

“UNTIL THIS WORD...”

By Keith Greer

“And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, ‘Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!’” {Acts 22:22}

Paul was making his defense before the Jews, giving them a short account of his own conversion. They listened until he mentioned the Gentiles; then they closed their ears. People today are much the same way. During religious discussions, they are willing to listen “**until this word.**”

Grace. People freely quote Ephesians 2:8, 9, which says we are saved by grace and not works. Indeed all agree with those passages, but what about Titus 2:11,12? “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” Now, they stop listening; why? This and other passages clearly state that we must live in a certain way – accomplishing works of obedience.

Faith. They quote and extol John 3:16 as a passage that teaches we are saved by faith alone. What happens when one brings James 2:14,17 into the discussion? “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him...Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” Again, they stop listening, because the verses teach that we must DO something!

Baptism. They bring up the thief on the cross {Luke 23:41-43} to show that baptism IS NOT essential to salvation. We believe the thief was saved, but he did not live in the Christian age; read Jesus’ words on the subject {Mark 16:16}. “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Once again, they’ve stopped listening; why? Baptism is not part of their equation for salvation.

Sadly, some folks just can’t be open-minded enough to examine the scriptures to be sure that their understanding agrees with God’s book! Just like the Jews in Paul’s time, it is not that the audience cannot grasp the meaning of the Scriptures; it is that they’ve already made up their minds! ***