NIV)

More importantly, how do you define salvation for all mankind since Jesus' atoning death is now available to all. (John 3:16)

To the Jews, circumcision and keeping the law were required for salvation.

What are the requirements for the Gentile/non-Jew to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Is it grace alone, through faith or is it grace, circumcision and works?

I am suggesting to you that the cancer of works, law and circumcision is moving through the body of this new church in ancient times, and maybe modern times, and it is on the verge of metastasizing. It is about 20 years since Pentecost, and the life of the church is about to suffer a premature death. Untimely death. Early death.

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: *“Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”* (Acts 15:1-NIV)

The difference between these two gospels was night and day. Freedom verses slavery. Many will think they are receiving God’s plan for salvation, but they end up swallowing the lie hook, line and sinker. This is the devil’s plan to enslave. These verses in Acts 15 introduce us to **How Do You Get Saved?**

*What is the difference between a lost person and a saved person?

*How do you have your sins forgiven?

*How does a person receive eternal life?

*How do you get to heaven?

This theological conflict identified in Acts 15, is still a problem today with many churches and Christians. So many Christians are trudging through life wearing cemented boots of law. Cemented boots of circumcision. Cemented boots of legalism.

Why? Because people have a hard time with a free gift of grace.

Many are haunted with the question, surely there must be something more I must do to gain God’s forgiveness. To gain God’s favor. Or if not to gain it, maybe to boost it.

Certainly, there is something I must do to gain God’s favor or boost my status with God.

What are you hoping for? God will love you more. God will protect your family. God will bless your finances. God will give you a spouse. God will give you good health. God will keep you out of jail.

You can’t earn those benefits; blessings you get free as a part of the package of grace. Just ask.

In the back of the mind of well-meaning Christians, is the haunting question, **should I be doing more**. Let's take a survey, now be honest, anybody besides me, ever haunted by this question. Anybody ever taunted by this? Anybody exhausted by this question?

Could I be doing more? Should I be doing more?

If I do more, will that unlock some kind of blessing, I have yet to experience? Is it possible for me to get more blessing and favor of God because I have earned it.

You have all of the love, blessing and favor that an All Loving and Holy God can give.

We have a difficulty with the free and finished work of Christ. And so did the first century church. Ok, time to look closely at the problem of the cancer of legalism attempting to infect those in the Antioch church. Now, the church in Jerusalem had already been infected.

A new group of Gentile-Pagan-Heathen believers, like wild horses were jumping the fence and now were galloping across the landscape of Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconian, Lystra and Derbe. God is at work in non-Jewish people lives.

^{48b} And all who were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:48-49, 52-NIV)

Strict Jews were happy that God was at work in the life of the heathen. As they went to church in regions outside of Jerusalem, many were becoming extremely uncomfortable.

Gentiles were fast outnumbering Jews in the church.

From childhood it had been drilled into the Jew that circumcision and keeping the law was what separated God's people from the heathen. From pagans. From prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners.

So, it was natural for them to think that these new Christ-Gentiles should start acting like Jews. You have a Jewish Messiah offering you forgiveness of sins and eternal life, through his atoning death, so don't forget the surgical activity of circumcision and then start cleaning up your pagan/heathen lifestyle by following the law. All 613 of them.

Could you imagine, the look on the **Gentiles face**, when his family attends the newcomer's class and finds a list of doctors who will do the circumcision for the males in the family. And here is some new curriculum, we call it the **Law of Moses** you need to start abiding by it.

You say that the recidivism rate was really high. Quite a lot of relapses back into heathenism after a few classes on circumcision and law 101. Need some celebrate recovery?

Paul and Barnabas' two-year missionary journey brought Gentiles into the church without requiring them to obey Jewish rules.

Paul and Barnabas 2-year missionary work has brought perhaps 1000's into the kingdom of God. In Turkey on one Sabbath the whole town was present to hear Paul and Barnabas speak.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. (Acts 13-NIV)

Pagans and heathens started new churches or started attending Jewish synagogues. At **no time** did Paul and Barnabas tell them they had to start obeying Jewish rules!

To many Hebrew Christians this was unacceptable. For generations they have kept the law, and now Gentiles can jump on the salvation band wagon, without Jewish past practices.

To watch the end of a movie and think you know the whole movie, those who know the movie will tell you, you don't know all that has come before your entry into the movie. You don't get credit for watching this movie unless you start from the beginning.

So Hebrew Christians were frustrated with new Gentile Christians who enjoyed all of the benefits of sins forgiven and eternal life without **doing the work....**

Two problems arose that many Hebrew Christian could not stomach. **One**, how can these new followers of Jesus be God's people if they don't obey the Law of Moses? **Next**, how can Hebrew Christians break bread with Gentiles unless they followed dietary laws and get circumcised.

So, some self-appointed apologists of the Jewish practice thought, if Paul and Barnabas wont deal with it, they'd have to.

The bags were packed. The GPS route was set. And off these Hebrew Christians trotted in the name of Jesus and Moses as keepers of the Law so they traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch.

They wasted no time once they arrived in setting these new Christians from pagan/heathen land straight. Paul and Barnabas get wind that Gentile believers in Antioch are being taught practices they clearly oppose.

Self-appointed legalists went to Antioch and told the church: "You are not good enough for God unless you are circumcised."

The self-appointed legalists who were associated with the Jerusalem church, were ignorant of the new freedoms that Christ provided. They were ignorant about how law and grace were connected. In their ignorance these well-meaning Hebrew Christians were doing damage to Jesus message by **mixing** law and grace. Let's read on.

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In the letter the Gentiles are instructed to make it a priority to not engage in sexual immorality, throw out your idols and change your eating practices. The early church did a great deal of eating together.

Who got the better end of the deal?

Father,

Today I accept Jesus Christ's atoning death as salvation for the first time or a fresh time to cover my pile of sins. I walk in the newness of a life of grace that calls for me to flee sexual immorality, cast out my idols and honor my brothers and sisters in Christ as we eat together.

Today I lean into Christ's grace and accept Isaiah 64:6's description that all human efforts are as filthy rags.

The Holy Spirit wants to teach me to walk in the Spirit and become like Jesus. I welcome that commitment.

Thank you that I am free from the yoke of the law, and the circumcision of the body. I am Your child based on grace, not goodness. I am Your servant based on mercy, not grace.

In Jesus' Name, Amen!

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

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This news made all the believers very glad. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

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Your life span is reduced drastically. Then patients hear from the medical community, you have 1-5 years left to live. Sad! Painful!

One of the reasons cancer is so deadly, is because the medical world knows little about **how it begins** and **why it spreads** as MD, Peter Matia tells us.

Not so with legalism that is attempting to steal your freedom in Christ. We know **how it begins** and **why it spreads**. The prescription for the disease of the cancer of legalism is spelled out in Acts 15. Paul wrote several of his most famous letters to churches infiltrated and inflicted, with the cancer of legalism-Galatians and Romans.

Cancer cells are different than normal cells in two different ways: Contrary to popular belief, cancer cells do not grow faster than noncancerous cells; they just don't stop growing when they are supposed to.

For some reason, still unknown to the medical world, these rogue cancer cells stop listening to the body's signals that tell them when to grow and when to stop growing.

When cancer cells move from a manageable local area of the body and travel to another part of the body where they should not be, this creates the potential for a **system wide disease failure**.

This is what happens when cancer metastases and moves from the lungs to the liver. From the kidney to the pancreases. From the breast to the bladder. The challenge of treating cancer is that it is not one single, simple, straight forward disease as Dr. Attia, reminds us. It is a medical condition with mind boggling complexity. (pg. 146-Outline)

Traditional chemotherapy occupies the fuzzy world of poison and patient medicine. Mustard gas used as a weapon during World War 1 was a direct precursor to the earliest chemotherapy practices. (pg. 148, Outlive)

Now, all these thoughts and facts are sobering. Startling. Even downright unfair. And that is exactly the reaction I was hoping to enlist in each of you. To disturb you. Maybe even make some mad. Why? Because legalism infiltrates all churches, all believers in Christ want you to enjoy the freedom he purchased on the cross.

As we study Acts 15, we see a **debate**, a **discussion** and even a **disagreement** that arises in the New Testament church about how you define **salvation** for the Gentile.

^{2a} This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. (Acts 15-NIV)

More importantly, how do you define salvation for all mankind since Jesus' atoning death is now available to all. (John 3:16)

To the Jews, circumcision and keeping the law were required for salvation.

What are the requirements for the Gentile/non-Jew to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Is it grace alone, through faith or is it grace, circumcision and works?

I am suggesting to you that the cancer of works, law and circumcision is moving through the body of this new church in ancient times, and maybe modern times, and it is on the verge of metastasizing. It is about 20 years since Pentecost, and the life of the church is about to suffer a premature death. Untimely death. Early death.

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: *“Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”* (Acts 15:1-NIV)

The difference between these two gospels was night and day. Freedom verses slavery. Many will think they are receiving God’s plan for salvation, but they end up swallowing the lie hook, line and sinker. This is the devil’s plan to enslave. These verses in Acts 15 introduce us to **How Do You Get Saved?**

*What is the difference between a lost person and a saved person?

*How do you have your sins forgiven?

*How does a person receive eternal life?

*How do you get to heaven?

