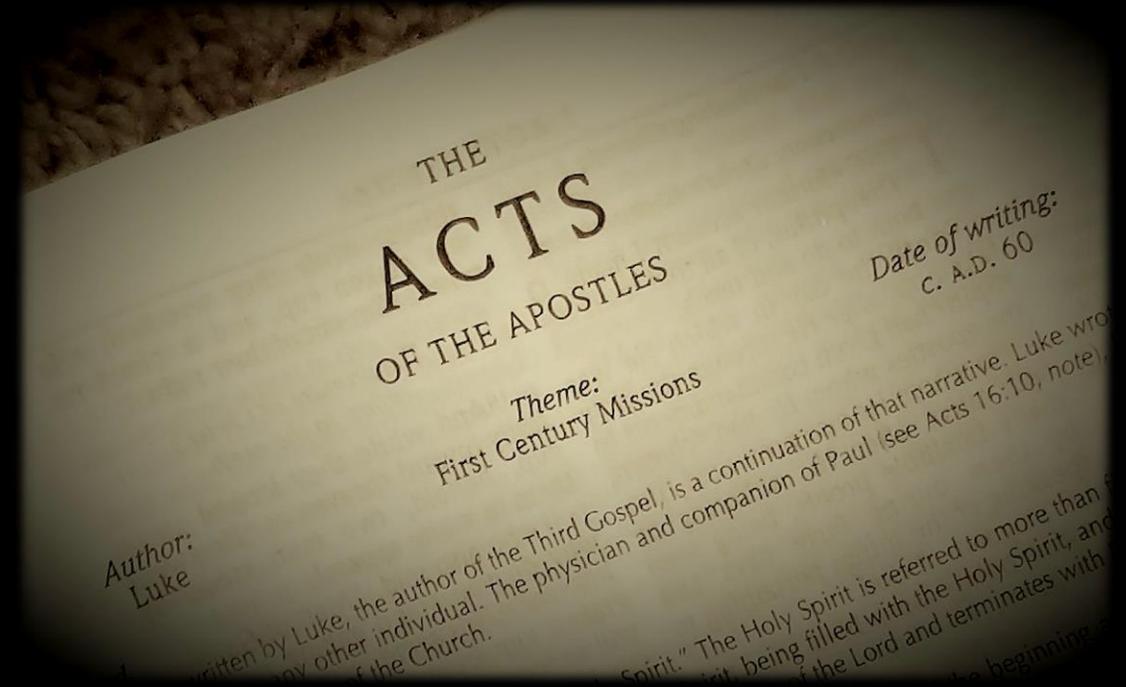


Verse by Verse

Acts 15



Previously in *Acts*

Previously in Acts

- In the last two chapters we saw Paul and Barnabas take the gospel out on the first missionary journey.
- Typically they started in Jewish synagogues, but some of their best response came from non-Jewish people.
- This has been an ongoing theme in Acts – the number of non-Jewish people putting their faith in Christ.
- For some, this was something of a problem.

Acts 15 Introduction

Acts 15 Introduction

- In this chapter controversy sets in over this very issue.
- This will lead us to a decisive conference that takes place in Jerusalem involving important church leaders.
- Their decision helps clarify the gospel and sets a standard for evangelism that continues until this day.

Acts 15 Key Verse

Acts 15 Key Verse

- Acts 15:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

¹¹ But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.

Acts 15 Outline

Acts 15 Outline

1. The Controversy 15:1-5
2. The Testimony of Peter 15:6-11
3. The Judgment of James 15:12-21
4. The Council's Decision 15:22-35
5. Paul and Barnabas 15:36-41

1. The Controversy Acts 15:1-5

1. The Controversy Acts 15:1-5

- **15:1** We already know that there were a number of Gentile believers in Antioch.
- They had now put their faith in the God and Messiah of Israel and were baptized members of the church.
- Yet, it is highly unlikely that any of them were circumcised or ever bothered to keep the Jewish law.

