

The Vincennes Voice

"...The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight..." (Matt. 3:3)

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ACTS 15 AND DERIVING AUTHORITY

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Many wish to point out the Church of Christ was founded by Alexander Campbell in the 1800's. Some even venture to say Mr. Campbell and other restoration preachers instituted the "Direct Command, Apostolic Example, Necessary Inference" way of deriving authority. Both assertions are grievously wrong. Further, I am witnessing an ever-growing trend, among the Lord's people, to belittle those who follow well-established Bible patterns for deriving authority for all we teach and practice (Col. 3:17; Acts 4:7).

Acts 15 is an excellent example of how the apostles and early leaders of the Lord's Church solved doctrinal questions of the day. We, too, come upon doctrinal questions which must be answered.

The issue at hand was "Should Gentile converts to the Lord be circumcised?" Some were saying yes, others no. Hence, the occasion of the meeting in Jerusalem to solve the issue. Please take notice of how they solved the issue, thus illustrating how we resolve such issues.

1. They made a plea to a direct command (or statement) of God. James did so in Acts 15:13-21. He was making reference back to the writings of Amos 9:11-12. In other words, God had already stated He was opening salvation to the Gentiles (making no mention of circumcision).

2. They made a plea based upon an apostolic example. Paul and Barnabas made mention of the fact of the "signs" and "wonders" God had done "through them among the Gentiles" (Acts 15:12). The apostles were permitted to do these to illustrate Gentiles were now part of God's plan without the need for being circumcised.

3. They made a plea based upon necessary inference (or forced conclusion). Peter did so in Acts 15:7-11. He drew from his experience with Cornelius in Acts 10, how they received the Holy Spirit, how there was no distinction made between he (Jews) and they (Gentiles) and how they were saved exactly as he was. The forced conclusion was Gentiles could be saved without the need for circumcision.

4. They made a plea based upon the silence of God. Luke penned "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such commandment" (Acts 15:24). The last phrase in this verse clearly illustrates nothing whatsoever had been said concerning Gentile convert circumcision. Therefore, no troubling or harassing attitudes should arise as a result of these false teachings.

It is getting more common to hear "people of God" discount the importance of deriving authority for all we say and do (Col. 3:17) in the same ways the first century Christians did. The argument is made those ways were for those times. Assuredly, we are not ashamed, nor should we be made to feel ashamed for doing Bible things in Bible ways. If these ways were good enough for the folks gathered in Acts 15, they should be good enough for us.

OF A TRUTH

Larry R. Ping II

The three-word phrase “of a truth” occurs 18 times in the Bible, 11 of which are in the New Testament. This phrase means something being said is “evidently the truth, without objection or protest.” Consider some of these occurrences in this article.

1. “Of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Matt. 14:33). It is hard to believe some fail to admit Jesus being the Son of God. But He is, evident by the virgin birth (Matt. 1:23). He is, evident by the miracles He performed (Jn. 2:11). He is, evident by what He knew (Matt. 9:4). There should be no doubt concerning who Jesus is, He is the Son of God!

2. “Of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God” (Lk. 9:27). Jesus was foretelling the coming of His kingdom, the Church (Matt. 16:18-19). Some to whom He was speaking would live to see the day such came to fruition in Acts 2. These words of Jesus,

by the way, exterminate the false teaching the kingdom is not here yet. There were some who had been “translated...into the kingdom (Col. 1:13). John wrote he was “in the kingdom” (Rev. 1:9). How could John be in it if it did not yet exist?

3. “Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all” (Lk. 21:3). This is a familiar story concerning giving. The rich gave as they normally did. However, a poor widow cast in all she had. This familiar story helps us realize that the amount we give is not all that matters to God. The attitude with which we give is looked upon by God as well. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (II Cor. 9:7). What sort of giver are you?

4. “Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean” (Lk. 22:59). These words were spoken by an accuser of Peter, who found himself in the middle of an angry and fuming mob. It was evident, in many ways, Peter had been with Jesus.

Yet, Peter denied this fact not once, or even twice, but three separate and distinct times, just as Jesus had predicted (Lk. 22:34). Upon the conclusion of the third denial, Peter “wept bitterly” (Lk. 22:62). By the way, is it evident to others you live for Jesus the Christ (Gal. 2:20)?

5. “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34). This was Peter’s opening statement to Cornelius, who would become the first Gentile convert. Some Jews thought this to be a despicable thing, salvation being offered to the Gentiles. Even Peter himself needed reminding to see this truth (Acts 10:9-18). Without any doubt or uncertainty, the Bible makes it abundantly clear God offers salvation to “anyone” who wishes to receive it. He does not discriminate based upon social, financial or gender status. He does not care how rich or poor one may be. If you want to go to Heaven, you can, and God will not stand in your way of obeying.

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MEETING TIMES (EST)

SUNDAY
Bible Study – 10:00 am
Worship – 11:00 am & 3:00 pm

WEDNESDAY
Bible Study – 7:00 pm