

Sermon Notes

April 29, 2018

“Don't Make It Difficult”

Acts 15:1-21

Pastor Bill Hoffman

Acts 15 highlights a key issue for the early church: how to include non-Jews who were responding positively to the good news of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. Think about parallels with our issue of how to incorporate into our church people with little or no recent church background.

Some argued that non-Jews coming to faith needed to be circumcised and keep the whole law of Moses (verses 1, 5). What would be a strong argument for their position?

- On what basis do Paul and Barnabas and Peter disagree with the above position?

What further reasoning does James give?

The council does lay out minimal standards from the law of Moses that non-Jews are also to keep (verse 20); and the non-Jewish followers of Jesus in Antioch receive this well (verse 31). The reasoning seems to be that while not essential for salvation (see verse 11), these standards are important a) to not offend the sensibilities of Jews and b) to maintain a distinctively Christian lifestyle in a pagan world.

- Understanding that salvation is not about behavior, what might be 3-4 minimal behavioral standards which would be helpful for harmony in the church and modeling a distinctively Christian lifestyle?