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Acts 15 versus 18 through 35. These are the words of God. So let us take heed how we hear them known to God from eternity are all his works. Therefore, I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, But that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, From sexual immorality, from things strangled.

And from blood, For Moses, has had throughout many generations, those who preach him in every city being read in the synagogues every Sabbath. Then it pleased, the apostles and elders with the whole church to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas namely Judas.

Who was also named Barsabas and Silas leading men among the brethren. They wrote this letter by them, the apostles, the elders, and the brethren to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Silicia. Greetings Since we have heard that some who went out from us, have troubled, you with words, unsettling your souls saying you must be circumcised and keep the law to whom we gave no such commandment.

It seemed good to us being assembled with one accord to send, chosen men to you. With our beloved Barnabas and Paul men who have risked their lives. For the name of the Our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas who will also report the same things by word of mouth.

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you. No, greater burden than these necessary. Things that you abstain from things offered to idols from blood from things strangled and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch.

And when they had gathered the multitudes together, they delivered the letter when they had read it. They rejoiced over its encouragement. Now, Judas and Silas themselves being prophets. Also exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words, and after they had stayed there for a time, They were sent back with.

Greetings from brethren from the brethren to the apostles. However it seemed good to Silas to remain there Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others. Also Amend the sends this reading of Gods, inspired and inerrant word. We rejoice to worship Him in the preaching and hearing of it.

Preached for He blesses, especially to his glory and our good, the preaching of His Word, please be seated.

Now, one would like to think that after this decision by the Senate or the Council, or the assembly in Jerusalem in Acts chapter 15 that this problem of the need for believers and Gentile, believers specifically to be circumcised and and keep the ceremonial law this wrong teaching. This incorrect teaching that it never reared.

It's ugly head again. One would like to think that that is what happened, but one would be wrong because much ink is spilled in the New Testament, letters that are written after this

Council, still addressing some of the same difficulties. And yet, one of the main takeaways of the passage before us is that there was peace in the church, which is to say that the Holy Spirit had given The answer from the Word of God, and the counsel had recognized that answer and there were a church of a congregation or maybe get number of congregations in Jerusalem that not only received but acted upon, and lived out.

The doctrine that had that had been settled upon from the Bible and a congregation or probably multiple congregations in Antioch, which has become the great sending Center As we'll continue to see in the second half. Excuse me, second half of the book of Acts, The great sending Center of the faith into all the world and the Lord helping us The rest of our hearing of this passage preached.

We will see the great fellowship that exists in the churches through the spirits. Resolving this question here. You see, when you pledge, as you do, when you take your vows to be a member and never require and membership. Vows anything that the scripture doesn't already require of you. When you pledge to pursue the peace, a purity and prosperity of the church.

You're not pledging things that are in contention with each other. The peace and purity of the church are not at odds with one another. The purity of the church is the only way to have peace because peace is first of all with God. Peace is first of all, in Christ and theological.

Peace is gained not by glossing over differences but by pursuing truth from the scripture so that we come to have the same mind as first Corinthians 1. I think it's around verse 10 says thinking the same things speaking, the same things coming to the same. Judgments God does not pursue peace by diversity.

He pursues peace by unanimity in his church. And so This is the opposite. Then of the profits during the exile and leading up to the exile who were saying, peace peace. But there was no peace because they were not at peace with God and their doctrine and in their life.

And so however well they all agreed to tolerate one another's wickedness and error together. That toleration and agreement did not constitute. Peace. Here is how you have peace by the Spirits leading, his church in the way that Christ has sent His Spirit to lead in the church. And so we'll see that peace being produced through this decision to which the spirit has brought the council And we're going to go back and pick up some of what was originally in last week's portion versus we had aimed or planned to do versus 18 through 22 last week.

We didn't get to cover those and we'll see in the first place, the content of the decision through which the Spirit brought this piece and then in the second place, we'll see. The way that this decision was communicated by letter and by men in person the way the decision was communicated as the Spirit brought this peace.

And then the carrying out or the follow-up, the consistency and the progress in the life of these two centers, two congregations or two groups of congregations. In these two cities, which we for organizational purposes have called the carrying out of this decision by which the Holy Spirit brought this piece First.

Then the content of the decision by which the Holy Spirit brought this peach and this piece. And what we find is that the spirit gave them a decision. That was based upon covenant, theology and implemented in counter-cultural. Living That first. They are united in their agreement with God, who has determined something in himself from before the world began, seeing the covenant of grace as and the administrations of it in time, as an outworking of what sometimes is called the Covenant of redemption, or the pactam salutes, the agreement of peace within the godhead from before the world began.

