

THE  
Corrupted  
GOSPEL

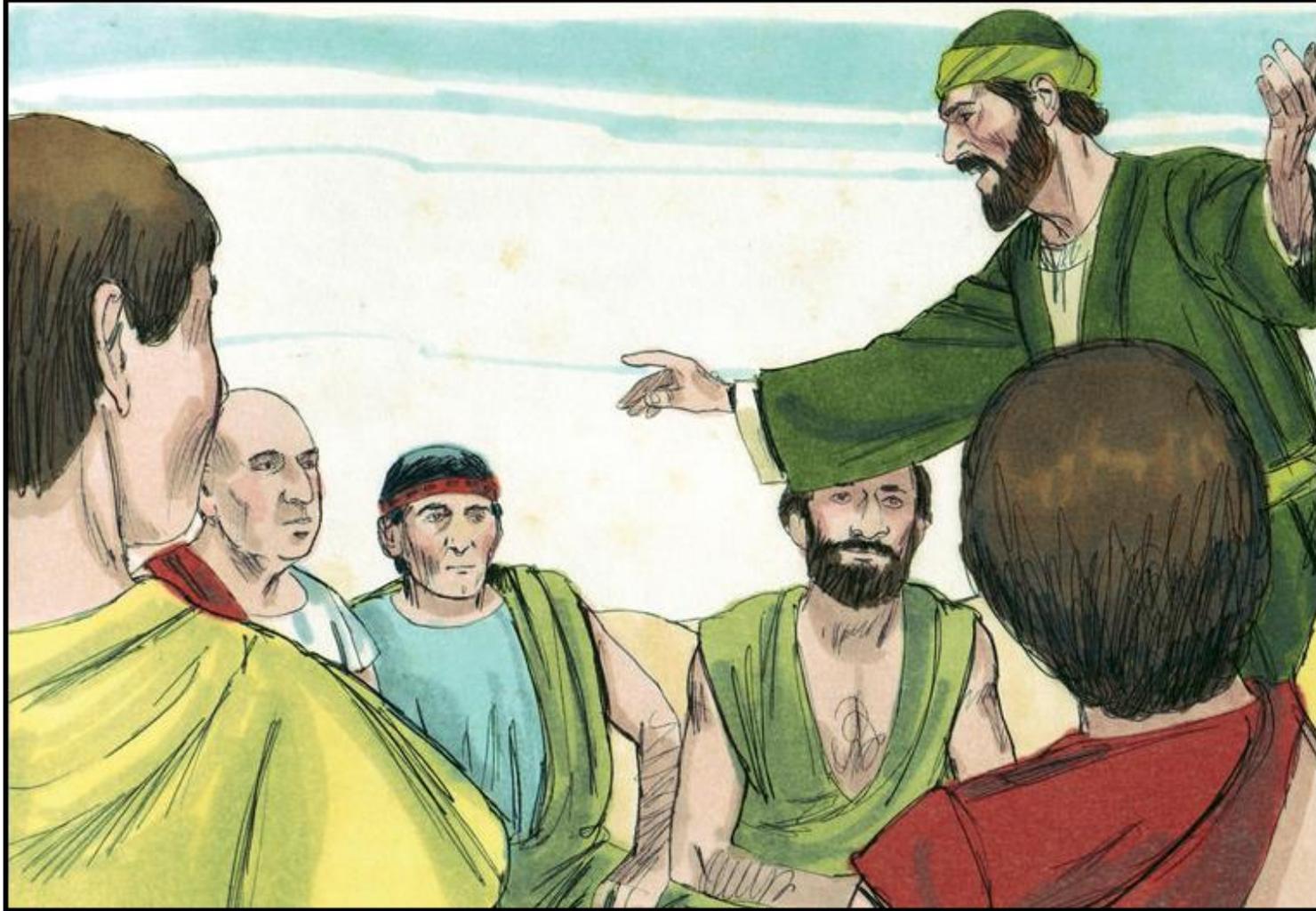
Acts 15: Elements Class, Sunday Sept 13<sup>th</sup>

## Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch in Syria

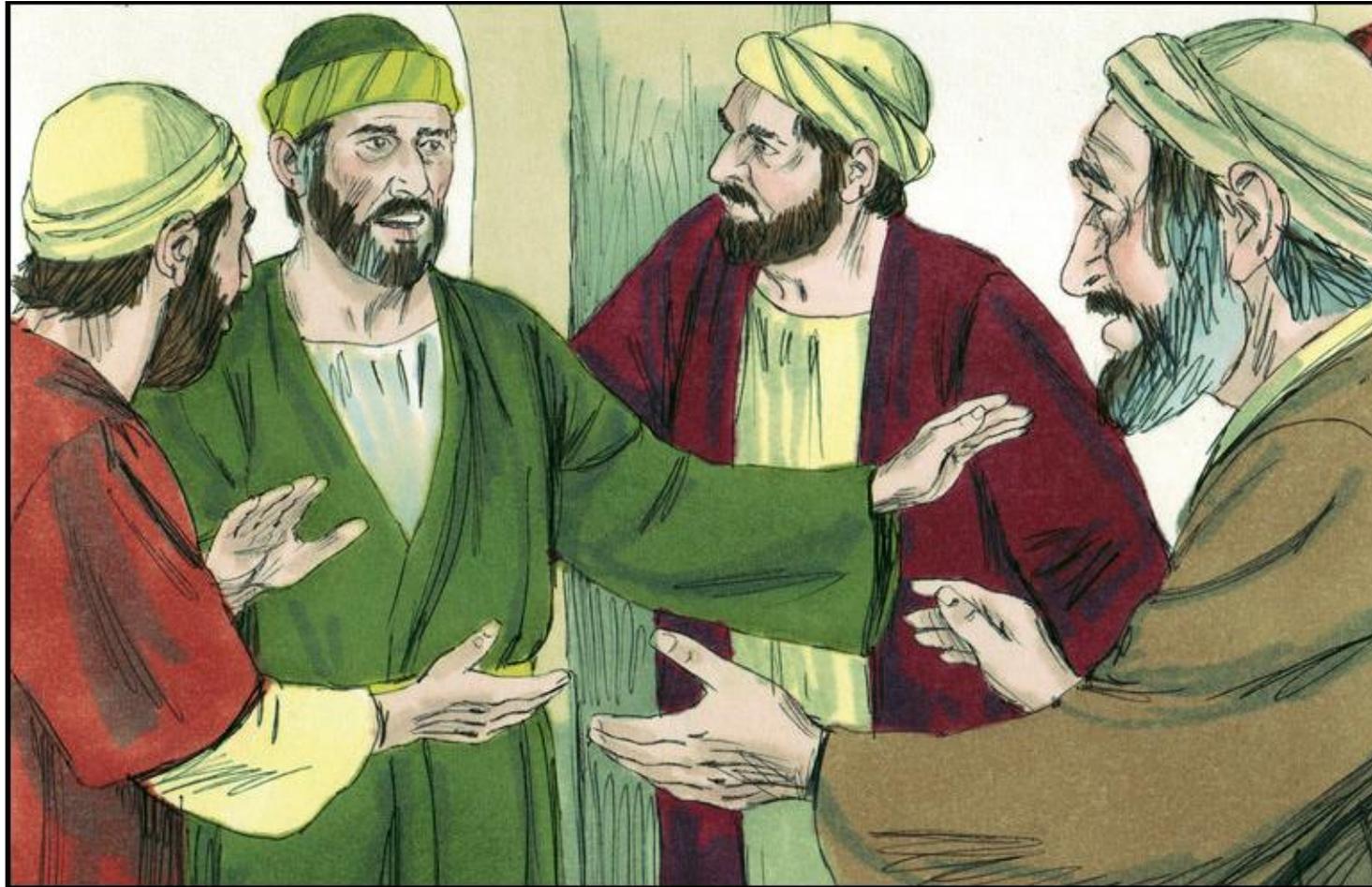
Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.

