



Acts Chapter 15 Part 1 Circumcise Your Children!

As we move into the 15th chapter of the book of Acts we find ourselves half way through our study on the book of Acts, but even more than that.. we find ourselves at a critical crossroads.

The 15th chapter of the book of Acts is often used to prove that the Apostle Paul preached against the Gentiles circumcising themselves. Many teach that Paul proclaimed that if you are a Gentile, that you don't have to be circumcised, and because of this incorrect interpretation of Paul's writings.. they will also proclaim that Gods Levitical laws are all nailed to some tree somewhere.

As we progress through the 15th chapter of the book of Acts I think that you will agree with me when I say that nothing could be farther from the truth of Gods Word. Paul never preached against the law of God, nor did he ever preach against circumcision.

Now I know that many people out there have many different candy stick scriptures that they love to use to try and convince us that Paul preached against the laws of God, but for every one that they have.. there are several of his scriptures that clearly teach otherwise.

Rom 2:13 *For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, **but the doers of the law who will be justified.***

Rom 3:31 *Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, **we uphold the law.***

Rom 6:1 *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?*

Rom 6:2 ***By no means!** How can we who died to sin still live in it?*

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Rom 7:12 *So **the law is holy**, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

Rom 8:7 *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, **for it does not submit to God's law;** indeed, it cannot.*

Rom 8:8 *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Rom 8:2 *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from **the law of sin and death.***

Pauls 2 Different Gospels?

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—

- Or -

Rom 7:12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

1Co 7:19 For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.

1Co 7:20 Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.

- Or -

Act 16:3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Rom 2:13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

- Or -

Gal 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

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The truth of the matter is that Paul always taught in favor of the Law of God, and he himself was obedient to the law of God until the day he died.

We'll come back to the well known fact that Paul always lived in observance of the law as we move forward.

The problem that most Christians have is that they don't understand which "Law" Paul is talking about. You see Paul taught about several different kinds of "Laws":

THE LAWS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL:

1. **The Law Of God:** Rom 3:31, 7:22-25, 8:7
2. **The Law Of Sin:** Rom 7:23-25
3. **The Law Of Sin And Death:** Rom 8:2
4. **The Law Of The Spirit Of Life:** Rom 8:2
5. **The Law Of Faith:** Rom 3:27
6. **The Law Of Righteousness:** Rom 9:31
7. **The Law Of Christ:** 1st Cor 9:21



To many Christians are all too willing to simply listen to anyone who has a three piece suit, patent leather shoes, a ten dollar hair cut, and a leather bound bible, claiming to be a Man of God. And because this man stands behind a pulpit and has several certificates and degree's hanging on his wall.. people are all too ready to buy into the black oil that drips from his lips.

If we're going to understand Acts chapter 15.. and what it's truly all about.. we must first understand a few fundamental facts about the Apostle Paul.

For those of you who have been with us from the beginning of this study.. you already know that Paul himself was a Pharisee.. in fact... Paul was known as a Pharisee among Pharisees.. which means that Paul was at the head of his class.

*Act 23:6 Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducee's and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brothers, **I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees.** It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial."*

You see Paul was not only a Pharisee... but he was an extremely well educated man. He was born in Tarsus which was the academic capitol of the world at that time. Paul sat at the feet of one of the most highly revered Rabbi's of his time who went by the name of Gamaliel. And in order to even sit at the feet of Gamaliel one had to have committed the Pentiumch (the first five books of the Old Testament) to memory.

And this was just in order to begin to be taught by Gamaliel. Paul also knew how to speak at least three languages that we know of, and he was also well schooled in the philosophy of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, and we see Paul use his knowledge of philosophy against those Gentiles who were being lead astray by it in several of his writings.

But here's my point in explaining how well schooled Paul was..

Even though Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees who excelled to the top of his class, and even though he could speak 3 different languages that we know of... and even though he was well educated in the philosophy of Aristotle, and Plato, and Socrates... you might even say that Paul had more degree's than a thermometer..

And even though Paul was so highly educated by the teachings of men... he could not see his own Messiah until the Messiah knocked him off of his horse on the way to Damascus and struck him blind.

It was then and only then... that Paul could recognize who Yahshua Jesus really was. Isn't that funny. A man who was so highly educated... a man who was taught by men for years upon years since he was just a boy... a man who attended schools and colleges of men and listened to Rabbi, after Rabbi... a man who had more degrees than a thermometer.. could not see his own

Messiah until his own Messiah knocked him off his horse on the way to Damascus and struck him blind in the street.

