

Councils, Confessions, Creeds, and Catechisms

The church's first council – Acts 15:1-35

The problem that had to be resolved – vs. 1-2

- Paul and Barnabas are in Antioch preaching and teaching.
- Other teaching was introduced into the church: circumcision was necessary for salvation.
 - 1) Consider, the Abrahamic covenant is foundational to this teaching.
 - 2) Consider, the difficulty in parsing out the promise.
- Both sides are passionate in their doctrine. Each side must represent their doctrine before a council.

The problem is addressed by a council – vs. 3-21

- The council members: Elders – church PASTORS
Apostles – those officially, and personally COMMISSIONED by Christ
- The council hears arguments: “disputing”- debate
 1. Peter presents a theological argument that includes:
 - The truth of Gentile inclusion.
 - The importance of the heart.
 - The key is faith, not works.
 - The impossibility of legalism.
 - The keystone of salvation is God's grace.
 2. Paul and Barnabas present testimony of Gentile conversion by grace alone.
 3. James presents Biblical support and a possible resolution, which included:
 - Abstinance from “pollutions of idols.”
 - Abstinance from “fornication.”
 - Abstinance from “things strangled.”
 - Abstinance from “blood.”

*** Why this prescription? These particular sins evidence a contrast with our atonement by the blood of Christ.

The problem is resolved – vs. 22-35

- The resolution was to be published to all believers.
- The resolution was to clarify the problem and its correction.
- The resolution was entrusted to sound teachers.
- The resolution was well received by the church.