

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 20TH-21ST // BOOK OF ACTS

THE QUESTION (ACTS 15:1-5)

THE BIG IDEA IN ACTS

Acts is usually associated with the growth of the church and the works (acts) of the apostles. Oddly, large parts of the church and the apostles aren't mentioned.

- It seems a more central idea is the **"problem" of Gentile Christianity**. What are we to do with non-Jews in a (mostly) Jewish religion?

WHY CIRCUMCISION?

In the Old Testament, circumcision for religious identification was given to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 17). It was so important that God nearly killed Moses because his son was uncircumcised (Exodus 4).

- Properly understood, circumcision was **obedience from faith and anticipation of the new birth**.

In the New Testament, Paul spends a lot of time convincing people not to be circumcised, or at least that it's unnecessary. Why the change? **The circumcision of the heart**.

- Over time, circumcision became a point of pride and a work necessary for salvation. It became a sign of righteousness rather than faith.

TWO SOLUTIONS TO ONE PROBLEM

"Some men" and Paul/Barnabas identified the same problem: humanity needs saving. But they disagreed on what it took to be saved.

- One group said it was faith plus works, and the other said it was faith alone. **The nature of the gospel was at stake**, and people were being confused/misled.

RESPONSE 1: THE GENTILES CONVERTED

Paul and Barnabas responded to the arguments of "some men" by pointing to the conversion of the Gentiles and their receiving of the Spirit.

- So much of Acts beats us over the head with the idea that **even the Gentiles received the Spirit**.

RESPONSE 2: THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

Paul and Barnabas wanted back-up on this point, so they involved the apostles in Jerusalem. They wanted church unity and clarity.

- Church councils are authoritative **insofar as they rightly interpret God's Word**, not just because they are church councils.

THE ANSWER (ACTS 15:6-22)

THE COUNCIL'S REASONING

After "much debate," three apostles made a few summary statements. The reason for their decision revolved around the inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation by faith.

- It's worth noting that **these are summary statements**, not exhaustive transcripts.

PETER'S ARGUMENT

Peter brings us back to Chapters 10-11, where the conversion of Cornelius (a Gentile) is recounted multiple times at length. His supporting point is that not even the Jews could keep the law. How could the Gentiles be expected to?

- **Everyone, including Jews, is saved by faith** in the Messiah.

PAUL'S ARGUMENT

Very briefly, we hear again from Paul and Barnabas, about their work among the Gentiles and how God blessed that ministry.

- Once again, their focus is on how **even the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit**: "If, then, God gave them the same gift...how could [we] possibly hinder God?" (11:17).