My friends... how many well educated men like Paul do you suppose are standing behind our church pulpits today? How many well educated men are there today just like Paul who have been taught by men in today's modern day denominational schools and colleges, and seminaries, who just like Paul have more degree's than a thermometer hanging on their walls... who just like Paul would not even know the Messiah if he walked up to them and kissed them on their foreheads?

This should make us think... and ponder the validity of those who preach and teach the Word of God in any capacity should it not? If our Messiah had not knocked Paul off of his horse on the way to Damascus and struck him blind in the street... Paul would have been just as lost as the rest of the Pharisees that our Messiah called “two fold children of hell” and “blind guides” and “whitewashed tombs beautiful on the outside but full of dead mens bones on the inside”.

Something tectonic had to happen in Paul's life in order to turn him away from the teachings of men.. and back to the teachings of God, and I want us to see that and make note of that. And we need despotically.. to recognize this in our time. To many of Gods people are being lead astray by those who have been taught the foolishness of men.

With all of their amphitheaters and mega churches, and cathedrals, and with all of their pomp and pageantry, they have the power to fool even the very elect... if it were possible. And I say that to say this..

Let us understand where the truth comes from and what the truth is. The truth my friends is the light, and the light is the truth, and the light only shines on those who walk with the light.

1Jn 2:4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

1Jn 2:5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:

1Jn 2:6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

So before we jump into reading Acts chapter 15 I want us to understand what Acts chapter 15 is all about and what it is not all about.

Acts chapter 15 is all about an argument that is going on between Paul and this group called “The circumcision group”. These men were Pharisees who ran the Synagogues and they were trying to force Paul's new Gentile converts into being circumcised... telling them that circumcision is what saved them.. but Paul knew better than that.

Circumcision can not save you any more than Baptism can save a person. It is the grace, and mercy of God alone that saves a person. We Baptize in the name of the Messiah, and we Circumcise because of the grace of our Father and because we love him... not to be saved or to earn anything from him. He has already freely given us all that we need, and there is nothing that we can do on our end.. to earn us anything. We simply obey his commandments because we love him, and we understand what the biblical definition of the love of God is.

1Jn 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

*1Jn 5:3 **For this is the love of God,** that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

Paul knew that no one was saved by simply being circumcised or by being baptized. A person must be circumcised, or baptized because of their love for the Messiah, and because of their love for God the Father. We can not earn our way into the gates of heaven, by doing anything.

Our Father in heaven tells us that all of our good works are as filthy rags to God the Father.

KJV

Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness's are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

What this circumcision group was doing... was scaring Paul's new converts away before they ever even had a chance to fully hear.. or understand.. the Word of God... and so Paul took this matter to James who was the brother of Yahshua Jesus and the elders at the Jerusalem council.

And the most important fact that we need to understand in this chapter is what the decree of James and the elders was concerning circumcision.. what was their decision concerning whether or not a new Gentile convert should be circumcised?

Lets read Acts chapter 15 and lest listen closely to what the judgment of James truly was on the matter of circumcision, and just as important.. what the judgment of James... was not.

Now as we read through Acts chapter 15 I want you to keep your ears open for anyone including James, or Paul, or the elders of the Jerusalem council, or anyone for that matter.. ever telling anyone.. that you don't have to be circumcised or that circumcision is of no value.

Lets see if you can find anywhere in Acts chapter 15 where anyone says.. “do not be circumcised”. I promise you my friends... you will not find it in this or any other chapter of your Bible.... Lets read:

Acts Chapter 15:

Act 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."

Act 15:2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

Act 15:3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.

Act 15:4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.

Act 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."

Act 15:6 The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.

Act 15:7 And after there had been much debate, 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.

Act 15:8 And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us,

Act 15:9 and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

Act 15:10 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?

Act 15:11 But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

Act 15:12 And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Act 15:13 After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me.

Act 15:14 Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.

Act 15:15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,

Act 15:16 "'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,

Act 15:17 that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things

Act 15:18 known from of old.'

Act 15:19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,

Act 15:20 but 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.

Act 15:21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him,

for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

Act 15:22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers,

Act 15:23 with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.

Act 15:24 Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,

Act 15:25 it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

Act 15:26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Act 15:27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.

Act 15:28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements:

Act 15:29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

Act 15:30 So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

Act 15:31 And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

Act 15:32 And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.

Act 15:33 And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them.

Act 15:35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Act 15:36 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."

Act 15:37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.