So peace in the church. Coming through a theology that is united in God himself and the expression of what God has intended and what God has now doing and then encounter culturalism a peace in the church. That comes from living according to God's law in especially and precisely. Those ways that distinguish the church from those round them, The content of the decision.

Then in covenant, theology and counter culturalism Notice in verse 28. This is all the work of the Holy Spirit for. It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us and so forth. There is still this awareness that it is God the Holy Spirit by whom the Lord Jesus is continuing to do and to teach in His church on earth.

We have many times noted that but because it takes us weeks and months and probably two years to hear the book of Acts preached. We can easily forget that at the beginning of the book of Acts, the Luke is. He's carried along by the Holy Spirit identifies that as volume.

Two of what, in volume one, Jesus began to do and to teach. And now in volume two Jesus's continuing to do and to teach by His Holy Spirit. And so the apostles and elders of the Council are acknowledging this, even in their letter for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit etc.

And if we pick up in verse 18, where we began reading and we aim to begin hearing preached this morning we're towards the end. Now of James's speech. Having summarized what Peter had said. And probably summarized more than that. These may or may not be but probably are condensed notes of what what James said.

Having summarized what Peter said having quoted from the book of Amos to show that Peter's testimony, and Paul and Barnabas's testimony. We're all consistent with what God had said in his word and so apostles who are having immediate experiences of God the Holy Spirit and visions and working signs.

And telling of the signs that God has done to attest to their own ministry, still submitting themselves to the written Word of God, still checking the testimony of these apostles, by the written Scriptures by the hand of Amos. In this case, having done that James. Now, draws a theological conclusion known to God from eternity.

Are all his works And so God who has revealed Himself? As Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whom the apostles and elders are going to credit for the decision to which they view themselves, not as having achieved. But having submitted to for it, seemed good to the Holy Spirit. And to us, James recognizes that this is something that has been decided and determined in and among the godhead from before time, began known to God from eternity, are all his works.

And so Father, Son and Holy Spirit have these decided determined before time that they are going that that he and they God is one and three that God is going to redeem in the sun and apply that redemption by the spirit a multitude from all the nations unto himself.

And so when he says therefore, I judged that, we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God. He's recognizing the covenant of redemption. He's recognizing that the covenant of grace with sinners. In Jesus Christ comes from that eternal agreement. That is within God that eternal decision that is within God and he brings now, you know, that language, that that Peter used to describe what had happened in Cornelius's house and saying, I couldn't withstand God.

God is the one who was saving. These Gentiles. God is the one who brought them to faith. And as we heard last week had purified marked off their hearts as holy by faith. God was the one

who had poured out his spirit. I would not withstand God and And the same same idea here that if they take something that God is doing and they try to add an obstacle, they are opposing, they would be opposing.

God here, Gentile believers is God's plan. A, he was the one who decided that this was how he was going to save. He was going to create man was going to fall by his own, wicked decision, his own sin. There is there are two free wills operative at once.

You know just as we were thinking in the other room you intended it for evil. God intended it for good But God intended it for good. Even the fall. He intended for good known to God. From all eternity are all his works. God was the one who was bringing about the redemption of the nations.

Even with the first proclamation of the gospel as he pronounced the judgment upon the serpent and bringing it about in the flood and the sparing of Noah and the reestablishing and progress of his relationship with sinners whom, he's redeeming by the blood of Christ. And the Covenant in the administration of the Covenant of grace, under Noah and under Abraham, and under Moses and during the and under David and during the exile.

And now Now God is the one who is turning these Gentiles to himself. Don't forget that language from just a chapter or so ago or not even that far ago as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. Therefore Since God is the one who is doing this. He says, since God is working out his and salvation and therefore since everything that God has written in the Scriptures governs.

What we do. Therefore, I judge that. We should not trouble those from among the Gentiles. From among the nations who are turning to God But that we write to them. And now he says He gives four things, and it's really three, the things strangled and blood belong together. But that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, From sexual immorality, from things strangled.

And from blood, God's moral law does not change. And so, The first two are fairly obvious from things polluted by idols. Now, I think we'll will catch that later when we talk about that application but it's second commandment, not only are you and first commandment, not only are you to have no other gods at all, but you're only to worship God in the way that he has said.

And the idol worship was not idolatrous worship of the one true God. It never actually is, That's the problem with man-made worship, But that's required by God's moral law. And as we saw, when we were going through the Ten Commandments, if you stayed at positively, worshiping God alone, and only in the way that he says, these are things that were moral obligations before the fall.