(Acts 14:24-26)

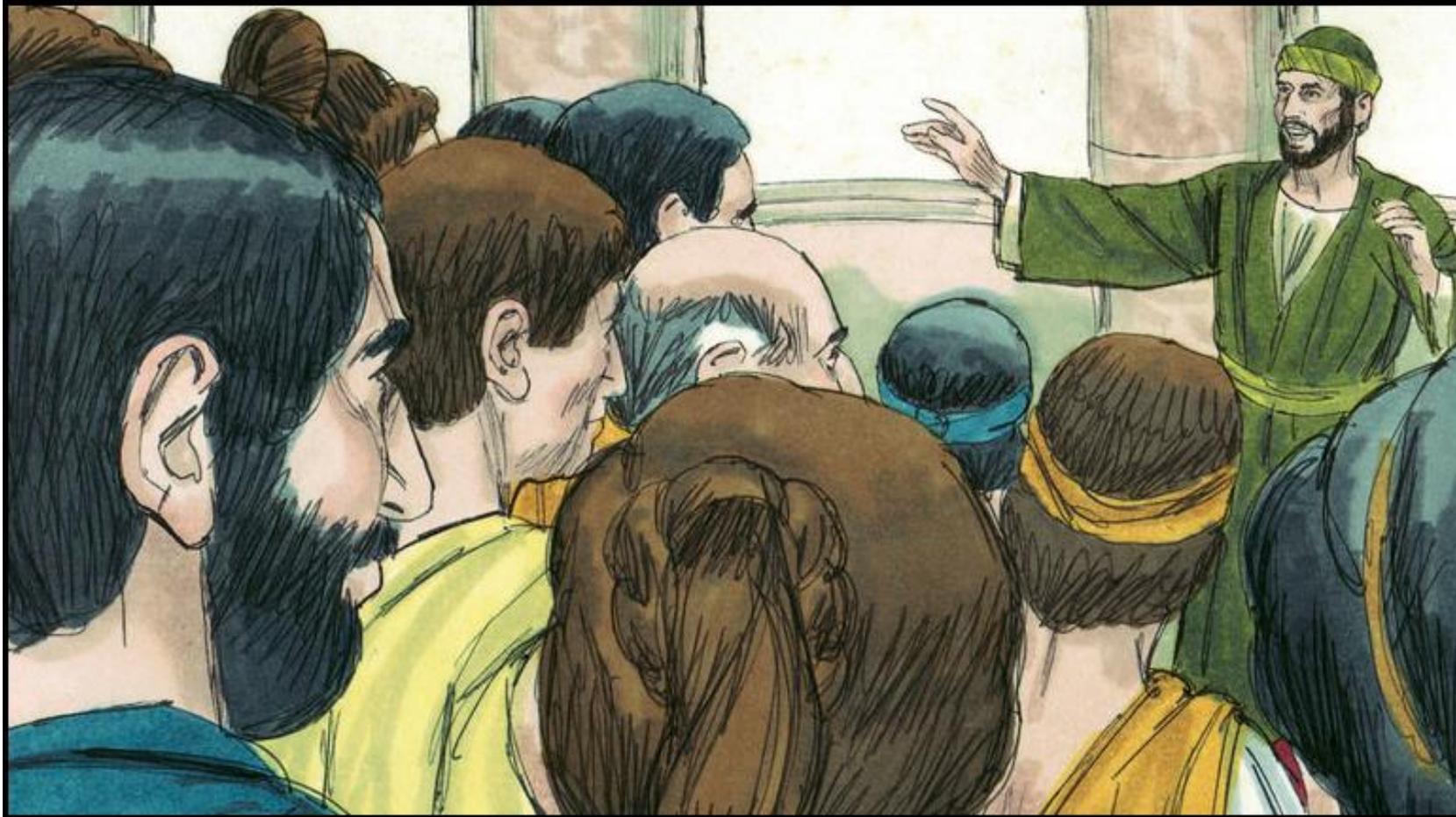
And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. (Acts 14:27)