Act 15:38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

Act 15:39 And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,

Act 15:40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

Act 15:41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Okay... now once again I ask you... did you hear anywhere in that chapter... anyone saying "do not be circumcised"? Did you hear anyone in that chapter saying "you don't have to be circumcised"? Did you hear anyone in that chapter saying "circumcision is not for the

Gentiles”? Did you hear anyone saying that “circumcision is only for the Jews”?

I would submit to you my friends that you did not, and I think that anyone with a first grade education would agree with me... that we heard no such thing in Acts chapter 15.. and yet this is what is taught by today's modern day version of Christianity.

Now you may or may not know it but there is another place in the New Testament where Paul gives an account of what just went on here with James and the Jerusalem council on this matter of circumcision.. and I'd like to take us there very quickly... so lets turn to Galatians chapter 2 verse 3 and lets read Paul's personal account of what just happened in Acts chapter 15:

Gal 2:1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

Gal 2:2 I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

So Paul says that he went to Jerusalem to speak privately to those who seemed influential (and of course that would have been James and the elders), and Paul wanted to make sure that he was proclaiming the same Gospel message as they were.. so that he wasn't doing all of this for nothing. Lets continue:

Gal 2:3 But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

Now I want to stop right here.. notice what Paul says.. he says that Titus was not what?..”FORCED”. Paul says that Titus was not “FORCED” to be circumcised.

You see this is what the argument was all about my friends.. the argument was not about whether or not a Gentile “SHOULD” be circumcised, or not be circumcised.. the argument was about whether or not a new Gentile convert should be “FORCED” to be circumcised before he even knew why he needed to be circumcised.

Lets be clear.. Gentiles were always commanded to be circumcised just like any other Israelite from the very beginning! Back during the Exodus when Moses lead the Israelite's out of Egypt many of the Egyptian people saw the plagues, and the power of the one true God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob and they went with the Israelite's when they left Egypt because they wanted to worship the one true God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob too.

And what was Gods commandment concerning these Gentile Egyptian sojourners who came along with the Israelite's?

Exo 12:48 If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.

Exo 12:49 There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you."

You see those who preach "Dispensationalism" and "Replacement Theology" will teach that there are two churches... two peoples... to families of God... two assemblies... to bodies of Christ.. and they will teach your children that no one is grafted into the House of Israel because all you need to do is to join the "New Testament" church.

But if you just watched our teaching this past 7th Day Sabbath on the lie of Dispensationalism you already know that thats nothing but a man made, man created, man fabricated.. lie.

Num 15:14 And if a stranger is sojourning with you, or anyone is living permanently among you, and he wishes to offer a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD, he shall do as you do.

Num 15:15 For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations. You and the sojourner shall be alike before the LORD.

Num 15:16 One law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you."

So now that we know that the Gentiles were always commanded to be circumcised and we who believe are all grafted into the House of Israel.. we should already know that Gentiles were commanded to be circumcised right from the beginning!

Once again the argument was not a matter of "SHOULD" a Gentile be circumcised... the argument was about "WHEN" a Gentile should be circumcised, and whether or not they should be "FORCED" to be circumcised.

And the answer to that question can be answered by answering this question: when should a Gentile be baptized?

A Gentile should be both circumcised and baptized when he or she is filled with the Ruach Hakodesh (the Holy Spirit of God) and they are lead to do so because of their love for the Father, not to earn anything.. but to simply show their love for the Father by obeying his commandments... what is the love of God according to the scripture in 1st John 5:3?.. that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not a burden to us.. lets continue.

Gal 2:4 Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—

Gal 2:5 to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the

gospel might be preserved for you.

So Paul says that this circumcision group, and these Pharisees were spy's that were slipped in to try and destroy the Gospel message that Paul was trying to deliver to these new Gentile Converts, by scaring them off and forcing them to be circumcised before they even knew why they needed to be circumcised.

Gal 2:6 And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.

Gal 2:7 On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised

Gal 2:8 (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles),

Gal 2:9 and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Gal 2:10 Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

So what Paul is saying here in a nut shell is that James and the elders in Jerusalem agreed with him that they agreed that the new Gentile converts should not be “FORCED” to be circumcised before they were ready. And we're going to see this through the scriptures as we move forward.

Lets start by examining verse 5 because once again this is what Acts chapter 15 is all about.. moving back to Acts chapter 15:

Act 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."

Now we just read in the “Law of Moses” where the Gentiles were commanded to be circumcised in Exodus chapter 12 verses 48 and 49 did we not?.. so we're already well armed with this biblical fact.. So these Pharisees were correct in saying that the new Gentile converts should be told to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses weren't they? Yes they were.