1. The Controversy Acts 15:1-5

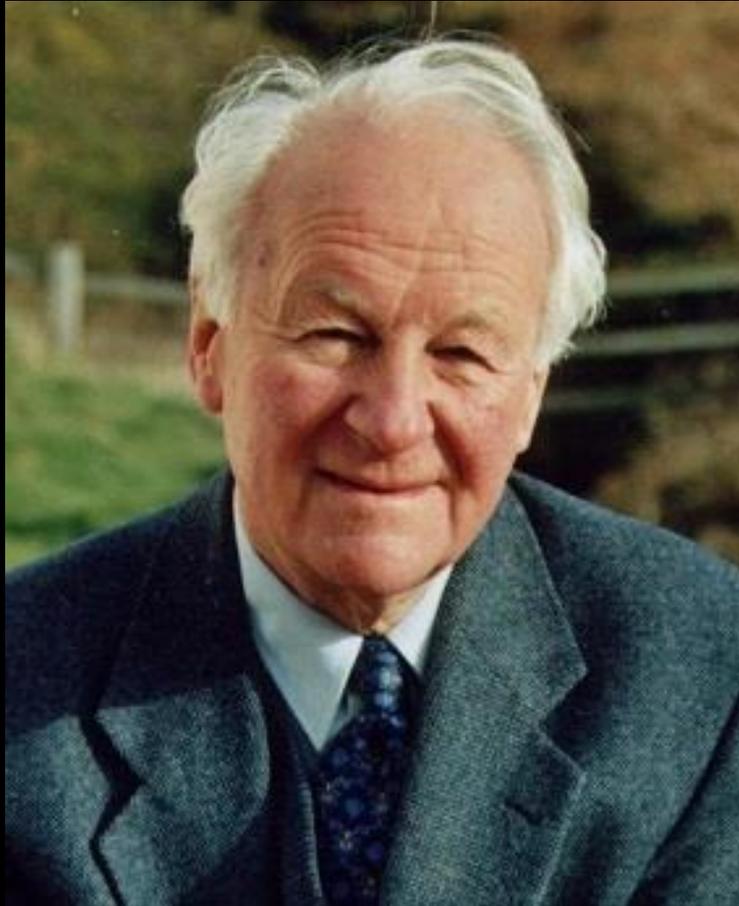
- **15:1** That apparently did not sit well with these brothers who had come from Judea.
- But this was **not a minor issue** – not a personal gripe.
- It is important that we see exactly how far their argument went.

1. The Controversy Acts 15:1-5

- Acts 15:1 (ESV)

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.”

1. The Controversy Acts 15:1-5



They were telling Gentile converts that faith in Jesus was not enough, not sufficient for salvation: they must add to faith circumcision, and to circumcision observance of the law ...

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),
All Souls Church, London*

1. The Controversy Acts 15:1-5



... In other words, they must let Moses complete what Jesus had begun, and let the law supplement the gospel.

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),
All Souls Church, London*

1. The Controversy Acts 15:1-5

- This issue – and any variation of it – digs into the foundation of the Christian faith.
- It asks the question “What must we do to be saved?”

1. The Controversy Acts 15:1-5

- **15:2-5** The church decided to send a group to Jerusalem to finally settle this issue.
- Predictably, the (Christian) Pharisees had the most trouble with Gentiles not keeping the law.

2. The Testimony of Peter Acts 15:6-11

2. The Testimony of Peter Acts 15:6-11

- Peter makes an excellent point.
- His experience – perhaps ten years prior to this – was divinely given to him at the home of Cornelius.
- In that incident Gentiles were fully converted and received the Holy Spirit by faith.

2. The Testimony of Peter Acts 15:6-11

- Further, the Old Testament is clear that the people of Israel were not especially good at keeping the law.
- To try to impose that law upon Gentiles is misguided.
- Our key verses remind us that, Jew or Gentile, all people are saved by the grace of God.