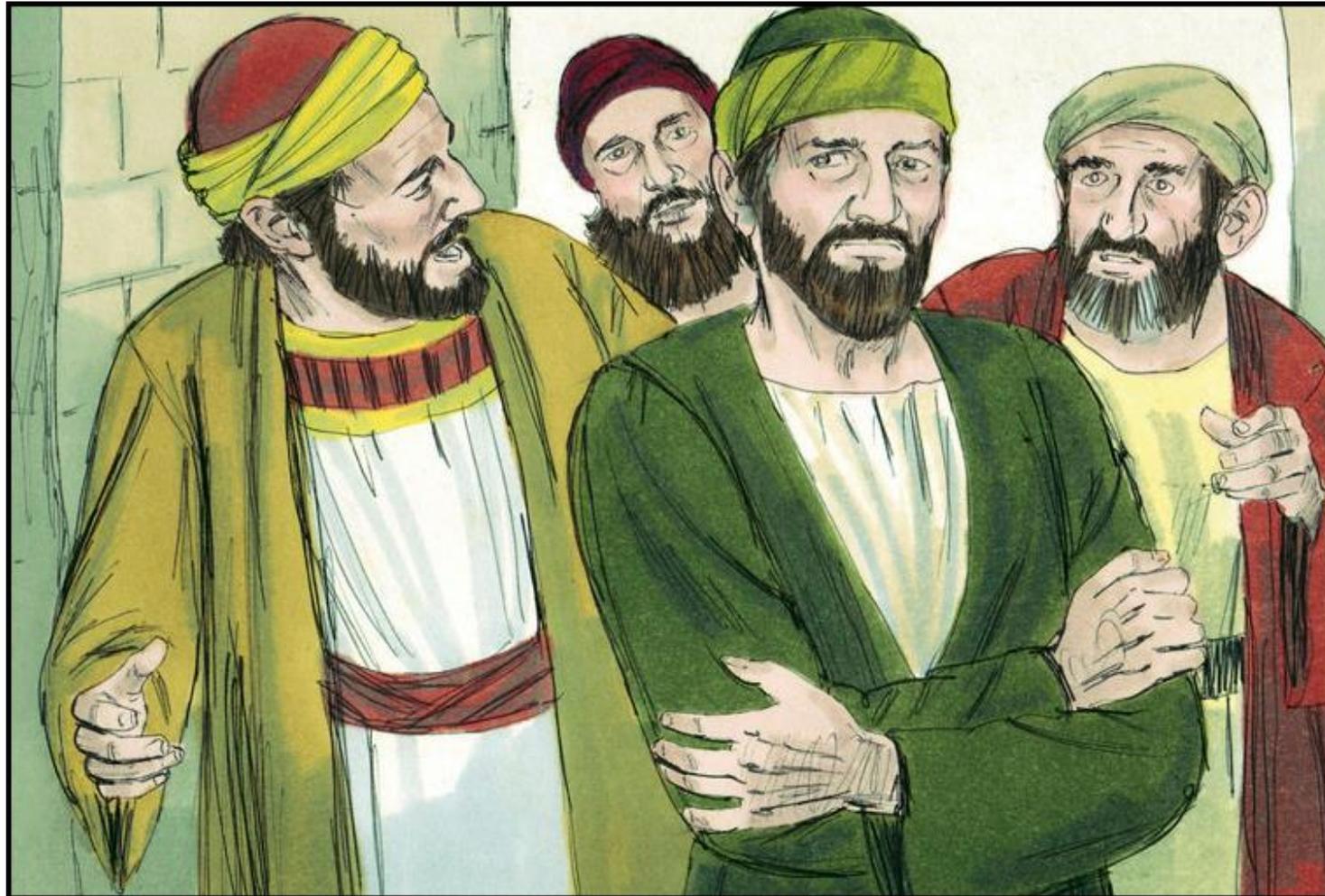
But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, **“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”** And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. (Acts 15:1-2)



So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. (Acts 15:3-4)