This theological conflict identified in Acts 15, is still a problem today with many churches and Christians. So many Christians are trudging through life wearing cemented boots of law. Cemented boots of circumcision. Cemented boots of legalism.

Why? Because people have a hard time with a free gift of grace.

Many are haunted with the question, surely there must be something more I must do to gain God’s forgiveness. To gain God’s favor. Or if not to gain it, maybe to boost it.

Certainly, there is something I must do to gain God’s favor or boost my status with God.

What are you hoping for? God will love you more. God will protect your family. God will bless your finances. God will give you a spouse. God will give you good health. God will keep you out of jail.

You can’t earn those benefits; blessings you get free as a part of the package of grace. Just ask.

In the back of the mind of well-meaning Christians, is the haunting question, **should I be doing more**. Let's take a survey, now be honest, anybody besides me, ever haunted by this question. Anybody ever taunted by this? Anybody exhausted by this question?

Could I be doing more? Should I be doing more?

If I do more, will that unlock some kind of blessing, I have yet to experience? Is it possible for me to get more blessing and favor of God because I have earned it.

You have all of the love, blessing and favor that an All Loving and Holy God can give.

We have a difficulty with the free and finished work of Christ. And so did the first century church. Ok, time to look closely at the problem of the cancer of legalism attempting to infect those in the Antioch church. Now, the church in Jerusalem had already been infected.

A new group of Gentile-Pagan-Heathen believers, like wild horses were jumping the fence and now were galloping across the landscape of Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconian, Lystra and Derbe. God is at work in non-Jewish people lives.

^{48b} And all who were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:48-49, 52-NIV)

Strict Jews were happy that God was at work in the life of the heathen. As they went to church in regions outside of Jerusalem, many were becoming extremely uncomfortable.

Gentiles were fast outnumbering Jews in the church.

From childhood it had been drilled into the Jew that circumcision and keeping the law was what separated God's people from the heathen. From pagans. From prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners.

So, it was natural for them to think that these new Christ-Gentiles should start acting like Jews. You have a Jewish Messiah offering you forgiveness of sins and eternal life, through his atoning death, so don't forget the surgical activity of circumcision and then start cleaning up your pagan/heathen lifestyle by following the law. All 613 of them.

Could you imagine, the look on the **Gentiles face**, when his family attends the newcomer's class and finds a list of doctors who will do the circumcision for the males in the family. And here is some new curriculum, we call it the **Law of Moses** you need to start abiding by it.

You say that the recidivism rate was really high. Quite a lot of relapses back into heathenism after a few classes on circumcision and law 101. Need some celebrate recovery?

Paul and Barnabas' two-year missionary journey brought Gentiles into the church without requiring them to obey Jewish rules.

Paul and Barnabas 2-year missionary work has brought perhaps 1000's into the kingdom of God. In Turkey on one Sabbath the whole town was present to hear Paul and Barnabas speak.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. (Acts 13-NIV)

Pagans and heathens started new churches or started attending Jewish synagogues. At **no time** did Paul and Barnabas tell them they had to start obeying Jewish rules!

To many Hebrew Christians this was unacceptable. For generations they have kept the law, and now Gentiles can jump on the salvation band wagon, without Jewish past practices.

To watch the end of a movie and think you know the whole movie, those who know the movie will tell you, you don't know all that has come before your entry into the movie. You don't get credit for watching this movie unless you start from the beginning.

So Hebrew Christians were frustrated with new Gentile Christians who enjoyed all of the benefits of sins forgiven and eternal life without **doing the work....**

Two problems arose that many Hebrew Christian could not stomach. **One**, how can these new followers of Jesus be God's people if they don't obey the Law of Moses? **Next**, how can Hebrew Christians break bread with Gentiles unless they followed dietary laws and get circumcised.

So, some self-appointed apologists of the Jewish practice thought, if Paul and Barnabas wont deal with it, they'd have to.

The bags were packed. The GPS route was set. And off these Hebrew Christians trotted in the name of Jesus and Moses as keepers of the Law so they traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch.

They wasted no time once they arrived in setting these new Christians from pagan/heathen land straight. Paul and Barnabas get wind that Gentile believers in Antioch are being taught practices they clearly oppose.

Self-appointed legalists went to Antioch and told the church: "You are not good enough for God unless you are circumcised."

The self-appointed legalists who were associated with the Jerusalem church, were ignorant of the new freedoms that Christ provided. They were ignorant about how law and grace were connected. In their ignorance these well-meaning Hebrew Christians were doing damage to Jesus message by **mixing** law and grace. Let's read on.

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.

⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." ¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. (Acts 15-NIV)

What is at stake.? A gospel of grace found only in Jesus' atoning death. God pronounces his dissatisfaction with anyone who preaches the gospel of grace and law. When any preacher or teacher says, "unless you belong to this group, you cannot have eternal life!" or "unless you add these rules, ceremonies, practices, you cannot be saved."

Salvation is only by God's grace through faith, plus nothing!

What happens when you mix grace and law? (1) Your mind and heart become unsure of how salvation works. You doubt your salvation. (2) The peace you once enjoyed because shame and guilt were once removed, resurfaces.

When you mix grace and law it is like trying to put new wine into old wine skins. Jesus said this does not work.

³⁶ He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old."³⁷ And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸ No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. (Luke 5-NIV)

Jesus is telling us not to put the new salvation of Jesus grace and forgiveness, into old Moses wineskin of law. They were saying that it **is not enough to be forgiven by Jesus, now you must obey Moses.**

When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple that separated the sinner from the holy of Holy was torn. Supernaturally it came apart when Jesus died. This is the first miracle after Jesus' death. And it happened in the holiest of Jewish locations, the temple. Here is the verse.

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. (Matthew 27-NIV)

When Hebrew Christians required salvation in Christ and obedience to Moses, they were stitching up the torn veil. They were asking these new Christ followers to move out of the sunlight, and into the darkness. Nobody knew this better than a Hebrew Christian who miserably failed in keeping the law. It could not be done. It was not a plan of salvation, it was a way of making it clear, you are a wretched sinner.

¹⁵ We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles ^{16a} know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 2-NIV)

God made it easy for people to have salvation, the Hebrews Christians thought, lets stitch that curtain back up and make it hard or impossible to find access to God. Why is this so ludicrous?

Adding to Jesus salvation is like you coming along and trying to improve a Rembrandt or Van Gough Museum. You take out some color pencils and say, "I will fix that." "It is flawed. "

It is incomplete. I can do better. I know best. I am going to add to that masterpiece. Standing in front of a Rembrandt or Picasso, I am thinking he really wasn't on it that day. I can see the limitations or flaws, and I am going to fix the painting. It would be even more shocking for a child with crayons to think that.

That is what happens when you add Moses, Law and circumcision to Jesus' death and invitation to salvation and grace.

The gospel of grace has often been hindered by people who stand in front of open doors and turn many away. Keeping them from entering. What is at stake, teaching Gentiles how to be good Jews or teaching them how to be good Christ followers. The correct message of salvation is paramount to personal growth and evangelism. The gospel has been perverted for centuries. In fact, there are people here today, who are nice people, who think their standing before God is somehow **conditional**.

We only have to look no further then western and world religions to salvation by works. Salvation by works - Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Scientology, works-based Christianity, Seventh-Day Adventist, Catholicism, Pentecostalism that requires speaking in tongues for baptism and baptismal regeneration to name a few.

No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Islam declares that Jesus was not crucified, Christianity say he was. Both can't be right.

Judaism refuses the claim that Jesus was the Messiah. Christians place their eternal hope in Jesus our Messiah. Someone's not right.

Buddhists search for Nirvana after 547 reincarnations. Christians are living for life after life-eternal life.

Secularists, humanists, evolutionists, atheists and agnostics are adamant, there is no creator of life. Christians live with the confidence that God gave them life and placed them into his creation with a purpose for each life. One of the two are fools.

Every religion is a battering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Jesus salvation through grace, has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate.

All of these religions and every other says, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!" On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world.

God accepts the lost based on faith. Any additional work creates a roadblock to faith and fellowship.

What if the conflict over salvation by grace-Jesus or salvation by Law-Moses, what if law and circumcision won that day at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15? Our songs would be altogether different.

What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus or What can wash away my sin, nothing but the law of Moses. Which do you choose, Moses or Jesus.

Oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus it washes white as snow.

O the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, it washes white as snow.

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the blood of the lamb,

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the 613 laws of Moses.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, or Amazing circumcision how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

Ok, God has made his point, you actually get to choose grace or goodness. Law or love. Mercy or merit. Life or death. Moses or Jesus. Circumcision of the personal effects, or circumcision of the heart.

613 laws or as the ruling in Jerusalem council stated: Receive forgiveness of sins through Jesus' atoning death and then abstain from idols and immorality.

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One of the reasons cancer is so deadly, is because the medical world knows little about **how it begins** and **why it spreads** as MD, Peter Matia tells us.

Not so with legalism that is attempting to steal your freedom in Christ. We know **how it begins** and **why it spreads**. The prescription for the disease of the cancer of legalism is spelled out in Acts 15. Paul wrote several of his most famous letters to churches infiltrated and inflicted, with the cancer of legalism-Galatians and Romans.

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For some reason, still unknown to the medical world, these rogue cancer cells stop listening to the body's signals that tell them when to grow and when to stop growing.

