

Nov 05, 2023



Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

**The Oaks
Baptist Church**
Grand Prairie, Texas

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

Never stop waiting on God, no matter our age, with great expectations

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

Dear faithful Father, when I lose hope, remind me to wait expectantly for You

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem
(Luke 2:38 NKJV)
(from "Our Daily Bread", Dec 06, 2022)

Series: God's Law Is Love

**UNIT 3: Christ Frees,
Law Enslaves**

NEXT WEEK

**Freedom in Love
(Rom 13:8-10; 1 Cor 13:8-13)**

Freedom from Expectations Acts 15:1-11

Lesson Background and Introduction

Most of Jesus' earliest followers were Jewish, and they still participated in many of the practices of Judaism. For example, until the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70, Jewish followers of Jesus participated in some of the temple's ceremonies (examples: Acts 3:1; 21:26). Additionally, throughout the Roman Empire, Jewish believers continued to participate in the synagogues (example: 17:1-2). Jews gathered in these buildings for worship and teaching from the Scriptures. Some Gentiles had become highly regarded within their local Jewish communities, partly because of their support of synagogues (example: Luke 7:1-10). The book of Acts mentions one such individual: Cornelius, a Gentile who was "God-fearing" (Acts 10:1-2, 22). There is no indication that these Gentiles took up the requirements of Judaism. As a result, they were not considered "fellow children of Abraham" (13:26). There were, however, some Gentiles who chose to convert fully to Judaism (see Acts 13:43; compare 6:5). Male converts were required to be circumcised, a painful, even dangerous, surgical procedure in the days of rudimentary anesthetics and no antibiotics. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham (see Genesis 17:9-14; compare Exodus 12:48). During the first century AD, some individuals had been teaching that Gentile followers of Jesus needed to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses (see Galatians 6:12-13). The reasoning for this position was that Israel had always been the distinct people of God. It was to Israel that God had revealed himself, given his law, and specified circumcision as the sign of his covenant. This group assumed that if God were making himself known to the nations, then the nations should be circumcised according to the Law of Moses.

The book of Acts was written by Luke. Acts is the second of a two-volume work by Luke addressed to Theophilus (Acts 1:1; see Luke 1:1-4). Prior to the events in this lesson, Paul and Barnabas, leaders of the first-century church, had been traveling throughout Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). These travels are identified as Paul's first missionary journey in AD 47-49 (Acts 13:4-14:28). The two visited various synagogues, where they taught from the Scriptures and preached the news of Jesus' resurrection (example: 13:32-33). They were not selective in choosing their audience; they preached to both Jews and Gentiles (see 14:1). After their journeys, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch (Acts 14:26-27), a city in modern-day Syria (not to be confused with another Antioch located in Pisidia; see 13:14). Antioch in Syria was located approximately 300 miles north of Jerusalem. The events of Acts 15:4-29 depict a meeting sometimes called the "Jerusalem Council." This meeting took place in approximately AD 51. This council was an early attempt to answer the vital question of how to incorporate Gentiles into the people of God. The church's future depended on how the council answered this question.

People try to hide conflict by avoiding or ignoring it altogether. Maintaining a facade of peace regardless of the underlying discord can be a severe failure. Evading problems usually makes the conflict worse. The leaders of the first-century church did not dodge conflict regarding the question of Gentile circumcision. Instead, they resolved the dispute while staying faithful to the gospel. God's plan for salvation is beyond human expectations. We are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and not through our heritage or achievements!

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Expectations of Grace Overcoming the Law (Acts 15:1-3)

Grace to fulfill the Law (1)

- Grace over law because God's promises come by grace (Rom 4:16)
- Grace over law because grace reigns over the law (Rom 5:20-21)
- Grace over law because we are under grace not the law (Rom 6:13-18)
- Grace over law because God has chosen His remnant by grace (Rom 11:5-6)
- Grace over law because God makes grace abound in us (2 Cor 9:8)
- Grace over law because God's grace is sufficient in all things (2 Cor 12:9)
- Grace over law because we are saved by grace (Eph 2:8-9)

Grace to overcome disputes (2)

- Grace in disputes by providing fellowship (Gal 2:9)
- Grace in disputes because nothing is ever too large for God (Judg 7:4-7)
- Grace in disputes because reliance on God will always bring deliverance (2 Cor 1:8-10)

The joy of grace (3)

- Joy and praise because of God's grace (Acts 11:18)
- Joy of grace through serving (1 Peter 4:10-11)
- Joy of grace through receiving the crown of joy (Isa 35:10)
- Joy of grace through the refreshing of God (Acts 3:19)
- Joy of grace through liberation (Rom 8:19-21)
- Joy of grace through reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17-20)

Expectations of Grace Considered (Acts 15:4-6)

Grace considered in accepting one another (4)

- Accept one another through agreement and unity (1 Cor 1:10)
- Accept one another through living in peace (2 Cor 13:11)
- Accept one another by being considerate of the interests of others (Phil 2:2-4)
- Accept one another in love (1 Peter 3:8-10)

Grace considered in making decisions (5-6)

- Grace in decisions through guidance by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:18)
- Grace in decisions through guidance into insight (Ps 119:99-100)
- Grace in decisions through guidance into understanding (Ps 119:130)
- Grace in decisions through guidance into wisdom (Prov 2:6)

Expectations of Grace as the Motivation of Salvation (Acts 15:7-11)

God's motivation to choose (7)

- God chose His people out of the world (John 15:19)
- God chose His people as a people for Himself (Acts 15:14)
- God chose His people and He also will justify and glorify them (Rom 8:30)
- God chose His people to be holy and blameless (Eph 1:4)
- God chose His people through His grace and for His purpose (2 Tim 1:9)

God's motivation to not make distinction (8-9)

- All Christians are one in Jesus (Gal 3:27-28)
- All Christians are members of one body (1 Cor 12:12)
- God has no distinction between Christians (Rom 10:12)
- There is no partiality with God (Rom 2:11)

God's motivation to save (10-11)

- Salvation because God wants everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)
- Salvation because God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:1-4)
- Salvation because Jesus came to save the lost (Luke 19:10)
- Salvation because God's grace brings salvation before all men (Titus 2:11)