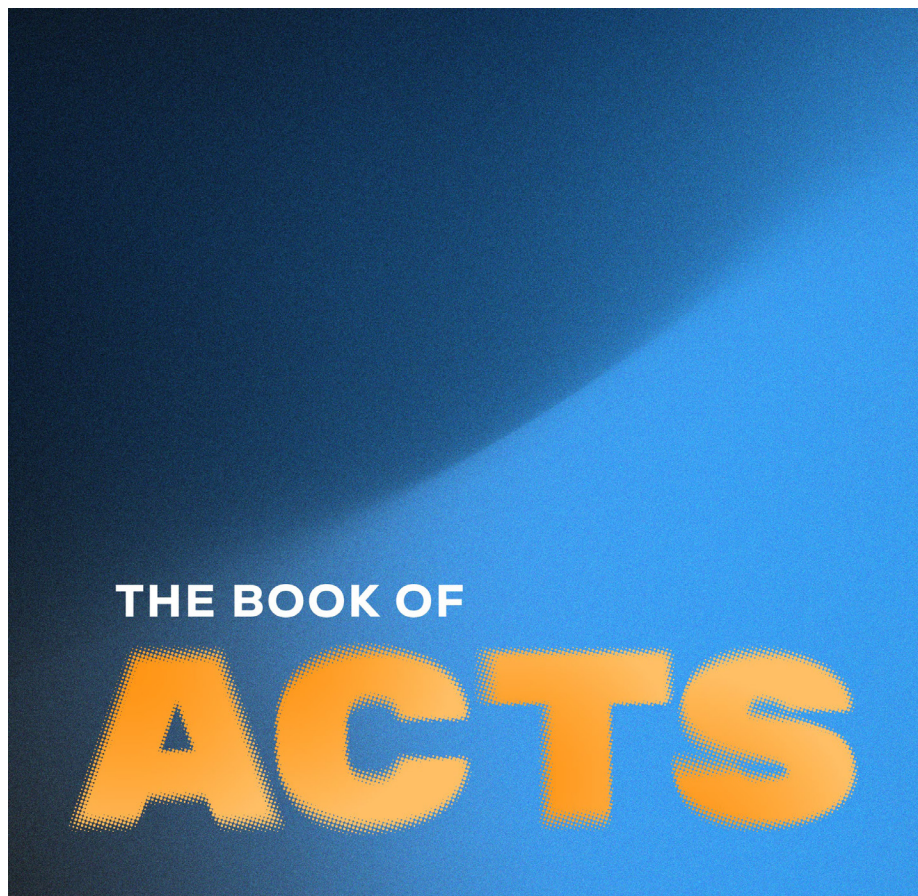
JAMES'S ARGUMENT

James wraps it up by supporting Peter's and Paul's arguments, then proposing a solution. James's OT argument follows Peter's by quoting a passage where **Israel's failure resulted in the inclusion of the Gentiles**.

- He is demonstrating that this was always the plan, and the Pharisees should have seen it coming.

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THE COUNCIL'S CONCLUSION

The apostles agreed to tell the Gentiles,

- "you don't need to be circumcised," and
- "you should abstain from these certain actions."
- As with all legitimate and authoritative church councils, they considered a question and then answered it by searching **Scripture and reason**.

CIRCUMCISION IS NOT REQUIRED

The New Testament talks a lot about circumcision, especially Paul. Though the council settled the question, some people kept bringing it up.

- Paul didn't blindly appeal to the decision of the council but **expounded on the reasons they used** to make their decision.

SHOW LOVE THROUGH ABSTINENCE

The Gentiles weren't totally off the hook. Getting a pass on circumcision didn't mean they could live reckless, sinful lives because of their freedom from the law.

- Loving their neighbor meant giving up certain "rights" and living above reproach. They had an obligation **to their weaker neighbor**. This requires wisdom.

WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH.

- Jesus' sacrifice is **sufficient** to pay for our sin, to save us.
- We **cannot** add anything to what He did by our own works.
- We receive the gift of salvation by trusting what God says, which is to say **by faith**.

WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH TO LOVE.

- We were designed to love God and love people.
- Now that we've been freed from sin, we can live in that design.
- One of the ways we demonstrate love is **by submitting** our desires to the needs of others.

THEY ARE SAVED BY FAITH.

- It seems like the Pharisees were focused on burdening others to make themselves feel good.
- Do we apply the grace we want to others?
- Do our actions and attitudes make it easier or harder for people to be in a right relationship with God?

CURRENT EVENTS

Next Class

July 13th | 6:30 pm



HIGHLIGHT
of the Month



PROVIDING ACCESS TO GOD'S
WORD AROUND THE WORLD

Intro to

LIFE GROUPS

AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY — STARTS HERE

SUNDAY, JUNE 21ST | 2:00 PM
CANNON COUNTY | STUDENT CENTER

INCOMING 6TH-12TH GRADE

EXPERIENCE

STUDENT CAMP

JULY 19TH-24TH, 2026
TO SIGN UP, VISIT OUR APP OR WEBSITE.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PODCAST

A new resource that helps you and your kids have
better conversations about faith.
Launching in April



SEASON 3 NOW AVAILABLE



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