

**Life saving faith**  
*Acts 15: verses 5 to 11*

Picture a church general body meeting in early AD where conservatives (Pharisees) object to new members of the church who are non-Jews (gentiles) and require that the new converts be circumcised and abide by the law of Moses, in short they need to accept Judaism before accepting Christianity. The scripture does not tell us if the new converts (erstwhile gentiles) are in attendance during this discussion, I hope they were not since that will not be the type of welcome that someone who accepted Jesus as their savior deserves. As general bodies go, there is no resolution!!

The matter gets assigned to a committee (as usual!), in this case the elders and apostles are the select group who are tasked to find a resolution. By the grace of God, the early church had Peter “the rock” Simon in their midst and he clinched the deal with this timeless quote “We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are”. The operative phrase is “**just as they are**”, yes accept Christ as your savior just as you are, whether it was the thief who accepted Jesus as his savior before his death or someone who was called on by God when he was in his mothers womb. **Just as they are.**

Challenges similar to the one expressed here are not unique to the early church, they exist to this day, and they manifest themselves in different forms. It could be differences in liturgical practices, linguistic differences, traditional symbols in worship, the role of the two genders in the church and many more issues, which range from mundane to sacred.

Peter “the rock” Simon continues to say “He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.” Spot on, a prayer in any language is a prayer; worship originates in the heart of the believer and not his lips. The presence of God in our midst purifies our hearts by the faith we have, as we say the prayers irrespective of the myriad of languages we pray in, or our pedigree. **Just as we are.**

We are all creatures of habit and habits followed over generations becomes culture, most of it good, some of it not so good. We cling to these as something, which binds us, and pass it down to future generations. We carry a little bit of this into everything we do including our worship, which is what makes it special and our own. Our children raised far from where we were raised have a different set of circumstances. They need to feel that they can participate in worship, **just as they are.**

This blessed lent gives us yet another opportunity to open our hearts to our Lord Jesus, **just as we are.**