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Now, all these thoughts and facts are sobering. Startling. Even downright unfair. And that is exactly the reaction I was hoping to enlist in each of you. To disturb you. Maybe even make some mad. Why? Because legalism infiltrates all churches, all believers in Christ want you to enjoy the freedom he purchased on the cross.

As we study Acts 15, we see a **debate**, a **discussion** and even a **disagreement** that arises in the New Testament church about how you define **salvation** for the Gentile.

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More importantly, how do you define salvation for all mankind since Jesus' atoning death is now available to all. (John 3:16)

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*What is the difference between a lost person and a saved person?

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This theological conflict identified in Acts 15, is still a problem today with many churches and Christians. So many Christians are trudging through life wearing cemented boots of law. Cemented boots of circumcision. Cemented boots of legalism.

Why? Because people have a hard time with a free gift of grace.

Many are haunted with the question, surely there must be something more I must do to gain God's forgiveness. To gain God's favor. Or if not to gain it, maybe to boost it.

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What are you hoping for? God will love you more. God will protect your family. God will bless your finances. God will give you a spouse. God will give you good health. God will keep you out of jail.

You can't earn those benefits; blessings you get free as a part of the package of grace. Just ask.

In the back of the mind of well-meaning Christians, is the haunting question, **should I be doing more**. Let's take a survey, now be honest, anybody besides me, ever haunted by this question. Anybody ever taunted by this? Anybody exhausted by this question?

Could I be doing more? Should I be doing more?

If I do more, will that unlock some kind of blessing, I have yet to experience? Is it possible for me to get more blessing and favor of God because I have earned it.

You have all of the love, blessing and favor that an All Loving and Holy God can give.

We have a difficulty with the free and finished work of Christ. And so did the first century church. Ok, time to look closely at the problem of the cancer of legalism attempting to infect those in the Antioch church. Now, the church in Jerusalem had already been infected.

A new group of Gentile-Pagan-Heathen believers, like wild horses were jumping the fence and now were galloping across the landscape of Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconian, Lystra and Derbe. God is at work in non-Jewish people lives.

^{48b} And all who were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:48-49, 52-NIV)

Strict Jews were happy that God was at work in the life of the heathen. As they went to church in regions outside of Jerusalem, many were becoming extremely uncomfortable.

Gentiles were fast outnumbering Jews in the church.

From childhood it had been drilled into the Jew that circumcision and keeping the law was what separated God's people from the heathen. From pagans. From prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners.

So, it was natural for them to think that these new Christ-Gentiles should start acting like Jews. You have a Jewish Messiah offering you forgiveness of sins and eternal life, through his atoning death, so don't forget the surgical activity of circumcision and then start cleaning up your pagan/heathen lifestyle by following the law. All 613 of them.

Could you imagine, the look on the **Gentiles face**, when his family attends the newcomer's class and finds a list of doctors who will do the circumcision for the males in the family. And here is some new curriculum, we call it the **Law of Moses** you need to start abiding by it.

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Paul and Barnabas 2-year missionary work has brought perhaps 1000's into the kingdom of God. In Turkey on one Sabbath the whole town was present to hear Paul and Barnabas speak.

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Pagans and heathens started new churches or started attending Jewish synagogues. At **no time** did Paul and Barnabas tell them they had to start obeying Jewish rules!

To many Hebrew Christians this was unacceptable. For generations they have kept the law, and now Gentiles can jump on the salvation band wagon, without Jewish past practices.

To watch the end of a movie and think you know the whole movie, those who know the movie will tell you, you don't know all that has come before your entry into the movie. You don't get credit for watching this movie unless you start from the beginning.

So Hebrew Christians were frustrated with new Gentile Christians who enjoyed all of the benefits of sins forgiven and eternal life without **doing the work....**

Two problems arose that many Hebrew Christian could not stomach. **One**, how can these new followers of Jesus be God's people if they don't obey the Law of Moses? **Next**, how can Hebrew Christians break bread with Gentiles unless they followed dietary laws and get circumcised.

So, some self-appointed apologists of the Jewish practice thought, if Paul and Barnabas wont deal with it, they'd have to.

The bags were packed. The GPS route was set. And off these Hebrew Christians trotted in the name of Jesus and Moses as keepers of the Law so they traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch.

They wasted no time once they arrived in setting these new Christians from pagan/heathen land straight. Paul and Barnabas get wind that Gentile believers in Antioch are being taught practices they clearly oppose.

Self-appointed legalists went to Antioch and told the church: "You are not good enough for God unless you are circumcised."

The self-appointed legalists who were associated with the Jerusalem church, were ignorant of the new freedoms that Christ provided. They were ignorant about how law and grace were connected. In their ignorance these well-meaning Hebrew Christians were doing damage to Jesus message by **mixing** law and grace. Let's read on.

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.

⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." ¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. (Acts 15-NIV)

What is at stake.? A gospel of grace found only in Jesus' atoning death. God pronounces his dissatisfaction with anyone who preaches the gospel of grace and law. When any preacher or teacher says, "unless you belong to this group, you cannot have eternal life!" or "unless you add these rules, ceremonies, practices, you cannot be saved."

Salvation is only by God's grace through faith, plus nothing!

What happens when you mix grace and law? (1) Your mind and heart become unsure of how salvation works. You doubt your salvation. (2) The peace you once enjoyed because shame and guilt were once removed, resurfaces.

When you mix grace and law it is like trying to put new wine into old wine skins. Jesus said this does not work.

³⁶ He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old."³⁷ And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸ No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. (Luke 5-NIV)

Jesus is telling us not to put the new salvation of Jesus grace and forgiveness, into old Moses wineskin of law. They were saying that it **is not enough to be forgiven by Jesus, now you must obey Moses.**

When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple that separated the sinner from the holy of Holy was torn. Supernaturally it came apart when Jesus died. This is the first miracle after Jesus' death. And it happened in the holiest of Jewish locations, the temple. Here is the verse.

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. (Matthew 27-NIV)

When Hebrew Christians required salvation in Christ and obedience to Moses, they were stitching up the torn veil. They were asking these new Christ followers to move out of the sunlight, and into the darkness. Nobody knew this better than a Hebrew Christian who miserably failed in keeping the law. It could not be done. It was not a plan of salvation, it was a way of making it clear, you are a wretched sinner.

¹⁵ We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles ^{16a} know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 2-NIV)

God made it easy for people to have salvation, the Hebrews Christians thought, lets stitch that curtain back up and make it hard or impossible to find access to God. Why is this so ludicrous?

Adding to Jesus salvation is like you coming along and trying to improve a Rembrandt or Van Gough Museum. You take out some color pencils and say, "I will fix that." "It is flawed. "

It is incomplete. I can do better. I know best. I am going to add to that masterpiece. Standing in front of a Rembrandt or Picasso, I am thinking he really wasn't on it that day. I can see the limitations or flaws, and I am going to fix the painting. It would be even more shocking for a child with crayons to think that.

That is what happens when you add Moses, Law and circumcision to Jesus' death and invitation to salvation and grace.

The gospel of grace has often been hindered by people who stand in front of open doors and turn many away. Keeping them from entering. What is at stake, teaching Gentiles how to be good Jews or teaching them how to be good Christ followers. The correct message of salvation is paramount to personal growth and evangelism. The gospel has been perverted for centuries. In fact, there are people here today, who are nice people, who think their standing before God is somehow **conditional**.

We only have to look no further then western and world religions to salvation by works. Salvation by works - Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Scientology, works-based Christianity, Seventh-Day Adventist, Catholicism, Pentecostalism that requires speaking in tongues for baptism and baptismal regeneration to name a few.

No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Islam declares that Jesus was not crucified, Christianity say he was. Both can't be right.

Judaism refuses the claim that Jesus was the Messiah. Christians place their eternal hope in Jesus our Messiah. Someone's not right.

Buddhists search for Nirvana after 547 reincarnations. Christians are living for life after life-eternal life.

Secularists, humanists, evolutionists, atheists and agnostics are adamant, there is no creator of life. Christians live with the confidence that God gave them life and placed them into his creation with a purpose for each life. One of the two are fools.

Every religion is a battering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Jesus salvation through grace, has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate.

All of these religions and every other says, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!" On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world.

God accepts the lost based on faith. Any additional work creates a roadblock to faith and fellowship.

What if the conflict over salvation by grace-Jesus or salvation by Law-Moses, what if law and circumcision won that day at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15? Our songs would be altogether different.

What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus or What can wash away my sin, nothing but the law of Moses. Which do you choose, Moses or Jesus.

Oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus it washes white as snow.

O the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, it washes white as snow.

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the blood of the lamb,

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the 613 laws of Moses.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, or Amazing circumcision how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

Ok, God has made his point, you actually get to choose grace or goodness. Law or love. Mercy or merit. Life or death. Moses or Jesus. Circumcision of the personal effects, or circumcision of the heart.

613 laws or as the ruling in Jerusalem council stated: Receive forgiveness of sins through Jesus' atoning death and then abstain from idols and immorality.

²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. (Acts 15-NIV)

In the end the half-brother of Jesus writes a letter that is passed on from the Hebrew Christians at Antioch, no longer insisting that the Gentiles must be circumcised and follow the law of Moses, to be saved.