The problem was that they were trying to put the cart before the horse. The Pharisees were trying to “FORCE” the new Gentile converts to be circumcised before they even understood why they needed to be circumcised.

Once again these Pharisees wanted to “ORDER” Paul's new Gentile converts to be keep the law of Moses and to be circumcised because they were still keeping the law by works, and not by faith. They believed that the actual work of circumcision was what saved them... it is not.

Any Christian worth a pound of salt should already know.. that you can not “ORDER” or “FORCE” anyone to obey God or to be circumcised any more than you can “ORDER” or “FORCE” someone to be baptized.

Even our Father in Heaven himself does not “FORCE” anyone to obey him. It is a choice.

Deu 11:26 "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse:

Deu 11:27 the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today,

Deu 11:28 and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.

It has to do with the circumcision of the heart long before it has to do with the circumcision of the flesh and it always has been a matter of the circumcision of the heart first. Anyone who reads their scriptures and prays for discernment from him to understand already knows this:

Deu 30:6 And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Deu 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.

Rom 2:28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.

Rom 2:29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.

So in other words Paul says that circumcision has never been outward and physical. Being circumcised is a matter of the heart because it is the heart that drives one who loves God, to obey his commandment and to be... circumcised.

It all goes back to the biblical definition of the love of God found in 1st John 5:3.

We also see Peter making a stand and speaking out about circumcision being a yoke that even their fathers could not bear:

Act 15:7 And after there had been much debate, 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.

Act 15:8 And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us,

Act 15:9 and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

Act 15:10 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?

Act 15:11 But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

So what "yoke" is Peter talking about that even their fathers could not bear? Once again... it was the fact that they were trying to keep the law by works, and not keeping the law by faith. They did not want to be circumcised.. to them it was a burden because they did not understand what they were doing.

Circumcision is God's wedding ring that was placed upon his people. It is a covenant of love between him and his people. When a man joins with a woman his seed will travel through that wedding ring... through that covenant.. and this would signify that this child would be a child of the one true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

All of the children of God's people would pass through that circumcision.. that love of God and would be automatically marked as a child of God.

Circumcision was to be done out of love not out of works :

Rom 9:30 What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;

Rom 9:31 but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.

Rom 9:32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,

Rom 9:33 as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

Do you believe... and if you do... you must learn how to properly... love him.

Joh 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

This was the yoke that Peter was talking about. He was talking about their fathers trying to keep the law, and circumcision as if it were based on works. They believed that it was circumcision that saved them. They did not understand that it was always faith through God's grace that saved them. Circumcision is simply a matter of doing what God says to do because we love him. Once again what is the biblical definition of the love of God? 1st John 5:3:

1Jn 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments

are not burdensome.

There is a difference between what is known as “Legalism” and obedience by faith:

Rom 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Rom 1:2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,

Rom 1:3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh

Rom 1:4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

*Rom 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about **the obedience of faith** for the sake of his name among all the nations,*

You see what Paul was trying to get through to them is that circumcision with out faith is worthless. If you circumcise yourself because you think that doing so is going to earn your way into Gods kingdom... that circumcision is of no effect.

If you do not truly believe in the Messiah, and who he was, and what he did.. then your circumcision is worthless even for the Jew. If you're circumcised in the flesh before your heart is circumcised.. your putting the proverbial cart before the horse.

The first thing these new Gentile converts needed to do is to come out of their paganism, and this is why James gives them these four things from the law to begin with. What good would it be for someone who is still practicing Paganism to be circumcised? They first had to come out of the Paganism that they were all to used to practicing.

If you're still drinking blood and eating animals that had been strangled and sacrificed to other gods, and involved in temple prostitution, and you still have idols in your house what good is being circumcised going to do them?

Who is it that believes that all these new converts have to do is obey these four things that James had given them to do? Surely this was not all that these new Gentile converts needed to do or to understand.

James never intended for these four things to be all the new converts had to do. These four things were to simply help them come out of their pagan practices while learning the commandments of God every Sabbath in the synagogues just as James says in Acts 15 verse 21 (and we'll see that again in just a moment).

James Decree And Judgment To Be Handed Down:

So the bottom line is that James has a decision to make concerning whether or not these new Gentile converts should be “FORCED” and “ORDERED” to be circumcised right away or not.. and here is James decision on the matter finally was:

Act 15:13 After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me.

Act 15:14 Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.

Act 15:15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,

Act 15:16 "'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,

Act 15:17 that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things

Act 15:18 known from of old.'

Act 15:19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,

Act 15:20 but 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.