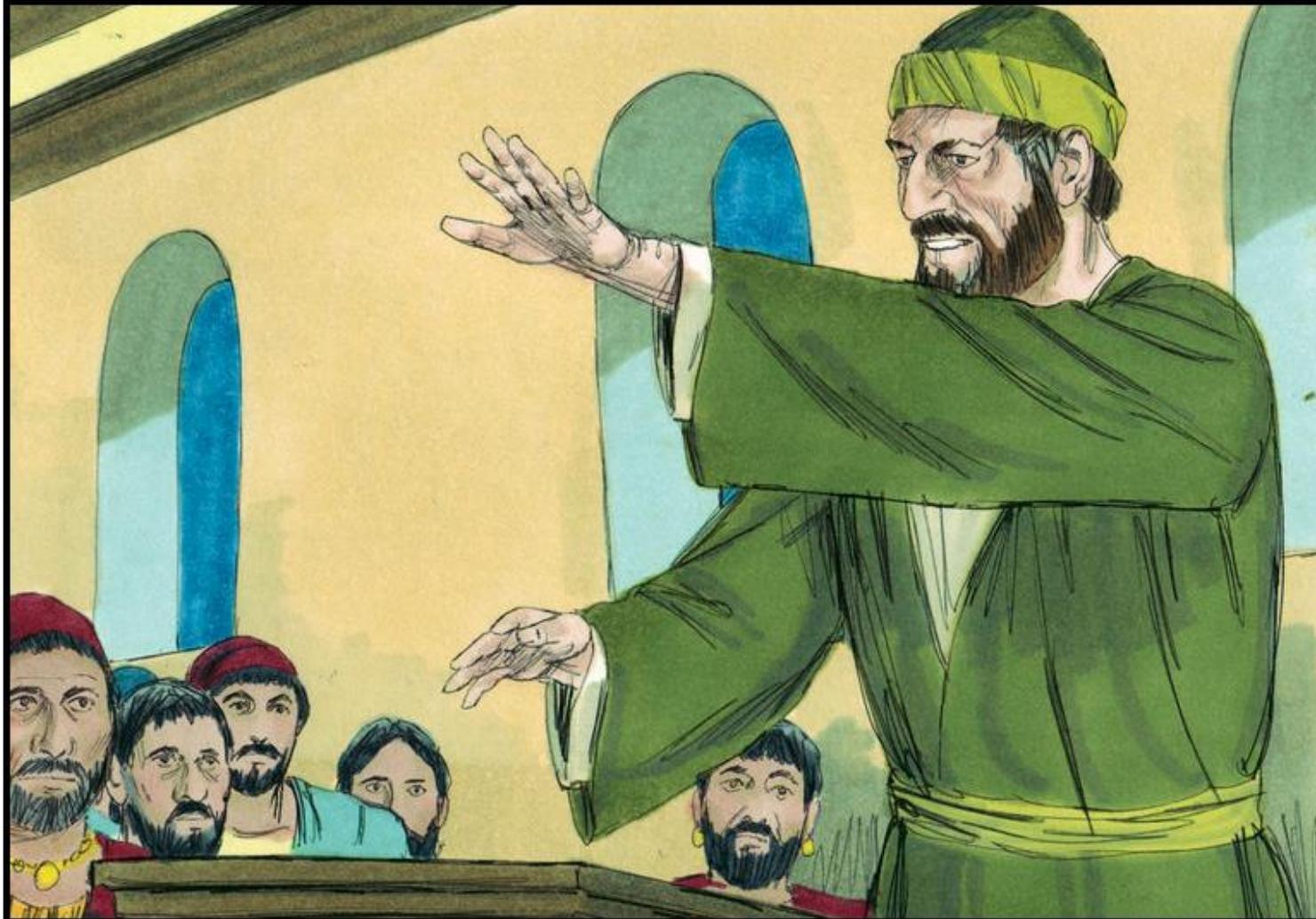
But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, **“It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.”** The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. (Acts 15:5-6)



