**Establishing Authority**

*Acts 15*

**Introduction**

1. The fifteenth chapter of Acts has been abused by several to promote unauthorized practices.
   1. Used to suggest a church council who regulates points of doctrine or discipline is scriptural. (Denominational)
   2. Used to suggest settling doctrinal questions by means of voting is scriptural. (Suggested before by some Christians)
2. **This passage does not authorize church councils, nor does it authorize settling doctrinal questions by popular vote. It rather disputes such unlawful practices of establishing authority by showing the proper way to establish authority.**
3. A consideration of the chapter supplies fundamental truths concerning doctrinal authority, and how to determine if something is authorized.
4. The Conflict **(v. 1-5)**
5. Judaizers to Antioch from Jerusalem **(v. 1-2).**
   1. Claimed to represent Jerusalem church **(v. 24)**.
      1. **Taught circumcision (becoming a Jew, and observing OT) necessary for salvation**.
      2. This would mean Gentiles are not gospel subjects.
   2. Paul and Barnabas to go address the problem, and encourage the Jerusalem church to make publicly, and thus abundantly clear, their stand for truth. (Sent letter.)
6. Paul, Barnabas, and certain others sent to Jerusalem **(v. 3-5)**.
   1. Paul went by revelation – God told him to go **(cf. Galatians 2:2)**.
   2. The others didn’t tell him anything he didn’t know **(cf. Galatians 2:6)**. He was given the truth on the matter from God Himself **(cf. 1:11-12)**. ***(Holy Spirit has already revealed the truth on this matter. It is not to be decided upon.)***
   3. Visit not to consider if binding circumcision is scriptural **(cf. Galatians 2:5)**.
7. The Truth Preached **(v. 6-18)**
8. Peter Speaks – Necessary Implication **(v. 6-11)**.
   1. Cornelius’ household – ch. 10, 11.
   2. Given HS, Saved by Faith, and Grace. (NOT Old Law)
9. Paul and Barnabas Speak – Approved Example **(v. 12)**.
   1. Spoke of their work among Gentiles – God approving and bearing witness by miracles **(14:27; 15:3)**.
   2. Example – Gentiles converted by Paul; Approved – God performed miracles among them.
10. James Speaks – Direct Statement **(v. 13-18)**.
    1. Quote from **Amos 9:11-12** that agrees with what Peter stated.
    2. It was always God’s plan – from the beginning – to save Gentiles apart from Old Law **(v. 18)**.
11. The Solution **(v. 19-35)**
12. Old Law not binding does not mean not restrictions whatsoever **(v. 19-21)**.
    1. **Jews needed to understand that just because the Gentiles were not subject to the Law of Moses, and neither were they, did not mean that they were lawless.**
    2. Under Law of Christ – sinful practices still prohibited.
13. Letter that was sent **(v. 22-29)**.
    1. Judaizers – false teachers – did not represent Jerusalem church stance (v. 24).
    2. Holy Spirit made decision – not decided upon by man arbitrarily (v. 28).
14. Gentile converts encouraged **(v. 30-33).**
    1. They did not have to bear a yoke that was unbearable **(v. 10)**.
    2. Their salvation was legitimate.

**Conclusion**

1. Acts 15 teaches us several things. None of which include authority for church councils, and settling doctrine by popular vote.
2. Who authorizes? God; Jesus; Holy Spirit.
3. **How do we determine what is authorized? Direct Statement/Command; Necessary Implication; Approved Example – as did the apostles!**