

ACTS: To the Ends of the Earth

Study 33: Elevating Love over Liberty

READ Acts 15:12-35 and **LISTEN** to the [sermon](#) by Pastor Craig.

To protect the doctrinal foundation and unity of the church the apostles and elders wisely affirmed the essentials of the gospel while calling for Gentile believers to comply only with some fundamental regulations that the law stipulated. By the Gentile believers elevating their love for their Jewish brothers over their liberties in the gospel, the unity of the church was protected.

Big idea: We elevate love over unity when we concede our liberties to avoid offending others, but never at the expense of the gospel.

Questions:

1. From vv. 13-17 in what way did James affirm Peter's belief that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone?
2. Why is it important to not compromise on the essential truths of Scripture for the sake of unity? What might be some of those essential truths?
3. What was James' judgement on requiring Gentiles to "become Jews" and follow Jewish Law to be saved (vv. 19, 24) and what four prohibitions did James request of the Gentiles to abide by (vv. 20, 29)?
4. There are various views as to why these prohibitions were chosen. The most accepted view is that these things were still being practiced by Gentile believers and were very offensive to Jewish believers. Therefore, for the sake of unity, James calls the Gentiles to love their Jewish neighbours over their liberties.

A. How can using your Christian liberties in the body of Christ cause harm to other believers? See 1 Cor 8:8-12.

B. What might it look like to have certain liberties and yet not use them for the sake of guarding, serving or loving others? See 1 Cor 8:13, Gal 5:13-15, Rom 15:1-3.

5. What are some examples of offensive things that Christians can do that could lead weaker believers into sin?
6. What are some culturally acceptable practices that the Bible says are always wrong, but where Christians are in danger of imitating the world?
7. What are questions we might ask ourselves to give pause and consider if we're more concerned about serving and loving others or exercising our rights and freedoms?
8. The church received the letter with joy and, most importantly, continued to be strengthened in the Word (vv. 30-35). Why was this so important?

STOP AND PRAY:

Praise: *the Lord for His steadfast love and favour toward all His covenant people*

Thank: *God for the liberties that you now have in Christ as a child of God*

Pray: *that you would prioritize the love of others over the exercise of your liberties*