In the letter the Gentiles are instructed to make it a priority to not engage in sexual immorality, throw out your idols and change your eating practices. The early church did a great deal of eating together.

Who got the better end of the deal?

Father,

Today I accept Jesus Christ's atoning death as salvation for the first time or a fresh time to cover my pile of sins. I walk in the newness of a life of grace that calls for me to flee sexual immorality, cast out my idols and honor my brothers and sisters in Christ as we eat together.

Today I lean into Christ's grace and accept Isaiah 64:6's description that all human efforts are as filthy rags.

The Holy Spirit wants to teach me to walk in the Spirit and become like Jesus. I welcome that commitment.

Thank you that I am free from the yoke of the law, and the circumcision of the body. I am Your child based on grace, not goodness. I am Your servant based on mercy, not grace.

In Jesus' Name, Amen!

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

September 19, 2025

¹ Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. ³ The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted.

This news made all the believers very glad. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

The letter came from an automobile insurance company. I didn't drop them the owner of the policy said, "they dropped me." The owner of the policy goes on to complain as to why he was dropped. "It just doesn't make any sense, (1)I paid my premiums, on time I might say, I did all of the paperwork asked of me, and yet I am without auto insurance."

The reason I was dropped because I had too many car related infractions.

Too many speed violations, an uncontested accident that required auto repairs and I used up all of my privileges to have a vehicle available for no charge. And don't forget the two towing usages and one time we came and unlocked your car.

Did you get all of those? Violations? Infractions? Charges against your insurance have hit its maximum limits.

What? Isn't that why I have insurance? I am not perfect in the driving category. I bet I am better driver than Pastor Ken.

This is a complete shock to me! I thought the letter was to notify me that I was getting an award for being a good customer. For having the same company for over 50 years.

(1) Late for work. Isn't that a good enough reason for the speeding ticket?

(2) Wife handed a bottle to the baby and turned her head for just a moment, smash. I was honest about the whole thing. Any credit for that?

(3) Towing, I am locked out of car and no more privileges of having a loaner?

What do you mean I will not be reinstated? My policy will terminate on Jan 4 at 12:01a. For your own protection you are urged to obtain insurance from another carrier to prevent a lapse of coverage.

Are you telling me unless I am perfect, and work like the dickens to keep my record clean, only then am I worthy of insurance?

If my insurance company can't cover honest and reasonable mistakes, who is going to cover my intentional rebellion-drag racing on Friday night, driving without fixing required repairs (blinkers out) and changing lanes without signaling?

If I can't keep myself out of trouble by following the law the of insurance land, is there any hope?

I am trying the human achievement route with all my heart. You mean I only qualify for insurance based on **what I do**, or **what I experience** or **what I know**?

I had my first accident at 16. And I forget to set the parking brake properly and my car rolled down the hill at 17. Smash. I have been in need of insurance since the initial days of getting my driver's license at 16.

Those who are trying to please God understand this problem. We all have tried self-salvation (law, circumcision). Isaiah describes all human effort as filthy rages. Is 64:6, says that our pile of righteous acts and religious credentials are like a pile of stink in a cow pasture.

In Acts 15, the church is being infected with cancer.

The New Testament church was being infected with a cancer that would soon metastasize if the infection was not eradicated so the spread of cancer to other parts of the body could be stopped-the NT church dies!

When Paul found out that cancer was beginning to spread from the Jerusalem church to some of the geographical areas that Paul had just completed a two-year missionary journey, Paul came unglued. Paul went bonkers. Paul shot into orbit and then he went right to work to remove surgically the cancer that had shown up in the Galatian church.

Jerusalem church. And was not trying to get a foothold in the Antiochian church.

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — ⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1-NIV)

This is one of the churches that Paul found a favorable response to Jesus' message of sins forgiven by grace. Do you remember what happened in Iconian? We see this in Acts 14. A healing. Worship and deifying of Paul and Barnabas. Then a stoning. Later Paul went right back into town to disciple those who had come to Christ. This is the region of Galatia.

Let's be honest, at times all of us lean on goodness, rather than grace. We love that feeling of merit over mercy. There is a corrupt place in our being, so like Adam and Eve, we still want to hide from God and cover ourselves with manmade clothing.

With one bite by the Galatians of the circumcision/law apple, they were plunged into nakedness and hiding from God.

Someone today, came to church, thinking this is the place (church) that offers forgiveness of sins, Christ offers forgiveness not the church. Someone thinks if I get pastor Ken to pray for me, he is the one that God will use. God can use anyone to minister to you.

God says, "stop it." In fact, the Holy Spirit plans to do a checkup, from the neck up. And if the Holy Spirit finds any cancerous cells, if you let him, God will remove them.

Some were teaching that salvation takes place when you receive Jesus Christ and then YOU go on to be circumcised and keep the law.

This is like trying to mix oil and water. It's well known that water and oil don't mix, and if you put them together, the oil will float on top of the water in a distinct layer.

So, the water and oil are both lost. So, it is so with law and grace. Both are destroyed.

Those spreading this law-grace cancer were Hebrew Christians that were legalists, like Paul before he became converted to Christ. Look at your notes, verse 5.

⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

Many find it difficult to accept that salvation in Jesus Christ is offered by God as a free gift through repentance and faith.

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Two problems arose that many Hebrew Christian could not stomach. **One**, how can these new followers of Jesus be God's people if they don't obey the Law of Moses? **Next**, how can Hebrew Christians break bread with Gentiles unless they followed dietary laws and get circumcised.

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The bags were packed. The GPS route was set. And off these Hebrew Christians trotted in the name of Jesus and Moses as keepers of the Law so they traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch.

They wasted no time once they arrived in setting these new Christians from pagan/heathen land straight. Paul and Barnabas get wind that Gentile believers in Antioch are being taught practices they clearly oppose.

Self-appointed legalists went to Antioch and told the church: "You are not good enough for God unless you are circumcised."

The self-appointed legalists who were associated with the Jerusalem church, were ignorant of the new freedoms that Christ provided. They were ignorant about how law and grace were connected. In their ignorance these well-meaning Hebrew Christians were doing damage to Jesus message by **mixing** law and grace. Let's read on.

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.

⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." ¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. (Acts 15-NIV)

What is at stake.? A gospel of grace found only in Jesus' atoning death. God pronounces his dissatisfaction with anyone who preaches the gospel of grace and law. When any preacher or teacher says, "unless you belong to this group, you cannot have eternal life!" or "unless you add these rules, ceremonies, practices, you cannot be saved."

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What happens when you mix grace and law? (1) Your mind and heart become unsure of how salvation works. You doubt your salvation. (2) The peace you once enjoyed because shame and guilt were once removed, resurfaces.

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Jesus is telling us not to put the new salvation of Jesus grace and forgiveness, into old Moses wineskin of law. They were saying that it **is not enough to be forgiven by Jesus, now you must obey Moses.**

When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple that separated the sinner from the holy of Holy was torn. Supernaturally it came apart when Jesus died. This is the first miracle after Jesus' death. And it happened in the holiest of Jewish locations, the temple. Here is the verse.

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When Hebrew Christians required salvation in Christ and obedience to Moses, they were stitching up the torn veil. They were asking these new Christ followers to move out of the sunlight, and into the darkness. Nobody knew this better than a Hebrew Christian who miserably failed in keeping the law. It could not be done. It was not a plan of salvation, it was a way of making it clear, you are a wretched sinner.

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We only have to look no further then western and world religions to salvation by works. Salvation by works - Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Scientology, works-based Christianity, Seventh-Day Adventist, Catholicism, Pentecostalism that requires speaking in tongues for baptism and baptismal regeneration to name a few.

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What if the conflict over salvation by grace-Jesus or salvation by Law-Moses, what if law and circumcision won that day at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15? Our songs would be altogether different.

What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus or What can wash away my sin, nothing but the law of Moses. Which do you choose, Moses or Jesus.

Oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus it washes white as snow.

O the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, it washes white as snow.

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the blood of the lamb,

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the 613 laws of Moses.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, or Amazing circumcision how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

Ok, God has made his point, you actually get to choose grace or goodness. Law or love. Mercy or merit. Life or death. Moses or Jesus. Circumcision of the personal effects, or circumcision of the heart.

613 laws or as the ruling in Jerusalem council stated: Receive forgiveness of sins through Jesus' atoning death and then abstain from idols and immorality.

²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. (Acts 15-NIV)

In the end the half-brother of Jesus writes a letter that is passed on from the Hebrew Christians at Antioch, no longer insisting that the Gentiles must be circumcised and follow the law of Moses, to be saved.

In the letter the Gentiles are instructed to make it a priority to not engage in sexual immorality, throw out your idols and change your eating practices. The early church did a great deal of eating together.

Who got the better end of the deal?

Father,

Today I accept Jesus Christ's atoning death as salvation for the first time or a fresh time to cover my pile of sins. I walk in the newness of a life of grace that calls for me to flee sexual immorality, cast out my idols and honor my brothers and sisters in Christ as we eat together.

Today I lean into Christ's grace and accept Isaiah 64:6's description that all human efforts are as filthy rags.

The Holy Spirit wants to teach me to walk in the Spirit and become like Jesus. I welcome that commitment.

Thank you that I am free from the yoke of the law, and the circumcision of the body. I am Your child based on grace, not goodness. I am Your servant based on mercy, not grace.

