

Convicted – Antioch: A Growing and Vibrant Church

Imagine this: A vibrant and growing church suddenly finds itself facing a crisis that threatens to tear it apart. A dangerous teaching has crept in, distorting the very heart of the gospel message. The stakes are high, the conflict is real, and the future of this church and its message hangs in the balance. This isn't a hypothetical scenario; it's the explosive situation that unfolded in Antioch, as recorded in Acts 15:1-3. The church was grappling with a challenge that would have lasting implications for the spread of Christianity and for our understanding of salvation today.

1. Judaizers Came to Antioch | Act 15:1, 5; cf. 11:1-3
 - a. Preached that Gentiles had to become like Jews to be saved. | cf. 15:11
 - i. That is, Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses.
 - b. Their message negatively impacted the Antioch church. | Gal 2:11-14
 - i. “Even Barnabas,” the Son of Encouragement was caught up in their hypocrisy.
 - c. Jesus + circumcision/the Law was a heresy that was attractive to many. | Gal 1:6-9
2. Paul, Barnabas, and the Church Defended the Gospel of Jesus. | 15:2-3
 - a. Paul and Barnabas’ reaction: “No small dissension” (ESV, NKJV, LSB), “Sharp dispute” (NIV), “Heated argument” (NASB), “Serious argument” (CSB). | cf. Act 17:16-17; Gal 4:19-20; 5:12; Php 3:1-11
 - i. The issue of salvation by grace through faith was too important to be ignored. | Eph 2:8-10; Col 2:11-15; Gal 5:1-15
 - ii. Unity based on Jesus’ grace was too important to lose. | Eph 2:11-22
 - b. The Antiochene church sent Paul, Barnabas, and some others to Jerusalem.
 - i. The church – and not just its leaders – was convicted to defend the gospel of Jesus.
 - ii. A church without gospel centered convictions is like a lighthouse without a light – it may look impressive on the outside, but it offers no guidance or hope in the darkness.
3. Our Need for Gospel-Centered Convictions:
 - a. Center our hopes on the grace of God in Jesus. | 1 Pet 5:12
 - b. Be able to prove it from the scriptures. | 2 Tim 3:16-17
 - c. Ready and willing to defend it from distortions. | Jude 3
 - d. Live the gospel truth every day. | Gal 5:16-26

If Jackson Heights is going to be a growing and vibrant church, then we must remember that gospel-centered convictions are not optional extras but essential for every believer to believe, live, and passionately defend.