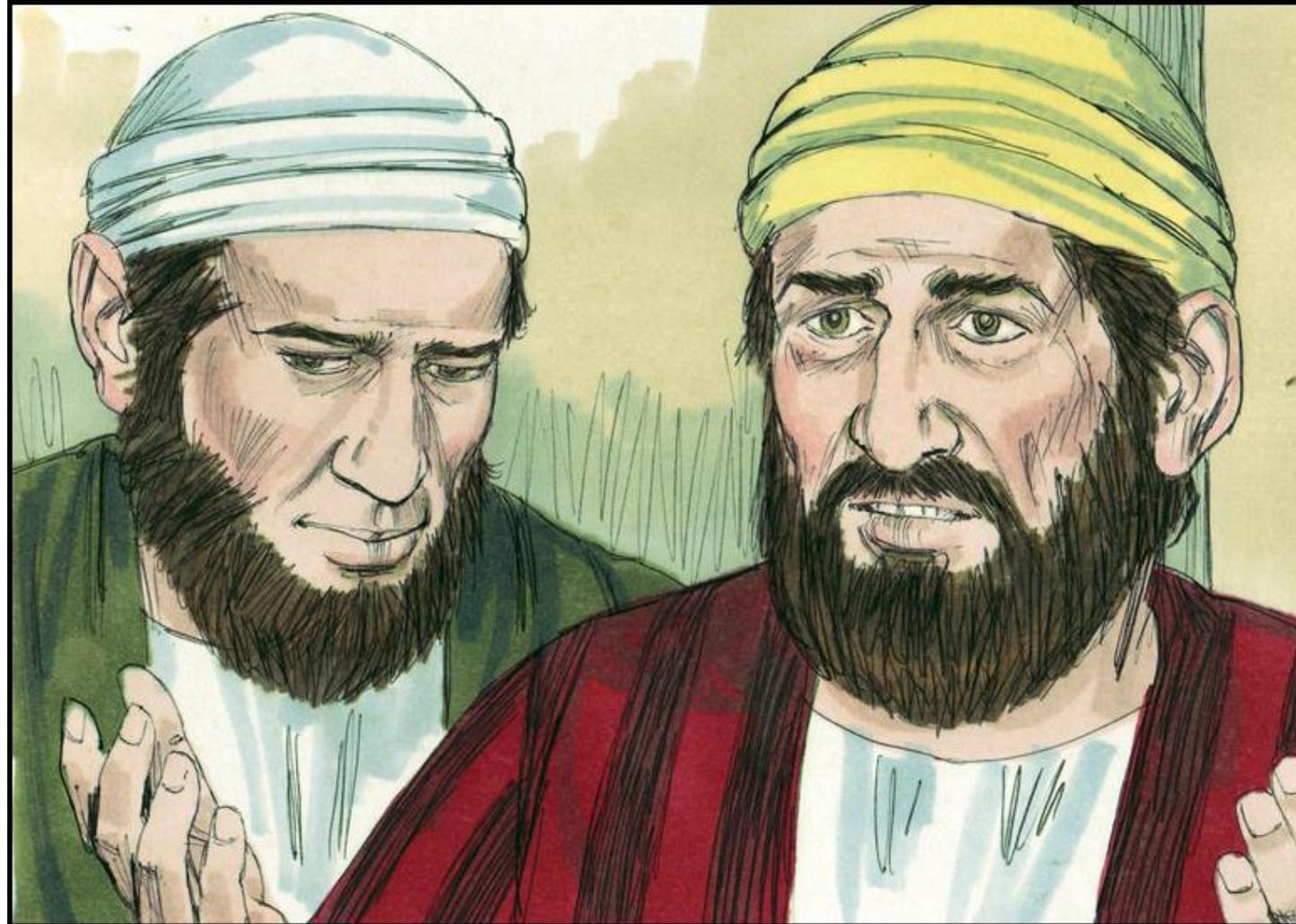
And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

**Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” (Acts 15:7-11)**

And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. (Acts 15:12)

