HOW ARE MEN SAVED?
Acts 15:1-11

Introduction:

A. Certain men have come to Antioch from Judaea
   1) They have come to teach
   2) "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."
   3) "manner" = ethos = "a custom, usage, of a people, established by law or otherwise"
   4) Genesis 17:10 - Lev. 12:3

B. Paul and Barnabas preached otherwise
   2) Barnabas, "preached the word"

C. They refused to yield to false teachers
   1) "dissension" = stasis = "an uproar", "a commotion", "an insurrection", "a controversy"
   2) "no small" = holigos = "little"
   3) "disputation" = suzetesis = "a joint inquiry, and so an investigation"

D. The brethren appointed Paul and Barnabas and "certain other of them", to go to Jerusalem"
   1) They were to go to the Apostles and Elders
   2) This would bring the full weight of personal knowledge on the question

E. How are men saved? (1 act - threefold)
   1) By believing in Jesus, Jew & Gentile
   2) By becoming a Jew first by circumcision and then subject to law and then faith
F. "On the way" Vs. 3
   1) "And so they were endorsed and sent on by the church"
   2) "It was, in fact, the congregation that was sending them"
   3) The authority of the church is beginning to emerge, Antioch to Jerusalem
   4) "conversion" = epistrope = "a turning about"
   5) Acts 14:15
   6) This caused, "great joy"

I. Their Reception at Jerusalem Vs. 4
   A. They were received of the church
      1) "church" = ekklesias = "called out......."
      2) Apostles and Elders
   B. They set the facts before the church
      1) "and they declared all things that God had done with them"
      2) "all that God had accomplished through them"
      3) Most of the successful things that occur in religion can be explained
         by mass marketing techniques, human leadership, carnal appeal,
         McDonald's, Hitler, designer clothes.

II. The Identification of Error Vs. 5
   A. The Pharisees, who were believers in Jesus, stated their convictions
      1) "that it is needful to circumcise them"
      2) "and to command them to keep the law of Moses"
   B. What were these men saying?
      1) They are Jews, they have a foundation for what they believe, they
         have been circumcised, they are covenant people.
      2) Circumcision was a multi-daily reminder of the covenant relationship
         that the male had with Jehovah. In sexual relationship it reminded
         both male and female of God's promise to make of Abraham a great
         nation.
3) In keeping the law they were reminded of God's
   a. moral requirements
   b. of man's obligation to man
   c. of God's provider (the days, moons, etc)
   d. the coming one and blood redemption (the sacrifices) and Passover

They could not conceive of men, (gentiles) starting in the middle.

III. The Matter Considered by Pastors       Vs. 6

   A. "And the Apostles and Elders came together for to consider this matter"
      1) "consider" = eidon = "to see", "to behold"
      2) "matter" = logos = "the subject matter of discourse"
      3) The Apostles and Elders were gathered together to look into and
         consider this question"

   B. This is not a sign of weakness
      1) Not an attempt at compromise
      2) A genuine search for truth

   C. How do these Gentiles fit into God's plan? What were they to discuss?
      1) Peter gave them facts
      2) Paul gave them facts
      3) They were saved, God approved by signs!

IV. Peter's Testimony About the Gentiles       Vs. 7-11

   A. He seems reluctant to speak
      1) "much disputing" = dialogismos = "balancing or adjustment of accounts",
         hence "reflection" or "thought"
      2) He realized what grave consequences lay ahead for him. He later
         retreated in daily life.

   B. God chose Peter to preach to them
      1) Acts 10:9 - At the house of Simon the Tanner
      2) Acts 11:2-18 - At Jerusalem
C. God had saved them
   1) God knew their hearts  Vs. 8
   2) He made no distinction as to the method of salvation  Vs. 9

D. They should be left alone  Vs. 10
   1) To require them to keep the law would be to tempt God
   2) The Jews did not keep the law

E. God's plan of salvation for all  Vs. 11
   1) Salvation is by grace
   2) Salvation is by grace for all

V. The Testimony of Paul and Barnabas  Vs. 12
A. They told of miracles and wonders  Gal. 2:1-10
   1) "miracles" = semeion = "a signal", "an ensign"
   2) "wonders" = teras = "a supernatural act"

B. This appealed to the Jews
   1) 1 Cor. 1:22 - "For the Jews require a sign.......
   2) "sign" = semeion = (same as Acts 15:12)

C. The letter to the Gentiles  Vs. 23-29
   1) This was a circular letter  Vs. 23
   2) It carried the weight of 3 sources

D. The need for the letter  Vs. 24
   1) "troubles you with words" = tarasso = "to stir up", "to agitate, as water in a pool"
   2) "subvert" = anaskeuazo = "to pack up baggage", "dismantle"; hence to upset, rearrange
   3) Two things more than faith
   4) These were not so instructed
E. The men sent with (to carry) the letter
   1) The messengers are important       Vs. 25
   2) They are "chosen" men
   3) They are "beloved" men
   4) They are brave men, "hazarded" = paradidomi = "to give up or hand
      over to another"
   5) They will speak for them       Vs. 27

F. The source of the letter's content       Vs. 28
   1) "the Holy Ghost", gifts and inspiration
   2) "and to us"
   3) "burden" = baros = "weight", "trial"
   4) There are necessary burdens

G. "these necessary things"
   1) Not necessary to salvation!
   2) Necessary to living as converts
   3) "necessary" = epanagkes = "force", "constraint", "a necessity arising
      from constraint"
   4) It was necessary for them to abstain, etc.

H. The four things that are necessary       Vs. 29
   1) "meats offered to idols"
   2) "from blood"
   3) "from things strangled"
   4) "from fornication"
   5) They would, "do well"! "you shall be come strong"

I. The delivery of the letter       Vs. 30
   1) They gathered the multitude
   2) The "delivered the letter" = epididomi = "to put into one's hands",
      "to give upon", "in addition"

J. The reaction of the Antioch church       Vs. 31
   1) They read the letter
   2) They rejoiced
3) "consolation" = paraklesis = "a calling near", "a summons to ones side"

VIII. The Church at Antioch Strengthened

A. By Judas and Silas Vs. 32-34
1) They were prophets, New Testament
2) "exhortation" - "exhorted" = parakeleo = "to call to another",
"every kind of encouraging word"
3) "confirmation" - "confirming" = episerizo = "to make to lean on"
4) The church "released" them to do the work the Apostles assigned them Vs. 33
5) Silas wanted to stay Vs. 34

B. Paul and Barnabas Vs. 35
1) "continued" = "to rub away"
2) "teaching" = didaskolos
3) "preaching" = euaggelizo = "a joyful message"
4) "the word of the Lord"