

Acts 15:1-33  
The Jerusalem Council  
Sermon Notes

The Jerusalem Council, A.D. 49, was one of the most significant events for the church in the first century after Christ's resurrection. For us it holds:

- a. A theological principle
- b. A practical principle
- c. An organizational principle

The theological principle:  
Salvation is by grace alone. Period.

Galatians 5:11 ESV

11 But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

"The struggle for faith alone never ends. It's a part of our own inability to accept a gift. And deeper than that: we want to be loved because of what we do for God."

Lloyd Ogilvie

Galatians 2:15-16 ESV

15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

The practical principle:

My freedom in Christ must at times be sacrificed for the sake of another.

Galatians 5:1 ESV

1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

"Christ's will for you is that you enjoy freedom. Where you go to school, what job you do, where you live, etc., are not nearly so crucial as whether you stand fast in freedom. If they were, the Bible would have commanded those things as clearly as it here commands freedom. But it doesn't."

John Piper

1 Corinthians 9:19-21 ESV

19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.

Romans 14:13 ESV

13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

The organizational principle:

Decision making by consensus promotes unity in the church ... and witness to the world.

"Consensus decision-making is a creative and dynamic way of reaching agreement between all members of a group. Instead of simply voting for an item and having the majority of the group getting their way, a group using consensus is committed to finding solutions that everyone actively supports, or at least can live with."

John 13:34-35 ESV

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

"It is in the midst of a difference that we have our golden opportunity. When everything is going well and we are all standing in a nice little circle, there is not much to be seen by the world. But when we come to the place where there is a real difference, and we exhibit uncompromised principles but at the same time observable love, then there is something that the world can see, something they can use to judge that these really are Christians, and that Jesus has indeed been sent by the Father."

Francis Schaeffer

John 17:21 ESV

21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.