

Understanding Difficult Scriptures #3

Acts 15, Romans 2 & 3 and Hebrews 10

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Acts 15—This is the difficult Scripture. Remember that we covered in part two, Matt. 19 that they read that where Jesus told the young man to keep the Commandments and He listed all of them but He didn't list the Sabbath so they say, 'He didn't list the Sabbath so we don't have to keep it.' Well, he didn't list some others either, but He also said, 'love your neighbor as yourself.'

Here in Acts 15 is quite a problem that they had. Most of the problems in the New Testament are not Catholic vs Protestant, **but they are the Truth vs Judaism!** Keep that in mind.

Now under the covenant with Israel, all males had to be circumcised on the eighth day. As things developed at the time coming down to Jesus' time, they had a lot of Gentiles who wanted also to partake of the religion of the Jews.

The Gentiles, in order to attend the synagogue, had to be circumcised. This became a problem within the Church, because now Jesus gave the commandment for them to go into all nations and baptize all of them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Now that's another difficult Scripture, but that doesn't give you the Trinity. We need to be baptized into the name of the Father *because we're going to be a son or daughter of God*, and of Christ *because His sacrifice makes it possible* and of the Holy Spirit *because that's the begetting of eternal life!*

Now it's not in the name of the Holy Spirit making it 'another God.' It is in the Holy Spirit and then all of the ceremony of baptism is in the name of Jesus Christ.

So, that should take care of that Scripture there. I know they like to read it and say, well, this is Trinitarian. Well, it's not Trinitarian; no such thing as a Trinity.

Now because that is a problem, this confronted all of Paul's ministry and it started out remember with Peter and Cornelius.

Now, years later here's what happened with different ministers coming. Remember that Jesus said many would 'come in His name preaching that He was the Christ.'

Acts 15—Let's see this and let's go through it so we completely understand it because this is one of the areas where they go to say, 'well, He didn't mention about the Sabbath, **but** He didn't mention anything about:

- adultery
- murder
- lying

So, it's okay to do those? *No!* Let's find out.

Acts 15:1: "Now, certain men who had come down from Judea were teaching the brethren, *saying*, 'Unless you are circumcised after the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'" *Not so!*

We'll see a little later that circumcision of conversion is circumcision of the heart.

Verse 2: "Therefore, after a great deal of strife and arguing with them by Paul and Barnabas, the *brethren* appointed Paul and Barnabas, and certain others from among them, to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this question." ***What are we going to do about this?***

Verse 3: "So then, after being sent on their way by the Church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria..."

Verse 4: "And when they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the Church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all the things that God had done with them"—*all of the conversion of the Gentiles not requiring them to be circumcised!*

Verse 5 *is the key, and this is something that you need to know*: "But there stood up certain of those who believed, who were of the sect of the Pharisees..."

Pharisees and the Jews call everything with all of ***their*** laws the Law or Torah of God. So, when they say 'Moses,' they say 'Moses gave oral instruction.' *That's not true!* Everything that God had Moses do was written down, ***and those are the Scriptures of God!***

All the traditional laws of the Jews... Note our book: *Judaism: Revelation of Moses or Religion of Men*. That will show you how all of these things took place.

Verse 5: "But there stood up certain of those who believed, who were of the sect of the Pharisees, saying, 'It is obligatory... [mandatory] ...to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the Law of Moses.'"

Now then, I've got a footnote explaining that in the *Faithful Version*. That meant all of the ***traditional laws*** of the Jews. There was no question about the Ten Commandments, as we will see.

Verse 6: “Then the apostles and the elders gathered together to see about this matter.”

After much speaking, then Peter brought it up and discussed it. They had a big discussion concerning it and what they need to do. Paul got up there and told him what happened and everywhere he went, how the Gentiles without circumcision were converted.

Verse 23: “*And they wrote letters by their hand, as follows...*” *Here’s their decision:* James, the half-brother of Jesus, gave his opinion and wrote it up.

“...‘The apostles and the elders and the brethren, to those brethren *who are of the* Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Greetings! Inasmuch as we have heard that certain *ones* among us who went *to you* have troubled your souls with words, saying, “*You are obligated* to be circumcised and to keep the law” (to whom we gave no such command)” (vs 23-24).

