

The Church of the Holy Apostles;  
A Bible Study on the Book of Acts  
Based upon the Homilies of St John Chrysostom (SJC)  
Study Guide – October 7, 2015, Acts 15.1-11 Homily 32

**Prayer before reading of the Holy Scriptures:** Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having conquered sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things which are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the light of our souls and bodies, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all holy, good and life giving Spirit, always now and forever and to the ages of ages.

**Chapter 15 v. 1-2** *And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.*

It is likely they spoke to all people about God moving the Jews to jealousy  
Trials are a constant in the Church – external AND internal  
No Gentile believers in the Jerusalem at the time

**Chapter 15 v. 3-5** *So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."*

IF the complaint had not been made, the Samaritans would not have heard about the success of the Gospel to the  
Gentiles = God's Providence  
All who understood the limitations of the law rejoiced

**Chapter 15 v. 6-11** *Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. "So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, "and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."*

Peter initially stood back and let's dialogue take place. May he is worried he lost credibility when he reach out also to the Gentiles. Maybe he isn't objective?

On all occasions Peter invokes the Word of God, not his own.

v. 9 "Made no distinction between them and us..." Peter does not yet say everyone to avoid the Jews tuning him out. SJC "For to show that this is the meaning, observe what he adds, 'Put no difference between us and them.' When he has mentioned the testimony borne to them, then he utters that great word, the same which Paul speaks, 'Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision.'"

v. 9 "from faith..." SJC "From faith alone, he says, they obtained the same gifts. This is also meant as a lesson to those (objectors); this is able to teach even them that faith only is needed, not works nor circumcision. For indeed they do not say all this only by way of apology for the Gentiles, but to teach (the Jewish believers) also to abandon the Law. However, at present this is not said."

Peter is teaching against the Law, not against the people

Pattern – the enemy helps the Gospel spread SJC "See on all occasions how the designs of their foes are made to work with them. If those had not stirred the question, these things would not have been spoken."

GOD chose the Gentiles

Evidence based upon their own witness, not the prophets

The Jews are in danger. If the Law couldn't save them, and how they disregarded faith, they are doomed.

Arguments are limited to the facts, not argument.

**Teaching on "Spiritual Growth"** – (see Homily 32, p 203-204)

1. Gentleness is ALWAYS a great good
2. Never stop trying to change/repent
3. Don't waste time
4. Even when you make progress, don't ease up.
5. Arrogance stops growth

**Life Application Challenge** – (Homily 32, p 205) Restore Human Nature!

“In a word, it is virtue which makes angels: but this is in our power: therefore we are able to make angels, though not in nature, certainly in will. For indeed if virtue be absent, it is no advantage to be an angel by nature; and the Devil is a proof of this, who was an angel once: but if virtue be present, it is no loss to be a man by nature; and John is a proof of this, who was a man, and Elias who went up into heaven, and all those who are about to depart there. For these indeed, though with bodies, were not prevented from dwelling in heaven: while those others, though without bodies, could not remain in heaven.”