They're stated negatively after the fall because there's sin now. And so, of course, they must not worship idols. Of course, they must keep themselves from sexual immorality And so he shows them or reminds them that the moral law is always binding and always distinguishing. Not just not just that the moral laws binding You could have named all Ten Commandments here, couldn't he?

But he picks two of the things that are going to forge this unity among all the church. While drawing a driving a wedge between the church and the world. You see these Jewish believers had had come down or claimed believers. These Jewish men had come down from the church in Jerusalem to Antioch and the temptation or rather than perhaps the desire was was not to offend the Jewish brothers who are coming down and saying, you need to be circumcised, you

need to keep the ceremonial law, according to Moses, and to aim, their obedience, to God, and their service to God at trying to win over their brethren, into accommodate them.

And yet as the Spirit has shown, as we considered last week, these brothers were requiring things that God did not require that the ceremonial law that applied to Moses and applied to the Levitical. Priesthood has been set aside because there's a new priesthood, the priesthood of Christ. And, and there is now therefore, a new law, new regulations, and approaching God through the priesthood of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

However, where they really needed to focus their energy in, in their obedience to God? And in their holiness was in that place where they're tempted to want to fit in with their culture, they are Gentile believers in Gentile cities and being able to participate in the social gatherings. And the meals that surround the temple worship is an important part of social and civic life.

The instruction that is coming now from the council picks. The particular place in the moral law, or the particular places in the moral law, that are going to make them appear. Most distinct from their society. This is not what in the second half of the 20th century and came to be not from the mindset of seeker sensitivity.

This is Christ's sensitivity. This is, this is recognizing a believer's ability to rationalize to himself. Well, I'm not actually going to go into the temple and I'm not actually going to participate in the worship of the temple. I'm just gonna join the barbecue afterward. I'm just gonna sit down and have rub out elbows with my neighbors, and enjoy the meat.

And I know that an idol is nothing like the Corinthians later are gonna rationalize to themselves. And Paul will say, idols are nothing but demons exist. And demons are the ones who are accepting the worship that takes place and in idle temples and you can't share of the table of the Lord.

And of the table of demons, he picks the thing that's going to make your neighbors. Look at you sideways, he picks the thing. That's that's gonna lead to other people calling you anti-social Because of your new religion and devotion to this, this Jewish Jesus whom, you are calling Christ, who was executed, but now you claim as alive.

And now, you become antisocial, you don't come to temple anymore, and you won't even participate in the meals anymore. And you've gotten weird, You're devoted to your wife, you don't hire the prostitutes at the temple. You don't you're not open and loose with what you call love, but is really just the indulgence of the flesh.

Now you live in a society dear congregation in which the indulgence of the flesh and the rejection of the image of God in man. And considering marriage to be dishonorable and the marriage bed to be. The one thing that ought to be defiled above all other things, You live in a society where that is quickly becoming the test of membership in your culture, willingness to participate, willingness to approve.

Willingness to celebrate. You're not the first Christians to live in such a culture, you know, actually would have been in some ways easier to get circumcised, get yourself a copy of the Jewish calendar. You know, figure out the, you know, the 13 step list to the keeping of this feast and the, you know, 29 step list to the keeping of that feast and it would have been less costly in terms of what, what your neighbors thought of you?

What your boss thought of you, the jobs that you are able to get the education which you don't want them, educating your children. Anyway, but that was a big deal, in Rome, the

schoolmaster that you could get for your child to study under It was costly much more costly to obey the second commandment and the seventh commandment than it would have been for them to take up the Jewish, ceremonial law.

And yet, it's something that a good Jew would be an agreement with you on. So, he drives a wedge, The Council. I should the Holy Spirit drives. A wedge between the Gentiles and their culture. As part as part of how he is uniting the church in good theology, and good application of that theology to life and not only the moral law, but also the Noue at Covenant where from where does this from things strangled?

And from blood come from Well many people because the the occasion for the the Jerusalem Council Jerusalem, Synod was this difficulty that came between Jewish background believers and Hellenistic and Gentile ethnic believers They say oh we know where those things come from. Those things come from the holiness code, That's Leviticus stuff.

That's also ceremonial lost stuff, But this is a decision that is made in the context of saying that the ceremonial law knows. This has been set aside. This is a decision that comes in the context, not of saying will throw them a couple of ceremonial bones to keep them happy.

In fact, the way he says it in verse 28, is it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you? No, greater burden than these necessary things. So those who know their Bibles say Actually The command not to eat the meat with the blood didn't start with Moses.