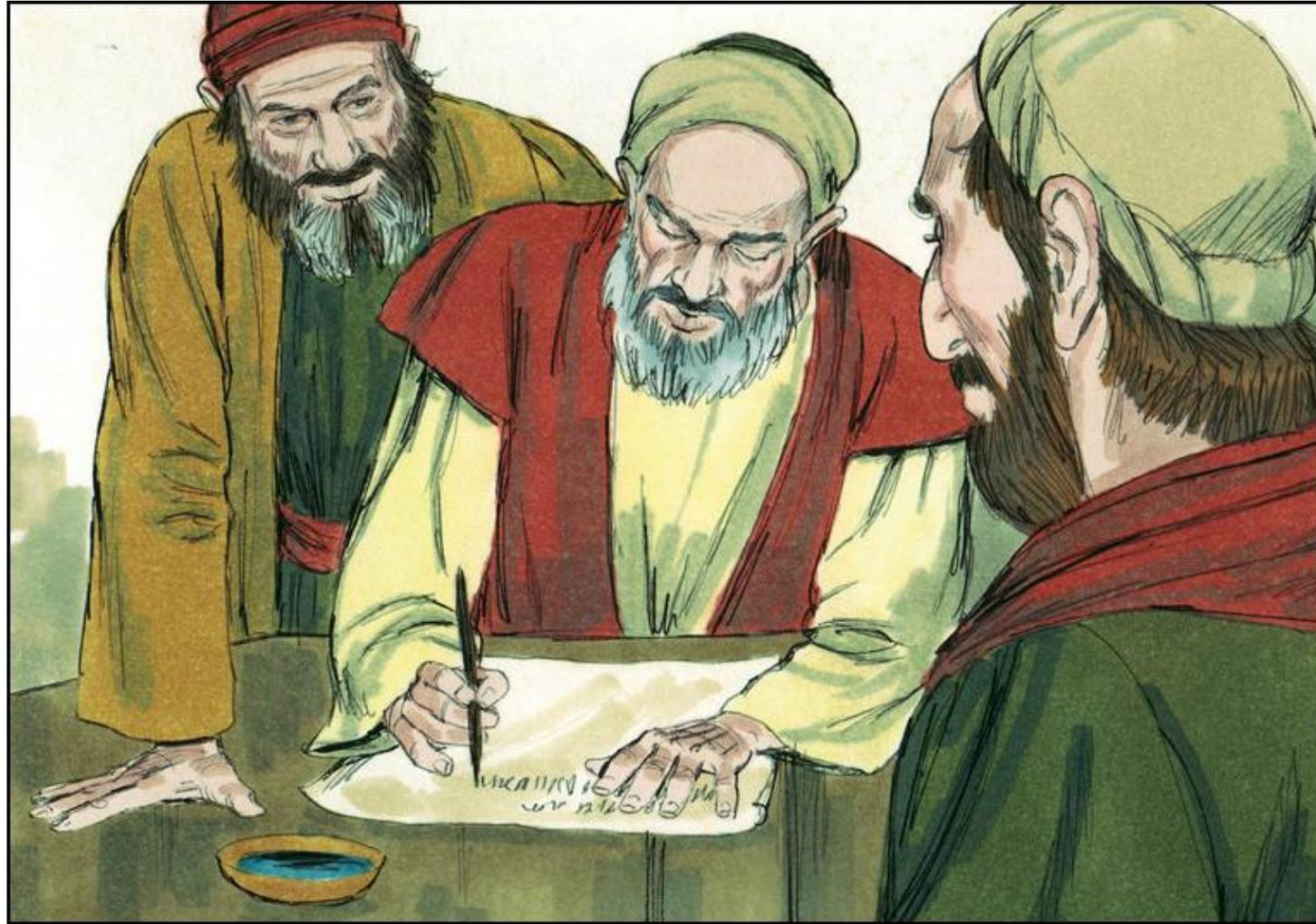


After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. (Acts 15:13-14)



Therefore my judgment is that **we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,** but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.” (Acts 15:19-21)

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, with the following letter: (Acts 15:22-23)



Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. (Acts 15:24-27)

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to **lay on you no greater burden** than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. (Acts 15:28-31)

This account is very important for many reasons. But today we want to cover **Seven Lessons for Ministry:**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

There is a kind of ‘gospel message’  
that once altered ceases to have the  
power to save.

1

But some men came down from  
Judea and were teaching the  
brothers, “Unless you are  
**circumcised** according to the  
custom of Moses, you cannot be  
**saved.**” (15:1)

**We cannot be so naïve to think that we will purely present the gospel without attaching (*even non-verbally*) that the gospel requires something else in addition to faith.**

It may not be as blunt as demanding circumcision, but other requirements we may add directly or indirectly may be:

**-Baptism**

**-Church attendance**

**-Tithing**

**-Good behavior**

It is very important to determine what you should teach as the gospel. You could be misdirecting people.