In Jesus' Name, Amen!

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

September 19, 2025

¹ Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. ³ The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted.

This news made all the believers very glad. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

The letter came from an automobile insurance company. I didn't drop them the owner of the policy said, "they dropped me." The owner of the policy goes on to complain as to why he was dropped. "It just doesn't make any sense, (1)I paid my premiums, on time I might say, I did all of the paperwork asked of me, and yet I am without auto insurance."

The reason I was dropped because I had too many car related infractions.

Too many speed violations, an uncontested accident that required auto repairs and I used up all of my privileges to have a vehicle available for no charge. And don't forget the two towing usages and one time we came and unlocked your car.

Did you get all of those? Violations? Infractions? Charges against your insurance have hit its maximum limits.

What? Isn't that why I have insurance? I am not perfect in the driving category. I bet I am better driver than Pastor Ken.

This is a complete shock to me! I thought the letter was to notify me that I was getting an award for being a good customer. For having the same company for over 50 years.

(1) Late for work. Isn't that a good enough reason for the speeding ticket?

(2) Wife handed a bottle to the baby and turned her head for just a moment, smash. I was honest about the whole thing. Any credit for that?

(3) Towing, I am locked out of car and no more privileges of having a loaner?

What do you mean I will not be reinstated? My policy will terminate on Jan 4 at 12:01a. For your own protection you are urged to obtain insurance from another carrier to prevent a lapse of coverage.

Are you telling me unless I am perfect, and work like the dickens to keep my record clean, only then am I worthy of insurance?

If my insurance company can't cover honest and reasonable mistakes, who is going to cover my intentional rebellion-drag racing on Friday night, driving without fixing required repairs (blinkers out) and changing lanes without signaling?

If I can't keep myself out of trouble by following the law the of insurance land, is there any hope?

I am trying the human achievement route with all my heart. You mean I only qualify for insurance based on **what I do**, or **what I experience** or **what I know**?

I had my first accident at 16. And I forget to set the parking brake properly and my car rolled down the hill at 17. Smash. I have been in need of insurance since the initial days of getting my driver's license at 16.

Those who are trying to please God understand this problem. We all have tried self-salvation (law, circumcision). Isaiah describes all human effort as filthy rages. Is 64:6, says that our pile of righteous acts and religious credentials are like a pile of stink in a cow pasture.

In Acts 15, the church is being infected with cancer.

The New Testament church was being infected with a cancer that would soon metastasize if the infection was not eradicated so the spread of cancer to other parts of the body could be stopped-the NT church dies!

When Paul found out that cancer was beginning to spread from the Jerusalem church to some of the geographical areas that Paul had just completed a two-year missionary journey, Paul came unglued. Paul went bonkers. Paul shot into orbit and then he went right to work to remove surgically the cancer that had shown up in the Galatian church.

Jerusalem church. And was not trying to get a foothold in the Antiochian church.

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — ⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1-NIV)

This is one of the churches that Paul found a favorable response to Jesus' message of sins forgiven by grace. Do you remember what happened in Iconian? We see this in Acts 14. A healing. Worship and deifying of Paul and Barnabas. Then a stoning. Later Paul went right back into town to disciple those who had come to Christ. This is the region of Galatia.

Let's be honest, at times all of us lean on goodness, rather than grace. We love that feeling of merit over mercy. There is a corrupt place in our being, so like Adam and Eve, we still want to hide from God and cover ourselves with manmade clothing.

With one bite by the Galatians of the circumcision/law apple, they were plunged into nakedness and hiding from God.

Someone today, came to church, thinking this is the place (church) that offers forgiveness of sins, Christ offers forgiveness not the church. Someone thinks if I get pastor Ken to pray for me, he is the one that God will use. God can use anyone to minister to you.

God says, "stop it." In fact, the Holy Spirit plans to do a checkup, from the neck up. And if the Holy Spirit finds any cancerous cells, if you let him, God will remove them.

Some were teaching that salvation takes place when you receive Jesus Christ and then YOU go on to be circumcised and keep the law.

This is like trying to mix oil and water. It's well known that water and oil don't mix, and if you put them together, the oil will float on top of the water in a distinct layer.

So, the water and oil are both lost. So, it is so with law and grace. Both are destroyed.

Those spreading this law-grace cancer were Hebrew Christians that were legalists, like Paul before he became converted to Christ. Look at your notes, verse 5.

⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

Many find it difficult to accept that salvation in Jesus Christ is offered by God as a free gift through repentance and faith.

Like cancer you cannot be casual about addressing these spiritual issues, sometimes radical surgery is required. You can live without a body part surgically removed to stop and remove cancer, but if it metastasizes, and moves into other parts of the body, there is a system wide failure.

Your life span is reduced drastically. Then patients hear from the medical community, you have 1-5 years left to live. Sad! Painful!

One of the reasons cancer is so deadly, is because the medical world knows little about **how it begins** and **why it spreads** as MD, Peter Matia tells us.

Not so with legalism that is attempting to steal your freedom in Christ. We know **how it begins** and **why it spreads**. The prescription for the disease of the cancer of legalism is spelled out in Acts 15. Paul wrote several of his most famous letters to churches infiltrated and inflicted, with the cancer of legalism-Galatians and Romans.

Cancer cells are different than normal cells in two different ways: Contrary to popular belief, cancer cells do not grow faster than noncancerous cells; they just don't stop growing when they are supposed to.

For some reason, still unknown to the medical world, these rogue cancer cells stop listening to the body's signals that tell them when to grow and when to stop growing.

When cancer cells move from a manageable local area of the body and travel to another part of the body where they should not be, this creates the potential for a **system wide disease failure**.

This is what happens when cancer metastases and moves from the lungs to the liver. From the kidney to the pancreases. From the breast to the bladder. The challenge of treating cancer is that it is not one single, simple, straight forward disease as Dr. Attia, reminds us. It is a medical condition with mind boggling complexity. (pg. 146-Outline)

Traditional chemotherapy occupies the fuzzy world of poison and patient medicine. Mustard gas used as a weapon during World War 1 was a direct precursor to the earliest chemotherapy practices. (pg. 148, Outlive)

Now, all these thoughts and facts are sobering. Startling. Even downright unfair. And that is exactly the reaction I was hoping to enlist in each of you. To disturb you. Maybe even make some mad. Why? Because legalism infiltrates all churches, all believers in Christ want you to enjoy the freedom he purchased on the cross.

As we study Acts 15, we see a **debate**, a **discussion** and even a **disagreement** that arises in the New Testament church about how you define **salvation** for the Gentile.

^{2a} This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. (Acts 15-NIV)

More importantly, how do you define salvation for all mankind since Jesus' atoning death is now available to all. (John 3:16)

To the Jews, circumcision and keeping the law were required for salvation.

What are the requirements for the Gentile/non-Jew to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Is it grace alone, through faith or is it grace, circumcision and works?

I am suggesting to you that the cancer of works, law and circumcision is moving through the body of this new church in ancient times, and maybe modern times, and it is on the verge of metastasizing. It is about 20 years since Pentecost, and the life of the church is about to suffer a premature death. Untimely death. Early death.

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: *“Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”* (Acts 15:1-NIV)

The difference between these two gospels was night and day. Freedom verses slavery. Many will think they are receiving God’s plan for salvation, but they end up swallowing the lie hook, line and sinker. This is the devils plan to enslave. These verses in Acts 15 introduce us to **How Do You Get Saved?**

*What is the difference between a lost person and a saved person?

*How do you have your sins forgiven?

*How does a person receive eternal life?

*How do you get to heaven?

This theological conflict identified in Acts 15, is still a problem today with many churches and Christians. So many Christians are trudging through life wearing cemented boots of law. Cemented boots of circumcision. Cemented boots of legalism.

Why? Because people have a hard time with a free gift of grace.

Many are haunted with the question, surely there must be something more I must do to gain God’s forgiveness. To gain God’s favor. Or if not to gain it, maybe to boost it.

Certainly, there is something I must do to gain God’s favor or boost my status with God.

What are you hoping for? God will love you more. God will protect your family. God will bless your finances. God will give you a spouse. God will give you good health. God will keep you out of jail.

You can’t earn those benefits; blessings you get free as a part of the package of grace. Just ask.

In the back of the mind of well-meaning Christians, is the haunting question, **should I be doing more**. Let's take a survey, now be honest, anybody besides me, ever haunted by this question. Anybody ever taunted by this? Anybody exhausted by this question?

Could I be doing more? Should I be doing more?

If I do more, will that unlock some kind of blessing, I have yet to experience? Is it possible for me to get more blessing and favor of God because I have earned it.

You have all of the love, blessing and favor that an All Loving and Holy God can give.

We have a difficulty with the free and finished work of Christ. And so did the first century church. Ok, time to look closely at the problem of the cancer of legalism attempting to infect those in the Antioch church. Now, the church in Jerusalem had already been infected.

A new group of Gentile-Pagan-Heathen believers, like wild horses were jumping the fence and now were galloping across the landscape of Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconian, Lystra and Derbe. God is at work in non-Jewish people lives.

^{48b} And all who were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:48-49, 52-NIV)

Strict Jews were happy that God was at work in the life of the heathen. As they went to church in regions outside of Jerusalem, many were becoming extremely uncomfortable.

Gentiles were fast outnumbering Jews in the church.