Verse 25: “It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send to you chosen men with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have dedicated their lives to *proclaim* the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we have sent Judas and Silas, who shall themselves also tell *you* by word *of mouth* the same things *that we have written*. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit...” (vs 25-28).

So they asked God to give them understanding through the power of the Holy Spirit, because remember this: ***There is no physical ritual that will make you right with God!***

If there is sin, you have to repent of the heart, and repentance of the heart has nothing to do with circumcision of the flesh. That’s why it’s called in Col. 2, the circumcision not made with hands, the circumcision of the heart.

Verse 28: “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things.”

Notice, they didn’t say anything about the Ten Commandments. We will see that when they got back there and read the letters to them, they read the letters to them on the Sabbath Day showing that they were keeping the Sabbath Day. Otherwise, they wouldn’t have gotten the message of the letters.

So, here’s what the special things that they had to stay away from because it was so prevalent in these gentile countries where they had false gods and so forth.

Verse 29: To abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been

strangled... [those are also health issues]: ...and from sexual immorality...”

- they said nothing about murder
- they said nothing about false witnessing.
- they said nothing about any of the other things

but that it’s implied here

- stay away from things sacrificed to idols
- stay away from idols
- stay away from false gods

“...if you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell” (v 29).

Verse 30: “Therefore, after being dispatched, they went to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle. And after reading *it*, they rejoiced at the consolation” (vs 30-31).

Now then, look at what happened here: v 32: “Then Judas and Silas, who were themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words, and established *them*.”

- How did they establish them?
- What did they exhort them with?
 - ✓ the Truth of God
 - ✓ the things from the Old Testament
 - ✓ maybe some of the things that were written already in what became the Gospel of Matthew

Verse 33: “And after they had been *there* for a time, they were let go in peace from the brethren to the apostles; but it seemed good to Silas to remain there” (vs 33-34).

And after certain days, Paul said, and he’d go out and so forth.... words read every Sabbath, the words of the prophets. They were taught in the synagogues on the Sabbath Day.

- there is nothing here that says you don’t have to keep the Sabbath
- there is nothing here that says you can keep Sunday

Read the whole chapter here and you will find that it was on the Sabbath that was brought out.

Romans in the *King James* is one of the most misleading books of the New Testament. Romans and Galatians! Why was that? *It was because of Martin Luther saying that:*

All you have to do is believe and you don’t have to keep the Commandments, you don’t have to keep the Sabbath.

That carried over, and when they were translating, they didn’t understand the Greek the way that they

should. This was a verse that took me many years to understand. I didn't understand it until I was studying the Greek and understanding the New Testament Greek and what it said. Then I discovered the key to the problem. Let's see what the problem is in:

Romans 3:20 (KJV): "Therefore, by **the deeds** of **the law**, there shall no flesh be justified in His sight. For by **the law** is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God **without the law...**" (vs 20-21).

What does *without* mean? *The absence of Law!* This is where they get the belief that you don't have to keep the Law.

Verse 21: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets."

I couldn't understand that! How could the Law and the Prophets witness that? You find in the Old Testament, no place where it does away with the Sabbath, you find in the Old Testament every place that they are to keep the Sabbath. Here's where they say you don't have to keep the Law.

Verse 22: "Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned..." (vs 22-23)

None of that made any sense to me, even as a minister.

Romans 2:13 (KJV): "For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but **the doers of the law shall be justified.**"

I read down and I said, 'How can you compare vs 20 & 21 in Rom. 3 and say that you don't need any law when it says right here that you have to be "**doers of the law.**"

- What does that mean?
- How do you solve that?

We've got it solved with the proper translation in the *Faithful Version*. This is very important because the key is this in the Greek, there is no *thus*, no *the* law. It is *for by deeds of law*, not *by deeds of the law*.

The difference is *by deeds of law* or *works of law*; those have to do with:

- the traditional laws of Judaism
- the sacrifices at the temple
- the temple laws for the priests and the Levites

Romans 2:13 (FV): "Because the hearers of the Law are not just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified."

This tells us before you can come to God, you have to be *a doer of the law* before you're justified; yet, *you're not justified by the Law!*

- What is that?
- How can that be?

Verse 14: "For when the Gentiles, which do not have the Law, practice by nature the things contained in the Law, these who do not have the Law are a law unto themselves."

