

THE BOOK OF ACTS

ACTS 15:1-21 | LESSON SUMMARY

The Heart

ACTS 15:1, "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." (ESV)

- "Some men" likely refers to a group of Pharisees
 - This sparks an intense debate
- Debate in the ancient world
 - Sophists
- A council is formed to hear out the disagreement
 - This does not mean that they are representatives of all Jewish leaders
 - Paul and Barnabas are well received
- **ACTS 15:4**, "When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders..."

ACTS 15:5, "But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses." (ESV)

- This nagging question: what do we do with the Law?
 - Peter represents a crucial key



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ACTS 15:7, "Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe...he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith." (ESV)

- Peter then makes a statement that would have been difficult for any devout Jew to hear, let alone say out loud

ACTS 15:10, "...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?" (ESV)

- This isn't about judgement, it's about revelation
- God's grace is confirmed the miracles Paul and Barnabas share
- **ACTS 15:12**, "...they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles."

The Law

ACTS 15:13, "After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me..." (ESV)



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- James is in agreement with Peter (referred to as Simon)
 - He quotes the prophet Amos
“In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,” declares the LORD who does this.

ACTS 14:19-20, “...the Gentiles who turn to God...should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.” (ESV)

- There are directives given
 - The Gentiles may not be required to practice circumcision or abstain from unclean meat, but that doesn't eliminate the moral aspects of the law

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: Konstantinos Tsakos: Samos; the Archeological Museums Zondervan, Acts: Archeological Study Bible, John B. Miller, Convinced That God Had Called Us, C. Hemer, The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History