It didn't start at Sinai. It started with the giving of meat for food when Noah and his sons, get off the ark And it's a reminder that the covenant of grace doesn't start even with Abraham that the covenant of grace started in at the fall. It started in Genesis 3 and at one time the visible church the expression on earth of the Covenant of grace was paired all the way back to one family and every one of you here in this room is under that administration or from at least that administration of the covenant of grace, It was made with Noah and with his descendants.

Now it's fun for some of you some of us to do ancestry.com sorts of things and trace family lines. And, you know, turn, you know, figure out your family tree, until you've got multiple volumes of it and so forth. Most of you can't trace to Pharaohs. I'm sorry for you but we can all trace to Noah.

We can all trace to Noah and even Noah, you know, reformed people like to quote from chapter 6, every intention of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil. And that continually absolutely true. Total depravity. Praise God. But, you know, in chapter 8, as Noah's coming off the boat, He says, a similar thing about humanity at that time, Whose humanity at that time, Noah has three sons and their wives.

He says the intentions of man's heart are evil from his youth.

It is because of the that sinful a tendency to look for power to look for life to look for goodness to look for provision to look for protection in the created things rather than in the Creator. Who provides those things to look for purpose to look for pleasure in the created things rather than the creator?

That's what's behind God giving meat but saying but don't eat it with the blood in it. Why? Because as we see in so much of ancient Near Eastern religion, they thought that they could somehow get the life force of the animal from its blood. And the Lord says that don't eat to meet with the blood in it for its life is in its blood.

Now he's not saying you can actually get the life force of the animal from the blood of the animal. He's saying he has given the animal, it's life. He is given the animal. It's blood. And if you think that you are going to get life from its blood in that way, then you are tempted to to start viewing.

All of these creatures, as all of these little sub deities, each of which you can get some power from Then, especially if you instead of slaughtering it by, by cutting its neck and killing it in a way that is designed to drain blood. You a first struggle with it to strangle it.

So you have this kind of yeah power competition. You know, overcoming it and then because of the way that you killed it. It has not drained of its blood and you eat it. It's the age old thing that you see even today in evolutionism and anything else in which you view matter as kind of self-determining self-improving.

And you place the origin or the power, or the purpose or the usefulness of the thing in the thing itself, rather than in the one who created it. So that not only do you rob God of glory, but then you turn yourself into a competing deity. Who can get power from it and you say, well that's for ancient Near Eastern pagans.

Well, Paganism is back. You know, there are people who takes stretching exercises and then stretching's fine. Nothing wrong with that the attach animal names to them. Okay, kind of weird but it's okay for your, you know, four-year-old to make shadow figures on the wall. And look, it's a swan.

And, you know, and to like, crane themselves and say, look, I must one, But then they attach what they call the the spirit or the nature of everything. And you can get like dog deaths from a dog pose and you can get hippopotamus-ness. They're probably is no hippo pose and nobody wants to be a hippo, But you get hippopotamusiness from a hippo pose and you can get craneness from a grain pose and you can get mosquito nest from a mosquito poser.

And it's not like children's television things. It's actual grown adults, who deny the Creator and they're looking for in the creature. For some kind of essence, some kind of power, some kind of spiritual advantage. That's what you watch out for. As believers anything, the participates in the mind that gets power or knowledge or ability or protection or pleasure or purpose from the created thing rather than from the Creator who alone is blessed forever.

Amen. And that was something that the Lord gave Noah because Noah was still sinful and it was a provision in the Noahic covenant, to prevent him from looking to the creature rather than the Creator because the heart of man is still sinful. That's what's going on here. In, in this a content of the decision.

First of all to reminding them that they're all under the covenant of Noah. You can't trace your family line back to Jacob. Okay, you know, well maybe you could trace it back to Abraham, you know, the Muslims screw up the whole Bible but they're really excited that they say they trace themselves back to back to Ishmi also that they can, they can claim Abraham, they even make Ishmael be the one who is almost offered on Mount Moriah and all that, all that rubbish.

But if you're a believer and you're not from Abraham and you start to read and understand Genesis beginning in Genesis 1:1 and known to God from eternity or all his works. And the covenant of of redemption within the Godhead is being worked out in the covenant of grace, you're tracing the covenant of grace.

You say Noah, you know, just not advocating children's church or anything like that but you're singing, you know, father Noah had many sons, many sons had father. Noah, I am one of them

and so are you. So, let's just praise the Lord, and invent hand motions, that exhaust the children, so that the parents are grateful that they're in a near coma.

By the time you hand them back over to the parents. But Father Noah Why? Because Jesus is the root of the tree of the Covenant of grace. Israel is not the root look at Romans 11 again sometime if you think that Israel is the tree or Israel is the root and that Gentiles are grafted into an Israel tree.