Notice v 15; this become very important because this is different than what we have over in Rom. 3.

Verse 15: "Who show **the work of the Law** written in their own hearts..."

- Are we to keep the Law? *Paul says you are!*
- What's the problem with justification?
- What does justification mean?

When you come to the understanding that you need to be baptized and you want to follow God and you want to do what is right:

- What's the first thing you need to do? *You need to repent!*
- What are you repenting of? *You're repenting of breaking the Laws of God, because breaking the Laws of God are sin.*

So, you must stop!

Romans 2:4: "Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the graciousness of God leads you to repentance? But you, according to your own hardness and unrepentant heart, are storing up wrath for yourself against *the* day of wrath and revelation of God's righteous judgment" (vs 4-5).

It's showing that you're going to be judged for your sins and it's going to be in wrath if you don't repent. What do we have? *You have to put them together here!*

Verse 13: "Because the hearers of the Law are not just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified." *You put them together this way:*

First, you must **repent of sin, which is the transgression of the Laws of God!**

- not the laws of Judaism
- not the laws of Catholicism
- not the misinterpretations of Protestantism

The only place in the New Testament where it says, **the work of the law.**

Verse 14: "For when the Gentiles, which do not have **the Law**, practice by nature the things contained in **the Law...**"

In other words, some Gentile nations have some things that are also contained in the Law of God—***the Law!***

“...these who do not have the Law are a law unto themselves; who show **the work of the Law...**” (vs 14-15).

So, the Law of God is to work within us and ***those who:***

- practice that after repenting and coming to God for forgiveness
- accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His shed blood

are justified! Not by what they have done, but because they have repented of their sins and ***it's the repentance!***

What is the key over here in Rom. 3 that unlocks the whole thing? Remember, the *King James* says, ‘without the law.’

You can't have the absence of Law and be just with God and you can't have the absence of Law *when Paul commends the Gentiles for keeping the work of the Law!* What is the answer here?

Romans 3:20: “Therefore, by **works of law...**”—*no definite article in the Greek!*

- sacrifices at the temple
- Judaism
- any other Gentile work

Verse 20: “Therefore, by works of law there shall no flesh be justified before Him; for through *the Law is the* knowledge of sin. But now *the* righteousness of God *that is* **separate...**” (vs 20-21)—*not the absence of.*

Quite a different translation! That's why the *King James* has caused untold difficulties in understanding what it means to keep the Laws of God.

“...separate from law has been revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even *the* righteousness of God *that is* through *the* faith of Jesus Christ, toward all and upon all those who believe; for there is no difference. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (vs 21-23).

- What puts you in right standing with God?
- What is justification? *Justification means that God has forgiven your sins upon repentance!*

That is ***a separate act of God through the sacrifice of Christ!***

- law can never forgive
- only God can forgive

- that is only by repentance

Repentance is also a choice that you make, because you have sinned against God. And because you see you have broken His Laws.

So, the justification that God gives *IF* you repent. ***When*** you repent, then you start keeping the Laws of God because He has forgiven your sins. ***That's what justification means. And it's only through the sacrifice of Christ!***

Let's come over here to Rom. 8 for just a minute and we will see this amplified just a bit more.

Romans 8:3: “For what *was* impossible for the Law to do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God having sent His own Son in *the* likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; in order that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us...” (vs 3-4).

What is the righteousness of the Law? That's keeping the Law, *keeping the Law in the Spirit*, not just in the letter, *but in the Spirit.*

That's what it is now with us. We are led by the Spirit of God. We are forgiven our sins by God when we confess our sins and we also ask God to give us the strength so that we don't continue to live in sin.

When you have all of these extra laws that men have added, *like the Jews have added* thousands and thousands of them. They figure that that makes them right with God, but it doesn't change the heart.

Conversion is to change the heart and the mind! Now let's look at what happens to the Laws of God, and let's see what Heb. 10 tells us.

- Where are the Laws to be written?
- Where are they to be a part of us?

That's what's important. That's why it says that ‘the doers of the Law shall be justified’; that is, when they repent of their sins.

Heb. 10:14—here Paul is writing that all the sacrifices at the temple and all of the shed blood can never forgive sin. It only justified them to the temple. But now with the Spirit of God we need to be justified to God the Father and Jesus Christ in heaven above.