2. The Testimony of Peter Acts 15:6-11

- Acts 15:10-11 (ESV)

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3. The Judgment of James Acts 15:12-21

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- **15:12** Peter, Barnabas and Paul the Pharisee and rabbi were all in agreement.
- This certainly made for a convincing case so far.
- **15:13** James the brother of Jesus now adds his affirmation to their cause.

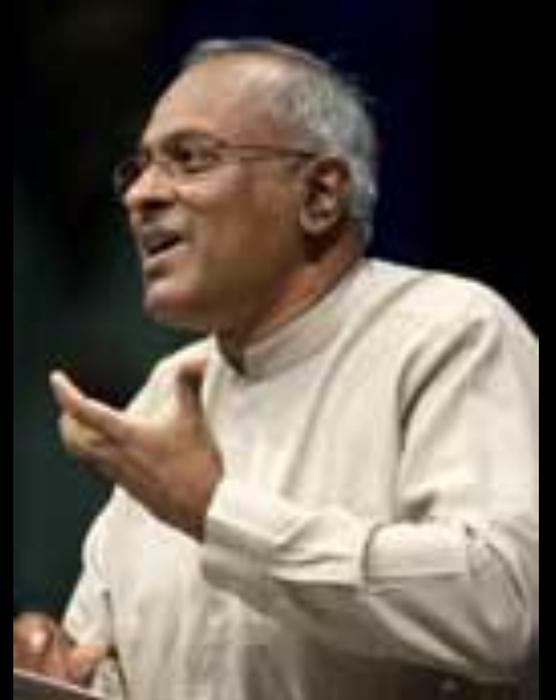
3. The Judgment of James Acts 15:12-21

- **15:14** James calls Simon Peter “Simeon,” which is the most Jewish version of his name.
- This detail is minor, but is an indicator of the faithful writing of Luke.
- But again, all of our main characters are in agreement.

3. The Judgment of James Acts 15:12-21

In arguing for the full inclusion of Gentiles into the church Peter appealed to direct guidance and intervention from God, and Barnabas and Paul appealed to God's confirmation of their work through signs and wonders. James appeals to Scripture.

*– Ajith Fernando,
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka*



3. The Judgment of James Acts 15:12-21

- **15:15-18** James points out that what Peter has claimed is fully in accordance with Scripture.
- According to the prophets, Israel can expect more than national and spiritual renewal.
- They can also expect Gentile conversion.
- This is exactly what the early church was now seeing.

3. The Judgment of James **Acts 15:12-21**

- **15:19-21** James suggests placing only minimal requirements upon the Gentiles.
- **None of these are prerequisites for salvation.**
- The Gentiles should understand since many had attended synagogue services where Moses was read.
- For reference, it seems **Leviticus 17 & 18** were on James' mind when he listed these things.

4. The Council's Decision Acts 15:22-35

4. The Council's Decision Acts 15:22-35

- **15:24** The agitators in Antioch were from Judea so they seemed to speak for the Jewish church.
- James and friends make it clear that the original troublemakers had no authorization.

4. The Council's Decision Acts 15:22-35

- **15:25-29** This unified decision is now the official word from the church in Jerusalem.
- It was backed by the apostles and elders of the church.
- We should be glad they decided the way that they did.

4. The Council's Decision **Acts 15:22-35**

- Three of the four items dealt with food and were meant to help ease Jewish/Gentile relations.
 1. **Food sacrificed to idols** – common in Gentile cities.
 2. **From blood** – because some Gentiles like to eat or drink blood.
 3. **Strangled animals** – because the blood is not drained out of them.

4. The Council's Decision

Acts 15:22-35



Recipe from easteuropeanfood.about.com

Traditional Polish Blood Soup Recipe Known as Czarnina or...

★★★★★ 80 - Polish duck or goose blood soup, known as czarnina or czernina, is a sweet-sour soup made with poultry blood, vinegar, and dried fruits.