2

**“some men came down from Judea and  
were teaching the brothers,**

**“Unless you are circumcised  
according to the custom of Moses,  
you cannot be saved. And after Paul  
and Barnabas had no small  
dissension and debate with them...**

**(15:1-2)**

**We must determine what we believe to be the gospel and be unified in our presentation of it...**

and it is worth the time and energy to discuss what an accurate gospel message should contain.

Briefly, a gospel message must contain elements of the following:

-The preeminence of God

-The perfection of God revealed in the law

-The powerlessness of the sinner

-The punishment for sin

-The provision of salvation

(in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone)

Expect controversy and people to  
come against you when defining the  
gospel.

3

**“Paul and Barnabas had no small  
dissension and debate with them...  
some believers who belonged to the  
party of the Pharisees rose up and  
said, “It is necessary to  
circumcise them...” (15:2, 5)**

**When setting correct parameters  
around the message of salvation it  
will incite disagreement...**

some will feel very strongly that a  
certain point should be included,  
while others demand another be  
excluded.

**Even after the leadership or congregation determines the requirements of the gospel, some still may rebel and spread a false idea. And we must protect the 'sheep' from the 'wolves'.**

“...we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions...” (15:24)

We must be resolved, when determining what an accurate gospel message is, to:

**-Use scripture as the ultimate guide**

**-Do not attempt to please people**

**-Do not compare ourselves with others**

**-Do not add to the word of God**

‘Human effort’ loves to sneak in and  
create a burden on people.

4

**Now, therefore, why are you putting  
God to the test by placing a yoke  
on the neck of the disciples that  
neither our fathers nor we have  
been able to bear? But we believe  
that we will be saved through the  
grace... (15:10-11a)**

**The flesh will fight desperately to  
retain some level of involvement in  
our own salvation...**

and we must be resolved to not  
appease the flesh or pride of self to  
give in, by adding any degree of  
human effort to the gospel.

We must make every effort not to burden those who do not know Christ.

5

**...placing a yoke on the neck of  
the disciples that neither our  
fathers nor we have been able to  
bear? ...we should not trouble  
those of the Gentiles who turn to  
God... to lay on you no greater  
burden (15:10, 19, 28)**

**Knowing that the flesh will fight desperately to retain some level of involvement in our own salvation...**

we must go above and beyond to reassure those who do not yet believe that they are not too weak, not too evil, not 'unable' to be saved.

We should be extra cautious to not directly or otherwise indirectly (*or subconsciously*) imply that **x, y, z behavior is required or true salvation.**

As much as we may want certain behaviors to change and as much as they may need to change, we can not demand certain immediate lifestyle changes:

**-Cohabitors must get married**

**-Smokers must quit**

**-Homosexuals must be straight**

**-Non church attenders must attend**

We must do everything we can to remove blockades that may prevent the lost from finding Christ.

6

**There are certain customs and traditions that we have as a church and as Christians that are not scripturally required of us, that unnecessarily create a cultural and/or spiritual blockades to the lost in finding salvation.**

We must seek to remove anything that is unnecessary (not the non-negotiables, biblical absolutes) that are creating a blockade for the lost:

- Implied clothing requirements
  - 'Christainese' (vernacular)
  - Outdated or abrasive music
- Schedules, days, time constraints

(A) Major on the majors, and (B) do not mix sanctification with salvation.

7

**...us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. (15:28-29)**

**(A) There are certain customs, traditions, truths that are non-negotiable and must exist regardless of the culture. And those should be the ones that we major on.**

**(B) There are certain behaviors that should begin to be true in the life of a genuine, born again, growing Christian...and those truths fall in the realm of sanctification. We should not mix the 'requirements' of sanctification with that of salvation.**

A growing, genuine, born again believer should be growing in specific areas (displaying certain attributes), but they are not required for salvation:

- Modesty in speech, action and dress
  - Prayer and study of scripture
- Submission to God's design for sexuality
- Generosity in time, talents and finance



# **Group/Follow Up Questions**