

ABSTAIN FROM BLOOD

Request: “A friend called for advice on medically receiving another person’s blood. Her mother was a Jehovah Witness and very sick and was reluctant to take blood. The only verse I could find was Acts 15:29 and seemed to support this idea. Could you explain what the phrase, ‘from blood,’ means in Acts 15:29?”

This verse was taken from the final draft of the doctrinal conclusion to the first ecclesiastical conference at Jerusalem. A serious theological debate had erupted within the early Christian church between grace and works salvation (Acts 15:1-6).

The **works** for salvation group thesis was: “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” (Acts 15:1, 5)

The **grace** salvation group thesis was: “But we believe that we (Jews) are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they (Gentiles) also are.” (Acts 15:11)

After completing the debate on this controversy, three messages were delivered to the delegation and two conferees were selected to carry the doctrinal conclusion to the local churches.

- Peter delivered the first message (Acts 15:7-11).
- Next, Paul and Barnabas gave a report on their first evangelistic mission trip among the Gentiles (Acts 15:12).
- James outlined the doctrinal conclusion of this ecclesiastical conference (Acts 15:13-21).
- Finally, the conference selected Judas and Silas to be sent with the ecclesiastical letter outlining the doctrinal conclusion of the conference (Acts 15:22-29).

This lesson has studied five points about the request regarding abstaining from sacrificial blood.

Because the sacrificial blood was part of shadow Christology, it was protected by Levitical Law (Lev.7:26-27; 17:10-16; 19:26).

- 1. In Peter’s message, he described legalism as “placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?” (Acts 15:10)**
- 2. Paul and Barnabas said, “God had done signs and wonders among the Gentiles.” (Acts 15:12)**
- 3. James taught that Amos 9:11-12 declared the Gentiles were prophesied into messianic salvation.**

(Acts 15:13-19). “Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles.”

James suggested the following four things to be included in their doctrinal draft: “But that we write that they **abstain** from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.” (Acts 15:20)

It was accepted and placed in the final doctrinal letter: “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain **from things** sacrificed to idols and **from blood and from things** strangled **and from** fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.” (Acts 15:28-29) [These things were offensive to the Jewish nation.]

4. It was important for me to learn how to resolve theological differences from the apostolic leadership of Christianity (Acts 15:2, 6).

I learn to never compromise the gospel of grace salvation by faith (Acts 15:7-11; Gal.2:5, 10-11).

I learn to be considerate of issues of conscience regarding liberties of the Christian Way of Life (CWL) (Acts 15:20, 29). An example is related to one of these issues - "food sacrifices to idols." (1 Cor.8:1-13, 7:10-12). "All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify." (1Cor.10:23)

The law of love is applied to believers (1 Cor.8:1; Rom.14:15). And the law of expedience is applied to unbelievers regarding liberties in CWL (1 Cor.10:27-33).

"So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food." (Rom.14:19-20; 15:1-9) "Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." (Rom.15:7)

5. The conclusion of the Jerusalem ecclesiastic conference established that the central doctrine of the Christian faith was GRACE and not works.

"And He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:9)

This was the point Paul was making in the book of Galatians. "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." (Gal.2:21)

- "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal.3:25)
- "For all of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Gal.3:27)
- A saved Jew does not have a spiritual advantage over a Gentile believer and vice versa.
- A saved freed person does not have a spiritual advantage over a slave and vice versa.
- A saved male does not have a spiritual advantage over a female and vice versa (Gal.3:28).

We have learned that sacrificial blood was part of a much larger issue for Christianity – **Grace verses Legalism.**

(Rom.3:28) "We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

(Rom.3:30) "Since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one."