Recipe by D S

11 ingredients

Meat

3 lbs Duck

Produce

1 Bay leaf

2 cups Dried fruit

1/4 tsp Marjoram

Baking & Spices

4 tbsp All-purpose flour

1 Black pepper

1 Salt

Oils & Vinegars

1/2 cup Vinegar

Dairy

2 cups Half-and-half

Liquids

10 cups Water

Other

2 cups Blood (from a freshly killed duck or goose)

4. The Council's Decision Acts 15:22-35

- Romans 14:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

4. The Council's Decision Acts 15:22-35

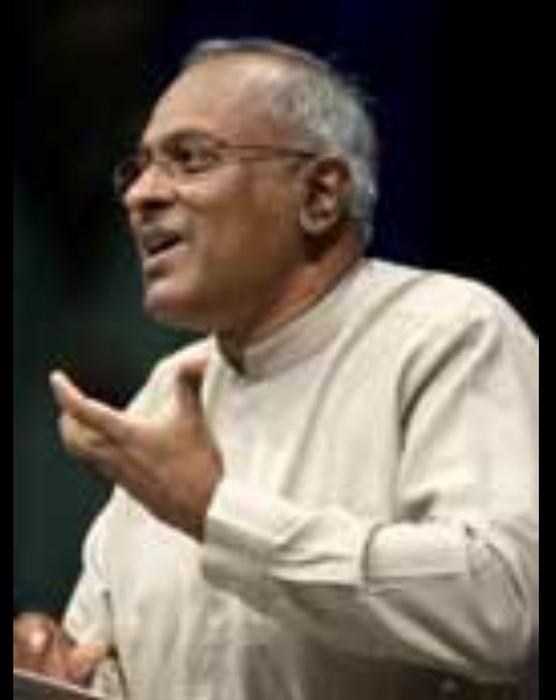
- The fourth item deals with the reality of the Greco-Roman culture of that day.
- Most of the Jewish moral laws dealing with murder, theft, etc. were similar in the Gentile world.
- Except one.

4. Abstain from ... sexual immorality.

4. The Council's Decision Acts 15:22-35

The issue of sexual immorality had to be brought up because the society in which the Gentile Christians lived was so pervaded with sexual immorality that the church had also been influenced by it.

*– Ajith Fernando,
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka*



4. The Council's Decision Acts 15:22-35

- This is equally applicable to us today.
- Both Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New were surrounded by sexually immoral cultures.
- The Bible consistently asks God's people to stay separate from the surrounding values and behavior.

4. The Council's Decision Acts 15:22-35

Some things we can learn:

1. Salvation will always be by grace through faith.
2. This means we do not add our favorite Christian practices (Don't drink, don't smoke) to the mix.
3. At the same time we can respect the backgrounds or experience of others as a way of showing love.
4. Sexual sin was never cancelled out by Jesus or by the early church – as if it was a trivial subject.

5. Paul and Barnabas Acts 15:36-41

5. Paul and Barnabas Acts 15:36-41

- By the grace of God, this disagreement turned out well for the future of the church.
- Paul and Barnabas and Mark and Silas all went on to engage in wonderful, God-ordained ministries.
- Let's not make it an excuse to settle all – or even most – arguments by separating from one another.

Acts 15 What We Just Read

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Acts 15 Key Points

Acts 15 Key Points

1. Salvation is now and always shall be by grace through faith.
2. Let's not add any checklists before accepting someone as a genuine new believer.
3. At the same time, let's strive to love one another better, respecting each other's backgrounds.
4. Finally, just like the early Christians, we need to avoid sexual immorality.

Acts 15 Key Points

- Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Acts 15 A Prayer

Acts 15 A Prayer

- Dear Father in heaven,
- We are grateful that the early church had to deal with so many conflicts, especially those that help to clarify the basics of our beliefs.
- Thank you that we are saved by your grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
- Thank you that his blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins.

Acts 15 A Prayer

- Help us to live out that faith in all kinds of good works.
- Help us especially to love one another by respecting each other's backgrounds and experience.
- And finally, since our culture is much like ancient cultures in this respect, help us to be a pure church in a world filled with sexual immorality.
- In Christ,
- Amen

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