From childhood it had been drilled into the Jew that circumcision and keeping the law was what separated God's people from the heathen. From pagans. From prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners.

So, it was natural for them to think that these new Christ-Gentiles should start acting like Jews. You have a Jewish Messiah offering you forgiveness of sins and eternal life, through his atoning death, so don't forget the surgical activity of circumcision and then start cleaning up your pagan/heathen lifestyle by following the law. All 613 of them.

Could you imagine, the look on the **Gentiles face**, when his family attends the newcomer's class and finds a list of doctors who will do the circumcision for the males in the family. And here is some new curriculum, we call it the **Law of Moses** you need to start abiding by it.

You say that the recidivism rate was really high. Quite a lot of relapses back into heathenism after a few classes on circumcision and law 101. Need some celebrate recovery?

Paul and Barnabas' two-year missionary journey brought Gentiles into the church without requiring them to obey Jewish rules.

Paul and Barnabas 2-year missionary work has brought perhaps 1000's into the kingdom of God. In Turkey on one Sabbath the whole town was present to hear Paul and Barnabas speak.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. (Acts 13-NIV)

Pagans and heathens started new churches or started attending Jewish synagogues. At **no time** did Paul and Barnabas tell them they had to start obeying Jewish rules!

To many Hebrew Christians this was unacceptable. For generations they have kept the law, and now Gentiles can jump on the salvation band wagon, without Jewish past practices.

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Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, or Amazing circumcision how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

Ok, God has made his point, you actually get to choose grace or goodness. Law or love. Mercy or merit. Life or death. Moses or Jesus. Circumcision of the personal effects, or circumcision of the heart.

613 laws or as the ruling in Jerusalem council stated: Receive forgiveness of sins through Jesus' atoning death and then abstain from idols and immorality.

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In the end the half-brother of Jesus writes a letter that is passed on from the Hebrew Christians at Antioch, no longer insisting that the Gentiles must be circumcised and follow the law of Moses, to be saved.

In the letter the Gentiles are instructed to make it a priority to not engage in sexual immorality, throw out your idols and change your eating practices. The early church did a great deal of eating together.

Who got the better end of the deal?

Father,

Today I accept Jesus Christ's atoning death as salvation for the first time or a fresh time to cover my pile of sins. I walk in the newness of a life of grace that calls for me to flee sexual immorality, cast out my idols and honor my brothers and sisters in Christ as we eat together.

Today I lean into Christ's grace and accept Isaiah 64:6's description that all human efforts are as filthy rags.

The Holy Spirit wants to teach me to walk in the Spirit and become like Jesus. I welcome that commitment.

Thank you that I am free from the yoke of the law, and the circumcision of the body. I am Your child based on grace, not goodness. I am Your servant based on mercy, not grace.

In Jesus' Name, Amen!

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

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This news made all the believers very glad. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

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Those spreading this law-grace cancer were Hebrew Christians that were legalists, like Paul before he became converted to Christ. Look at your notes, verse 5.

⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

Many find it difficult to accept that salvation in Jesus Christ is offered by God as a free gift through repentance and faith.

Like cancer you cannot be casual about addressing these spiritual issues, sometimes radical surgery is required. You can live without a body part surgically removed to stop and remove cancer, but if it metastasizes, and moves into other parts of the body, there is a system wide failure.

Your life span is reduced drastically. Then patients hear from the medical community, you have 1-5 years left to live. Sad! Painful!

One of the reasons cancer is so deadly, is because the medical world knows little about **how it begins** and **why it spreads** as MD, Peter Matia tells us.

Not so with legalism that is attempting to steal your freedom in Christ. We know **how it begins** and **why it spreads**. The prescription for the disease of the cancer of legalism is spelled out in Acts 15. Paul wrote several of his most famous letters to churches infiltrated and inflicted, with the cancer of legalism-Galatians and Romans.

Cancer cells are different than normal cells in two different ways: Contrary to popular belief, cancer cells do not grow faster than noncancerous cells; they just don't stop growing when they are supposed to.

For some reason, still unknown to the medical world, these rogue cancer cells stop listening to the body's signals that tell them when to grow and when to stop growing.

When cancer cells move from a manageable local area of the body and travel to another part of the body where they should not be, this creates the potential for a **system wide disease failure**.

This is what happens when cancer metastases and moves from the lungs to the liver. From the kidney to the pancreases. From the breast to the bladder. The challenge of treating cancer is that it is not one single, simple, straight forward disease as Dr. Attia, reminds us. It is a medical condition with mind boggling complexity. (pg. 146-Outline)

Traditional chemotherapy occupies the fuzzy world of poison and patient medicine. Mustard gas used as a weapon during World War 1 was a direct precursor to the earliest chemotherapy practices. (pg. 148, Outlive)

Now, all these thoughts and facts are sobering. Startling. Even downright unfair. And that is exactly the reaction I was hoping to enlist in each of you. To disturb you. Maybe even make some mad. Why? Because legalism infiltrates all churches, all believers in Christ want you to enjoy the freedom he purchased on the cross.

As we study Acts 15, we see a **debate**, a **discussion** and even a **disagreement** that arises in the New Testament church about how you define **salvation** for the Gentile.

^{2a} This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. (Acts 15-NIV)

More importantly, how do you define salvation for all mankind since Jesus' atoning death is now available to all. (John 3:16)

To the Jews, circumcision and keeping the law were required for salvation.

What are the requirements for the Gentile/non-Jew to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Is it grace alone, through faith or is it grace, circumcision and works?

I am suggesting to you that the cancer of works, law and circumcision is moving through the body of this new church in ancient times, and maybe modern times, and it is on the verge of metastasizing. It is about 20 years since Pentecost, and the life of the church is about to suffer a premature death. Untimely death. Early death.

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: *“Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”* (Acts 15:1-NIV)

The difference between these two gospels was night and day. Freedom verses slavery. Many will think they are receiving God’s plan for salvation, but they end up swallowing the lie hook, line and sinker. This is the devils plan to enslave. These verses in Acts 15 introduce us to **How Do You Get Saved?**

*What is the difference between a lost person and a saved person?

*How do you have your sins forgiven?

*How does a person receive eternal life?

*How do you get to heaven?

This theological conflict identified in Acts 15, is still a problem today with many churches and Christians. So many Christians are trudging through life wearing cemented boots of law. Cemented boots of circumcision. Cemented boots of legalism.

Why? Because people have a hard time with a free gift of grace.

Many are haunted with the question, surely there must be something more I must do to gain God’s forgiveness. To gain God’s favor. Or if not to gain it, maybe to boost it.

Certainly, there is something I must do to gain God’s favor or boost my status with God.

What are you hoping for? God will love you more. God will protect your family. God will bless your finances. God will give you a spouse. God will give you good health. God will keep you out of jail.

You can’t earn those benefits; blessings you get free as a part of the package of grace. Just ask.

In the back of the mind of well-meaning Christians, is the haunting question, **should I be doing more**. Let's take a survey, now be honest, anybody besides me, ever haunted by this question. Anybody ever taunted by this? Anybody exhausted by this question?

Could I be doing more? Should I be doing more?

If I do more, will that unlock some kind of blessing, I have yet to experience? Is it possible for me to get more blessing and favor of God because I have earned it.

You have all of the love, blessing and favor that an All Loving and Holy God can give.

We have a difficulty with the free and finished work of Christ. And so did the first century church. Ok, time to look closely at the problem of the cancer of legalism attempting to infect those in the Antioch church. Now, the church in Jerusalem had already been infected.

A new group of Gentile-Pagan-Heathen believers, like wild horses were jumping the fence and now were galloping across the landscape of Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconian, Lystra and Derbe. God is at work in non-Jewish people lives.

^{48b} And all who were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:48-49, 52-NIV)

Strict Jews were happy that God was at work in the life of the heathen. As they went to church in regions outside of Jerusalem, many were becoming extremely uncomfortable.

Gentiles were fast outnumbering Jews in the church.

From childhood it had been drilled into the Jew that circumcision and keeping the law was what separated God's people from the heathen. From pagans. From prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners.

So, it was natural for them to think that these new Christ-Gentiles should start acting like Jews. You have a Jewish Messiah offering you forgiveness of sins and eternal life, through his atoning death, so don't forget the surgical activity of circumcision and then start cleaning up your pagan/heathen lifestyle by following the law. All 613 of them.

Could you imagine, the look on the **Gentiles face**, when his family attends the newcomer's class and finds a list of doctors who will do the circumcision for the males in the family. And here is some new curriculum, we call it the **Law of Moses** you need to start abiding by it.

You say that the recidivism rate was really high. Quite a lot of relapses back into heathenism after a few classes on circumcision and law 101. Need some celebrate recovery?

Paul and Barnabas' two-year missionary journey brought Gentiles into the church without requiring them to obey Jewish rules.

Paul and Barnabas 2-year missionary work has brought perhaps 1000's into the kingdom of God. In Turkey on one Sabbath the whole town was present to hear Paul and Barnabas speak.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. (Acts 13-NIV)

Pagans and heathens started new churches or started attending Jewish synagogues. At **no time** did Paul and Barnabas tell them they had to start obeying Jewish rules!

To many Hebrew Christians this was unacceptable. For generations they have kept the law, and now Gentiles can jump on the salvation band wagon, without Jewish past practices.

