

## Power to Witness in Word and Deed – Part 2


*The Book of Acts*


**Acts 15:1–21**

**Read Acts 15:1–21.**


1. What are the “men [who] came down from Judea”<sup>1</sup> telling the believers in Syrian Antioch? (v. 1)

What would doing this mean for the Gentile believers? (v. 5)

Why is this a problem? (13:38–39; \*Gal. 5:2–3)


2. Why is circumcision so important to the Jewish believers? (Gen. 17:1–14)
3. What is at the heart of Paul and Barnabas’ “sharp dispute and debate” (v. 2a) with the men from Judea? (Gal. 2:15–16, 21; Rom. 3:21–24;  Eph. 2:4–9)
4. Read about Paul’s testimony in Philippians 3:2–9. Why do you think Paul is so passionate about resolving this debate? (Phil. 3:8–9)
5. What does the leadership of the Antioch church do in response to this dispute? (vv. 2b–3a)
6. What news do Paul and Barnabas share as they make their way to Jerusalem, and how is it received? (vv. 3–4)

How do some Pharisees who had become believers in the church at Jerusalem respond to this same news? (v. 5)

7. What three works of God does Peter point out to the council of apostles and elders? ( Acts 10; 11:1–18)  
v. 7  
  
v. 8  
  
v. 9

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<sup>1</sup> “Because [these men] could not accept conversion without circumcision as adequate, they had organized themselves into a pressure group, whom we often term ‘Judaizers’ or ‘the circumcision party’. They were not opposed to the Gentile mission, but were determined that it must come under the umbrella of the Jewish church, and that Gentile believers must submit not only to baptism in the name of Jesus, but, like Jewish proselytes, to both circumcision and law-observance as well.” Stott, John R. W. *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 242.

\*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

8. How does Peter describe the requirement that is being demanded of the Gentile believers? (v. 10)


Why is this requirement unacceptable? (vv. 10–11;  Gal. 3:6–14)

9. What testimony do Barnabas and Paul give that silences the assembly? (v. 12)

10. Lastly, James, the brother of Jesus and leader among the elders at Jerusalem, addresses the council and confirms Peter's testimony.

a. How does James summarize Peter's testimony? (vv. 13–14)

b. James then quotes a 750-year-old prophecy from the Old Testament book of Amos. How does this prophecy confirm the inclusion of Gentiles into God's holy people? (vv. 16–18)

11. It is critical for the church to settle this issue for the sake of the purity of the gospel. Why else is it critical? (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3–6;  Eph. 2:11–22)

12. What guidelines does James now set forth for living as one people of God, brothers and sisters in Christ? For the Jewish believers (v. 19)

For the Gentile believers (vv. 20–21)

13. As Jewish and Gentile believers alike are compelled to give up their wrongful attitudes and offensive practices, what now enables them to enjoy full fellowship with one another? (Rom. 12:10; Gal. 5:6)

How is this essential for their witness in the world? (Jn. 13:34, 35)

14. Also essential to their testimony is a clear understanding of the gospel. How does Peter clarify the essential truth of the gospel? (vv. 8, 9, 11)

15. How has the Holy Spirit used this passage to challenge or encourage you?