

Weekly Study Guide

The week of July 28, 2013

Daily Readings

Monday	Read Acts 15:1-4. There's a lot packed into these verses. Read them slowly. Up north in Antioch, the Christians experienced God's grace among all people, both Jews and Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas saw this very clearly on the trip they just completed. Now some people came from Jerusalem, the more established center of Christianity in the south, saying that Gentiles had to become Jews and obey the Jewish law (this was the meaning of circumcision) before they could participate in Jesus' salvation. Can you think of other times when Christians have had to sort out questions like these? Prayer: God guide us by your Spirit and your Scriptures into the knowledge of your will.
Tuesday	Read Acts 15:5. It's just one verse, but it deserves reflection. The Pharisees were the guardians of tradition. And tradition has value. How do you feel when precious traditions are threatened? Prayer: God guide us by what has come before and guide us to what will come next.
Wednesday	Read Acts 15:6-12. Peter, Paul, and Barnabas offer testimony to what they have seen God do among the Gentiles. (To review Peter's story, see Acts 10-11.) Have you ever seen God reach someone who might have seemed to be beyond hope? Prayer: Lord, give us faith to trust the power of your grace for all who believe.
Thursday	Read Acts 15:13-21. James was probably the brother of Jesus, who didn't recognize Jesus as Lord until after his resurrection. James recognized Peter's earlier experience (Simon = Peter), and also showed that Scripture had foreseen this moment when "all mankind" would seek the Lord. He recommended that Gentiles did not need to become Jews and submit to the law of Moses but that they should still turn away from the idolatry and immorality of the pagan world. In your experience, does freedom from the law have to mean "lawlessness."
Friday	Read Acts 15:22-35. The council in Jerusalem sent a letter explaining their agreement to the church in Antioch. But instead of just a letter, they also sent two men named Judas and Silas as personal representatives, providing context and verification of the truth of the letter. What are the virtues of learning from written letters or records? What are the virtues of learning from people? Prayer: Empower us, Lord, to be living witnesses and teachers of your way.
Saturday	Read Acts 15:36-41. Sometimes even Christian leaders run into reasonable conflicts. One wonders whether someday later Paul lamented his own unwillingness to give John Mark a second chance. But God used even this conflict to multiply his work, sending one mission to Cyprus (Barnabas and John Mark) and another north to Syria and Cilicia (Paul and Silas). Prayer: Jesus teach us to forgive as we have been forgiven.