They're not Israel are native branches. Christ is the root Christ is the tree. The one covenant of grace throughout the ages is taught throughout Scripture. It was not invented by reformed and Presbyterians in the 16th century and the 17th century. It was invented in the mind of God, from all eternity.

It was taught in the scriptures since God began. Talking to man about the salvation that he has planned for us and it has been discovered and captured and it was the way that the spirit theologically brought the church into unity. And I was going to say Genesis and acts chapter 15.

Last part here. And I think we'll probably just finish on the content of the decision. And ask God to help us and you help yourself too. If it's gonna be two weeks until you hear the rest of the sermon, take some time, every couple of days review, the passage start conversations with your children about these things.

God planned to save us from before the world began, Everything that happens, as part of that plan, Everything he tells us in the Bible teaches us. Something of how to think about Jesus and how to respond to Him and how to trust in him. But notice the end of verse 21 or sorry.

The whole of verse 21 for Moses had throughout many generations. Those has had throughout many generations. Those who preach him in every city being read in the synagogues every Sabbath. You say, What does what does that have to? Are they saying, well, you know, the preaching of the Torah in the synagogues is good enough for Moses.

Yeah, Moses doesn't need you to No, the covenant of grace and especially that administration under Moses was honored enough by God that in, in many generations by the time Acts 15 comes about in many generations. By the time Christ comes about Moses, has been preached in the synagogues, two things that that does One.

It has prepared for the coming of the Christ who has proclaimed in the teaching of Moses. Moses didn't exist to serve Moses. He existed to serve Jesus And second if the administration of the covenant of grace that was under Moses was so honored by God as to be taught and known in all of the cities, It's in God's providence, right?

Known to God, from all from eternity or all his works. That's how the statement begins. And the statement ends in verse 21. If, in God's Providence, he decided that there would be a Roman Empire, and he decided there would be safe travel and he decided there would be easier travel with, with these roads.

And, and the quelling of piracy on the Mediterranean and the use of a common language and and all of those things and he decided that he was going to spread the Jews out into these synagogues and that, although, with little spiritual effect in their hearts and God have mercy and and bring many, and a multitude, and the majority to faith in Jesus Christ, With little spiritual effect in their hearts yet with great rigor and consistency and discipline and devotion.



The word of God by the pen of Moses was preserved and read and proclaimed in almost every and almost every major city in the Roman Empire said, God honored the administration under Moses so much that he made, Moses known, How much more that's the argument here. How much more do you think God wants to honor the administration of the covenant of grace that is under Christ by making Christ known that these disciples not of Moses?

But if Jesus are so devoted to him that they are willing to become cultural outcasts that these, that these followers of Jesus are so devoted to him that when everyone else wants to celebrate perversion, they want to celebrate their marriages and keep the marriage bed. Pure that these followers of Jesus are so devoted to him, that they actually think that the whole history of creation and the whole history of the world has been all about bringing people to faith in Jesus Christ that they believe that this Noah guy really is the father of us.

All and that God has not just a Creator claim, but a covenantal claim on every single person in this world In the covenant of grace,

If the covenant of grace under Moses was so honored by God that the Lord had him read in the synagogues every Sabbath How much more how much more the fact that God has a church on earth that has led by a resurrected ascended enthroned Savior. It is time for us to know God as our purpose and God as our pleasure to view the purpose of the creation.

Not just the age of the earth and how God did it, but the purpose of the creation as the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ.

It's time for the church to wake up and stop living for pleasure and entertainment. So we can be rejoicing in the God who has saved us in his Son and make him known in the difference that he makes in our lives. And it's not a difference. That is made in a ceremonial code as long as a as long as your arm.

It's a difference that has made in theology, that has worked out in the life every day because the spirit who planned those things in the godhead is the same spirit who wrote about those things in the Bible. And as we'll hear about Lord dwelling, a couple weeks time as a spirit, who is working out these things.

And the people who believe in Jesus, in Jerusalem and an Antioch and by God's grace and mercy, Middle Tennessee, Let's play.

Our Father in heaven, we feel the weakness of our flesh. And we thank you for reminding us from your word. That Christ is our righteousness. That Christ is our life and that your spirit as he helps us in the preaching and the hearing of your word week by week is bringing centers to faith in Christ and growing believers in conformity to Christ.

We ask for both of those things. Now that any here who have not known Christ as their God and Savior would trust in him who made them and who gave himself for sinners that they might be saved. And we pray that for those of us whom you have already brought to faith in Christ that you would grow us in our trusting, in Him, our devotion to him, and that you would do.

So in such a way that gives us the privilege of displaying Him in our city, in our generation for, we ask it in his name, Amen.