To watch the end of a movie and think you know the whole movie, those who know the movie will tell you, you don't know all that has come before your entry into the movie. You don't get credit for watching this movie unless you start from the beginning.

So Hebrew Christians were frustrated with new Gentile Christians who enjoyed all of the benefits of sins forgiven and eternal life without **doing the work....**

Two problems arose that many Hebrew Christian could not stomach. **One**, how can these new followers of Jesus be God's people if they don't obey the Law of Moses? **Next**, how can Hebrew Christians break bread with Gentiles unless they followed dietary laws and get circumcised.

So, some self-appointed apologists of the Jewish practice thought, if Paul and Barnabas wont deal with it, they'd have to.

The bags were packed. The GPS route was set. And off these Hebrew Christians trotted in the name of Jesus and Moses as keepers of the Law so they traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch.

They wasted no time once they arrived in setting these new Christians from pagan/heathen land straight. Paul and Barnabas get wind that Gentile believers in Antioch are being taught practices they clearly oppose.

Self-appointed legalists went to Antioch and told the church: "You are not good enough for God unless you are circumcised."

The self-appointed legalists who were associated with the Jerusalem church, were ignorant of the new freedoms that Christ provided. They were ignorant about how law and grace were connected. In their ignorance these well-meaning Hebrew Christians were doing damage to Jesus message by **mixing** law and grace. Let's read on.

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.

⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." ¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. (Acts 15-NIV)

What is at stake.? A gospel of grace found only in Jesus' atoning death. God pronounces his dissatisfaction with anyone who preaches the gospel of grace and law. When any preacher or teacher says, "unless you belong to this group, you cannot have eternal life!" or "unless you add these rules, ceremonies, practices, you cannot be saved."

Salvation is only by God's grace through faith, plus nothing!

What happens when you mix grace and law? (1) Your mind and heart become unsure of how salvation works. You doubt your salvation. (2) The peace you once enjoyed because shame and guilt were once removed, resurfaces.

When you mix grace and law it is like trying to put new wine into old wine skins. Jesus said this does not work.

³⁶ He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old."³⁷ And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸ No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. (Luke 5-NIV)

Jesus is telling us not to put the new salvation of Jesus grace and forgiveness, into old Moses wineskin of law. They were saying that it **is not enough to be forgiven by Jesus, now you must obey Moses.**

When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple that separated the sinner from the holy of Holy was torn. Supernaturally it came apart when Jesus died. This is the first miracle after Jesus' death. And it happened in the holiest of Jewish locations, the temple. Here is the verse.

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. (Matthew 27-NIV)

When Hebrew Christians required salvation in Christ and obedience to Moses, they were stitching up the torn veil. They were asking these new Christ followers to move out of the sunlight, and into the darkness. Nobody knew this better than a Hebrew Christian who miserably failed in keeping the law. It could not be done. It was not a plan of salvation, it was a way of making it clear, you are a wretched sinner.

¹⁵ We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles ^{16a} know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 2-NIV)

God made it easy for people to have salvation, the Hebrews Christians thought, lets stitch that curtain back up and make it hard or impossible to find access to God. Why is this so ludicrous?

Adding to Jesus salvation is like you coming along and trying to improve a Rembrandt or Van Gough Museum. You take out some color pencils and say, "I will fix that." "It is flawed. "

It is incomplete. I can do better. I know best. I am going to add to that masterpiece. Standing in front of a Rembrandt or Picasso, I am thinking he really wasn't on it that day. I can see the limitations or flaws, and I am going to fix the painting. It would be even more shocking for a child with crayons to think that.

That is what happens when you add Moses, Law and circumcision to Jesus' death and invitation to salvation and grace.

The gospel of grace has often been hindered by people who stand in front of open doors and turn many away. Keeping them from entering. What is at stake, teaching Gentiles how to be good Jews or teaching them how to be good Christ followers. The correct message of salvation is paramount to personal growth and evangelism. The gospel has been perverted for centuries. In fact, there are people here today, who are nice people, who think their standing before God is somehow **conditional**.

We only have to look no further then western and world religions to salvation by works. Salvation by works - Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Scientology, works-based Christianity, Seventh-Day Adventist, Catholicism, Pentecostalism that requires speaking in tongues for baptism and baptismal regeneration to name a few.

No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Islam declares that Jesus was not crucified, Christianity say he was. Both can't be right.

Judaism refuses the claim that Jesus was the Messiah. Christians place their eternal hope in Jesus our Messiah. Someone's not right.

Buddhists search for Nirvana after 547 reincarnations. Christians are living for life after life-eternal life.

Secularists, humanists, evolutionists, atheists and agnostics are adamant, there is no creator of life. Christians live with the confidence that God gave them life and placed them into his creation with a purpose for each life. One of the two are fools.

Every religion is a battering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Jesus salvation through grace, has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate.

All of these religions and every other says, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!" On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world.

God accepts the lost based on faith. Any additional work creates a roadblock to faith and fellowship.

What if the conflict over salvation by grace-Jesus or salvation by Law-Moses, what if law and circumcision won that day at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15? Our songs would be altogether different.

What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus or What can wash away my sin, nothing but the law of Moses. Which do you choose, Moses or Jesus.

Oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus it washes white as snow.

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So, the water and oil are both lost. So, it is so with law and grace. Both are destroyed.

Those spreading this law-grace cancer were Hebrew Christians that were legalists, like Paul before he became converted to Christ. Look at your notes, verse 5.

⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15-NIV)

Many find it difficult to accept that salvation in Jesus Christ is offered by God as a free gift through repentance and faith.

Like cancer you cannot be casual about addressing these spiritual issues, sometimes radical surgery is required. You can live without a body part surgically removed to stop and remove cancer, but if it metastasizes, and moves into other parts of the body, there is a system wide failure.

Your life span is reduced drastically. Then patients hear from the medical community, you have 1-5 years left to live. Sad! Painful!

One of the reasons cancer is so deadly, is because the medical world knows little about **how it begins** and **why it spreads** as MD, Peter Matia tells us.

Not so with legalism that is attempting to steal your freedom in Christ. We know **how it begins** and **why it spreads**. The prescription for the disease of the cancer of legalism is spelled out in Acts 15. Paul wrote several of his most famous letters to churches infiltrated and inflicted, with the cancer of legalism-Galatians and Romans.

Cancer cells are different than normal cells in two different ways: Contrary to popular belief, cancer cells do not grow faster than noncancerous cells; they just don't stop growing when they are supposed to.

For some reason, still unknown to the medical world, these rogue cancer cells stop listening to the body's signals that tell them when to grow and when to stop growing.

When cancer cells move from a manageable local area of the body and travel to another part of the body where they should not be, this creates the potential for a **system wide disease failure**.

This is what happens when cancer metastases and moves from the lungs to the liver. From the kidney to the pancreases. From the breast to the bladder. The challenge of treating cancer is that it is not one single, simple, straight forward disease as Dr. Attia, reminds us. It is a medical condition with mind boggling complexity. (pg. 146-Outline)

Traditional chemotherapy occupies the fuzzy world of poison and patient medicine. Mustard gas used as a weapon during World War 1 was a direct precursor to the earliest chemotherapy practices. (pg. 148, Outlive)

Now, all these thoughts and facts are sobering. Startling. Even downright unfair. And that is exactly the reaction I was hoping to enlist in each of you. To disturb you. Maybe even make some mad. Why? Because legalism infiltrates all churches, all believers in Christ want you to enjoy the freedom he purchased on the cross.

As we study Acts 15, we see a **debate**, a **discussion** and even a **disagreement** that arises in the New Testament church about how you define **salvation** for the Gentile.

^{2a} This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. (Acts 15-NIV)

More importantly, how do you define salvation for all mankind since Jesus' atoning death is now available to all. (John 3:16)

To the Jews, circumcision and keeping the law were required for salvation.

What are the requirements for the Gentile/non-Jew to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Is it grace alone, through faith or is it grace, circumcision and works?

I am suggesting to you that the cancer of works, law and circumcision is moving through the body of this new church in ancient times, and maybe modern times, and it is on the verge of metastasizing. It is about 20 years since Pentecost, and the life of the church is about to suffer a premature death. Untimely death. Early death.

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: *"Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."* (Acts 15:1-NIV)

The difference between these two gospels was night and day. Freedom verses slavery. Many will think they are receiving God's plan for salvation, but they end up swallowing the lie hook, line and sinker. This is the devil's plan to enslave. These verses in Acts 15 introduce us to **How Do You Get Saved?**

*What is the difference between a lost person and a saved person?

*How do you have your sins forgiven?

*How does a person receive eternal life?

*How do you get to heaven?

This theological conflict identified in Acts 15, is still a problem today with many churches and Christians. So many Christians are trudging through life wearing cemented boots of law. Cemented boots of circumcision. Cemented boots of legalism.

Why? Because people have a hard time with a free gift of grace.

Many are haunted with the question, surely there must be something more I must do to gain God's forgiveness. To gain God's favor. Or if not to gain it, maybe to boost it.

Certainly, there is something I must do to gain God's favor or boost my status with God.

What are you hoping for? God will love you more. God will protect your family. God will bless your finances. God will give you a spouse. God will give you good health. God will keep you out of jail.