Hebrews 10:14: “For by one offering He has obtained eternal perfection *for* those who are **sanctified**”—***set apart and made Holy!*** How is that done?

Verse 15: “And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us...”

Justified and made Holy by God through His Holy Spirit. How do we keep the Laws of God?

“...for after He had previously said, “This is the covenant that I will establish with them after those days,” says the Lord...” (v 15). *Here, in the heart is where the Laws need to be:*

- not on table of stone
- not written on doorpost
- *but right here:*

“...**I will give My Laws into their hearts...**” (v 16).

- how you think
- how you act
- how you do
- how you view everything

“...**I will inscribe them in their minds**” (v 16). *Isn't it interesting the way it is inscribed, **written** in our minds?*

- That can't be doing away with Law, can it?
- How can you be in covenant with God:
 - ✓ without Law?
 - ✓ without obedience?
 - ✓ without repentance?

It's an impossibility! So, God now wants everything written in our heart and in our mind. “...**I will inscribe them...**”

Verse 17: “And their sins and lawlessness I will not remember ever again.”

Now that agrees completely with Rom. 2, ***that the doers of the Law shall be justified!***

Justified means ***put in right standing before God in heaven above!***

Verse 18: “Now, where remission of these is, it is no longer necessary to offer sacrifices for sin.”

Now then, what does this give us? *Here's something that's very important to understand.* When we have the Spirit of God, when we're living by every Word of God—isn't that what Jesus said we are to do—live by every Word of God? *Yes, indeed!* Every Word of God includes:

- all of His Laws
- all of His Commandments

We're to do it in the Spirit of the Law, not in the letter of the Law?

Verse 19: “Therefore, brethren, having confidence to enter into the *true* Holiest by the blood of Jesus.”

In other words, when you have the Spirit of God, you have direct connection with God the Father. That's an amazing thing; ***directly with God***

to Father! We'll see that when we come to some other difficult Scriptures,.

Verse 20: “By a new and living way, which He consecrated for us through the veil (that is, His flesh)” (v 20).

When Jesus died, that veil outside that covered the whole front of the temple was ripped in two, as well as the one inside at the Holy of Holies, ***showing that the way to God was open direct.***

So, here's how we are to behave, v 21: “And having a great High Priest over the house of God, let us approach *God* with a true heart...” (vs 21-22)—***not deceitful!***

- we're to be converted
- our minds are to be changed

Where do we start from? ***We start from the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked!***

Conversion is the changing of the mind, the rewriting of God's Laws into our heart and in our mind so that we:

- live by them
- think by them
- conduct our lives in everything that way

Verse 22: “Let us approach *God* with a true heart, with full conviction of faith, our hearts having been purified from a wicked conscience...” ***That is the whole key.*** So, there is nothing out here that can substitute:

- for repentance
- receiving the Holy Spirit of God
- having the Laws and Commandments written in our heart and in our mind

You cannot have that until you have the Holy Spirit of God given to you after repentance and baptism and the laying on of hands.

- we have to grow in grace and knowledge
- we have to grow in understanding
- we have to add to everything that God has given

That's why the Bible is such a fantastic book. It has everything that we need, everything we need to understand:

- for our personal lives
- how the world is
- what God is doing
- the events that are going to happen

It's laid out by His Sabbath and His Holy Days!

So, where it says in the *King James Version*, *without the law* is a wrong translation. It should read that ***the justification is separate from Law!*** But Law

is included because now you keep it in the Spirit written in your heart and in your mind.

- no law has the power to forgive
- no law has the power to give life
 - only God can forgive
 - only God can give life

These are just a couple of the difficult Scriptures that are very hard to understand from the *King James*, ***which have all been corrected in the Faithful Version.***

Scriptural References:

- 1) Acts 15:1-6, 232-34
- 2) Romans 3:20-23
- 3) Romans 2:13-15, 4-5, 13-15
- 4) Romans 3:20-23
- 5) Romans 8:3-4
- 6) Hebrews 10:14-22

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Matthew 19
- Colossians 2

Also referenced: Book {truthofGod.org}:

Judaism: Revelation of Moses or Religion of Men by Philip Neal

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