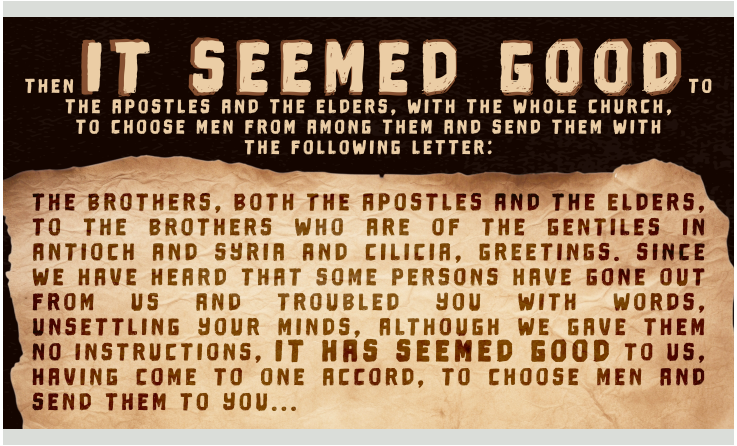
Digging Deeper

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The CROSS + What? (Acts 15:1-5)

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I have been known to say, "It is the CROSS, only the Cross, and not the Cross + chocolate chip cookies".

Yes, that is sarcasm, but there's a point.

There are certain things in life that are good (like chocolate chip cookies), and things that are good for you.

In the category of things that are good, you might list people, food, and fun things that you like.

Perhaps they are good for you as well. As followers of Jesus we have many good things.

Prayer is good, right? Christians should pray. Worship is good, right? Christians should worship. What else could you list that are good things followers of Jesus should do?

Yet we often add these good things to how we view our relationship with God.

Consider, if asked "How can Christians be in a relationship with God?", most Christians would say through God's Son, Jesus, and his Cross.

But while we might quickly give that answer, we often find in practice that we have added one or more things to faith in Jesus and His Cross. Things added are usually not bad things. They are good things such as chocolate chip cookies.



I know that using chocolate chip cookies as an example is ludicrous, but it is to make a point. We humans like to contribute, we like to add things into existing systems. It is a way we make things our own.

My point is that nothing except the Cross of Jesus Christ can save us—and faith in Him as the Son of God—we need nothing else.

Yet we add things, and those things so often get in the way of people coming to meet Jesus, humbly acknowledging their need for him.

In previous posts we've just been part of a celebration.

Paul and his traveling companions have faced opposition and persecution. Now with the celebration barely complete, they face a different type of opposition, it is from the inside.

Consider verse 1: But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." (emphasis mine). They go on in verse 5 to require the entire Law of Moses be kept.

No one is suggesting that the Law of Moses is bad. It's good.

However, these teachers were essentially saying that human action is required for salvation—they are adding the Law to the Cross—as if the death and resurrection of God the Son is somehow not enough, is somehow deficient.

They are blatantly asserting that we, as humans, make things right between ourselves and God, not the other way around.

The fallacy here is to presume that we, the created, can somehow take actions which require the Creator to then save us.

Just a quick aside. The Letter to the Galatians was written to the people in this region, probably as Paul is traveling to Jerusalem. All the cities that Paul and Barnabas just traipsed through were in an area known as Galatia. It is no wonder that Paul in chapter two of that letter, uses such strong language. And it possibly seems as if Peter has gotten swept up in this teaching (Galatians 2:11-16)

Circling back, let's just be clear they are not opposed to Gentile believers. However, they are saying that faith is NOT enough. They in fact think that they are saved because they believe in Jesus AND follow the Law.

Faith will lead us to all sorts of things: reading God's Word, joining others in worship, prayer, concern for the poor, concern for living holy lives—it will lead to action—that is what alive faith looks like.

Yet we must never confuse, or add those good things to the grace given to us by God.