You can't earn those benefits; blessings you get free as a part of the package of grace. Just ask.

In the back of the mind of well-meaning Christians, is the haunting question, **should I be doing more**. Let's take a survey, now be honest, anybody besides me, ever haunted by this question. Anybody ever taunted by this? Anybody exhausted by this question?

Could I be doing more? Should I be doing more?

If I do more, will that unlock some kind of blessing, I have yet to experience? Is it possible for me to get more blessing and favor of God because I have earned it.

You have all of the love, blessing and favor that an All Loving and Holy God can give.

We have a difficulty with the free and finished work of Christ. And so did the first century church. Ok, time to look closely at the problem of the cancer of legalism attempting to infect those in the Antioch church. Now, the church in Jerusalem had already been infected.

A new group of Gentile-Pagan-Heathen believers, like wild horses were jumping the fence and now were galloping across the landscape of Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconian, Lystra and Derbe. God is at work in non-Jewish people lives.

^{48b} And all who were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:48-49, 52-NIV)

Strict Jews were happy that God was at work in the life of the heathen. As they went to church in regions outside of Jerusalem, many were becoming extremely uncomfortable.

Gentiles were fast outnumbering Jews in the church.

From childhood it had been drilled into the Jew that circumcision and keeping the law was what separated God's people from the heathen. From pagans. From prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners.

So, it was natural for them to think that these new Christ-Gentiles should start acting like Jews. You have a Jewish Messiah offering you forgiveness of sins and eternal life, through his atoning death, so don't forget the surgical activity of circumcision and then start cleaning up your pagan/heathen lifestyle by following the law. All 613 of them.

Could you imagine, the look on the **Gentiles face**, when his family attends the newcomer's class and finds a list of doctors who will do the circumcision for the males in the family. And here is some new curriculum, we call it the **Law of Moses** you need to start abiding by it.

You say that the recidivism rate was really high. Quite a lot of relapses back into heathenism after a few classes on circumcision and law 101. Need some celebrate recovery?

Paul and Barnabas' two-year missionary journey brought Gentiles into the church without requiring them to obey Jewish rules.

Paul and Barnabas 2-year missionary work has brought perhaps 1000's into the kingdom of God. In Turkey on one Sabbath the whole town was present to hear Paul and Barnabas speak.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. (Acts 13-NIV)

Pagans and heathens started new churches or started attending Jewish synagogues. At **no time** did Paul and Barnabas tell them they had to start obeying Jewish rules!

To many Hebrew Christians this was unacceptable. For generations they have kept the law, and now Gentiles can jump on the salvation band wagon, without Jewish past practices.

To watch the end of a movie and think you know the whole movie, those who know the movie will tell you, you don't know all that has come before your entry into the movie. You don't get credit for watching this movie unless you start from the beginning.

So Hebrew Christians were frustrated with new Gentile Christians who enjoyed all of the benefits of sins forgiven and eternal life without **doing the work....**

Two problems arose that many Hebrew Christian could not stomach. **One**, how can these new followers of Jesus be God's people if they don't obey the Law of Moses? **Next**, how can Hebrew Christians break bread with Gentiles unless they followed dietary laws and get circumcised.

So, some self-appointed apologists of the Jewish practice thought, if Paul and Barnabas wont deal with it, they'd have to.

The bags were packed. The GPS route was set. And off these Hebrew Christians trotted in the name of Jesus and Moses as keepers of the Law so they traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch.

They wasted no time once they arrived in setting these new Christians from pagan/heathen land straight. Paul and Barnabas get wind that Gentile believers in Antioch are being taught practices they clearly oppose.

Self-appointed legalists went to Antioch and told the church: "You are not good enough for God unless you are circumcised."

The self-appointed legalists who were associated with the Jerusalem church, were ignorant of the new freedoms that Christ provided. They were ignorant about how law and grace were connected. In their ignorance these well-meaning Hebrew Christians were doing damage to Jesus message by **mixing** law and grace. Let's read on.

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.

⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." ¹² The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. (Acts 15-NIV)

What is at stake.? A gospel of grace found only in Jesus' atoning death. God pronounces his dissatisfaction with anyone who preaches the gospel of grace and law. When any preacher or teacher says, "unless you belong to this group, you cannot have eternal life!" or "unless you add these rules, ceremonies, practices, you cannot be saved."

Salvation is only by God's grace through faith, plus nothing!

What happens when you mix grace and law? (1) Your mind and heart become unsure of how salvation works. You doubt your salvation. (2) The peace you once enjoyed because shame and guilt were once removed, resurfaces.

When you mix grace and law it is like trying to put new wine into old wine skins. Jesus said this does not work.

³⁶ He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old."³⁷ And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸ No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. (Luke 5-NIV)

Jesus is telling us not to put the new salvation of Jesus grace and forgiveness, into old Moses wineskin of law. They were saying that it **is not enough to be forgiven by Jesus, now you must obey Moses.**

When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple that separated the sinner from the holy of Holy was torn. Supernaturally it came apart when Jesus died. This is the first miracle after Jesus' death. And it happened in the holiest of Jewish locations, the temple. Here is the verse.

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. (Matthew 27-NIV)

When Hebrew Christians required salvation in Christ and obedience to Moses, they were stitching up the torn veil. They were asking these new Christ followers to move out of the sunlight, and into the darkness. Nobody knew this better than a Hebrew Christian who miserably failed in keeping the law. It could not be done. It was not a plan of salvation, it was a way of making it clear, you are a wretched sinner.

¹⁵ We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles ^{16a} know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 2-NIV)

God made it easy for people to have salvation, the Hebrews Christians thought, lets stitch that curtain back up and make it hard or impossible to find access to God. Why is this so ludicrous?

Adding to Jesus salvation is like you coming along and trying to improve a Rembrandt or Van Gough Museum. You take out some color pencils and say, "I will fix that." "It is flawed. "

It is incomplete. I can do better. I know best. I am going to add to that masterpiece. Standing in front of a Rembrandt or Picasso, I am thinking he really wasn't on it that day. I can see the limitations or flaws, and I am going to fix the painting. It would be even more shocking for a child with crayons to think that.

That is what happens when you add Moses, Law and circumcision to Jesus' death and invitation to salvation and grace.

The gospel of grace has often been hindered by people who stand in front of open doors and turn many away. Keeping them from entering. What is at stake, teaching Gentiles how to be good Jews or teaching them how to be good Christ followers. The correct message of salvation is paramount to personal growth and evangelism. The gospel has been perverted for centuries. In fact, there are people here today, who are nice people, who think their standing before God is somehow **conditional**.

We only have to look no further then western and world religions to salvation by works. Salvation by works - Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Scientology, works-based Christianity, Seventh-Day Adventist, Catholicism, Pentecostalism that requires speaking in tongues for baptism and baptismal regeneration to name a few.

No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Islam declares that Jesus was not crucified, Christianity say he was. Both can't be right.

Judaism refuses the claim that Jesus was the Messiah. Christians place their eternal hope in Jesus our Messiah. Someone's not right.

Buddhists search for Nirvana after 547 reincarnations. Christians are living for life after life-eternal life.

Secularists, humanists, evolutionists, atheists and agnostics are adamant, there is no creator of life. Christians live with the confidence that God gave them life and placed them into his creation with a purpose for each life. One of the two are fools.

Every religion is a battering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Jesus salvation through grace, has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate.

All of these religions and every other says, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!" On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world.

God accepts the lost based on faith. Any additional work creates a roadblock to faith and fellowship.

What if the conflict over salvation by grace-Jesus or salvation by Law-Moses, what if law and circumcision won that day at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15? Our songs would be altogether different.

What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus or What can wash away my sin, nothing but the law of Moses. Which do you choose, Moses or Jesus.

Oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus, oh, the blood of Jesus it washes white as snow.

O the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, o, the dietary laws of Sinai, it washes white as snow.

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the blood of the lamb,

There is power, power, wonder working power, in the 613 laws of Moses.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, or Amazing circumcision how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

Ok, God has made his point, you actually get to choose grace or goodness. Law or love. Mercy or merit. Life or death. Moses or Jesus. Circumcision of the personal effects, or circumcision of the heart.

613 laws or as the ruling in Jerusalem council stated: Receive forgiveness of sins through Jesus' atoning death and then abstain from idols and immorality.

²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. (Acts 15-NIV)

In the end the half-brother of Jesus writes a letter that is passed on from the Hebrew Christians at Antioch, no longer insisting that the Gentiles must be circumcised and follow the law of Moses, to be saved.

In the letter the Gentiles are instructed to make it a priority to not engage in sexual immorality, throw out your idols and change your eating practices. The early church did a great deal of eating together.

Who got the better end of the deal?

Father,

Today I accept Jesus Christ's atoning death as salvation for the first time or a fresh time to cover my pile of sins. I walk in the newness of a life of grace that calls for me to flee sexual immorality, cast out my idols and honor my brothers and sisters in Christ as we eat together.

Today I lean into Christ's grace and accept Isaiah 64:6's description that all human efforts are as filthy rags.

The Holy Spirit wants to teach me to walk in the Spirit and become like Jesus. I welcome that commitment.

Thank you that I am free from the yoke of the law, and the circumcision of the body. I am Your child based on grace, not goodness. I am Your servant based on mercy, not grace.

In Jesus' Name, Amen!