Act 15:21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

What the Jewish believers had to remember, was that these new Gentile converts knew nothing of the law of God. They were by enlarge, pagans who were doing pagan things like idol worship, temple prostitution, drinking blood, strangling animals to be sacrificed to any number of different gods and so on.

All of these practices are well documented in our history books, and sadly enough there are still pagans and satanists to this day that continue to indulge in such pagan practices. So these new converts needed time to learn the law of God... they weren't raised with it like the Jewish believers were.

So moving forward lets examine this decree from James. James gives the new Gentile converts four things to do... what are they? *abstain from the things polluted by idols... and from sexual immorality... and from what has been strangled... and from blood.*

Now let me ask you my friends... are these four things just four things that James made up... or are these four things from the Levitical Law of God?

Think about that for a moment and think hard. I would submit to you my friends... that James just gave them four things to do directly related to Gods Levitical Law also known as “The Law of Moses”. And what does James say they were to do next?

Act 15:21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him,

for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

My friends did Moses command circumcision? Yes indeed he surely did, and this is why main stream Christianity has no idea what to do with this verse.

In other words what James is saying is lets get these new Gentile converts to start obeying the easier things of the Law first so we can get them out of their pagan practices... and then they will hear the whole of the law being read in the synagogues every Sabbath, and they'll be moved to be circumcised when their hearts become circumcised and they are lead to do so for the right reasons.

Verse 21 was meant to expand upon the four things that James already had given the new Gentile converts to do. James knew that in time these new Gentile converts would understand, and that they would then act on that understanding.

For James to be quoting things out of the law of Moses for the converts to do... and then to say that the law of Moses is obsolete.. makes no sense at all what so ever, and yet that's what main stream Christianity wants you to believe. If that were the case.. then it wouldn't matter if the law of Moses was read in the synagogues every Sabbath or not would it?

Not to mention the fact that our own Messiah commands us to obey the law of Moses in Matthew chapter 23 verses 1 through 3 (and thats a lesson in itself that we won't venture into here today for times sake but you can read it for yourself once again in Matthew chapter 23 verses 1 and 2) our Messiah commands us to "do and observe" the law of Moses.

James never says "No they don't have to be circumcised" nor does he ever say "Don't be circumcised". So how do we know that our understanding of this scripture is true and correct? How do we test that our doctrine is sound? Just like the Berians... we continue to come through the scriptures.

I would submit to you my friends that we know that our understanding is true and correct because the rest of the scripture tells us that our understanding is true and correct. What does the scripture say?

In verse 30 we see that Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were sent with a letter containing James judgment on the matter of circumcision to deliver to all of the churches... telling the new Gentile converts to start doing these four things from the Law of God, and then to go hear and listen to the law of God being read in the synagogues every Sabbath, and if we venture into the first few verses of Acts chapter 16 what do we find Paul doing?
CIRCUMCISING TIMOTHY! PAUL HIMSELF... CIRCUMCISES TIMOTHY!

Act 16:1 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son

of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.

Act 16:2 He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.

Act 16:3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Act 16:4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.

Now... I ask you plainly my friends... if the letter that they were delivering from James and the Elders in Jerusalem was a judgment that said "Gentiles don't have to be circumcised" why in the world would Paul have circumcised Timothy when he wouldn't have had to??!??

Would Timothy have allowed Paul to circumcise him and gone through all that pain and trouble in order to deliver a letter from James that says you don't have to be circumcised?

I think you know better than that. And this is exactly why Paul circumcised Timothy but did not circumcise Titus in Galatians chapter 2 verse 3.

Timothy was already sure in his heart of what he was doing and where he was going. He had the love of God in his heart... his heart was already circumcised... and so he was moved because of his love for the Messiah and his Father to be circumcised in the flesh as his father commanded him to be.

Titus on the other hand being a new believer was not ready to be circumcised, just like baptism my friends. People who are new in the faith may not be baptized for days, week, months, or even years... until they fully accept the truth of the Gospel, and the Word of God... then.. and only then.. when their hearts are right with God, and they have experienced the circumcision of the heart which is the infilling of the Ruach Hakodesh... then and only then.. when they finally see the importance of baptism will they be moved to be baptized... and again not to earn their way into Heaven... but because they love their Messiah and he said "if you love me keep my commandments".

And this is the only way that circumcision or baptism is valid. It can only be done because of the love of God and his Son, which is the circumcision of the heart... it can not be forced, or ordered, or done to earn salvation. Both circumcision and baptism are only valid if a person is moved to do so because of the love they have for God in their heart.

Many will try to lie to you and tell you that Paul was just trying to trick the Jews because he knew that there would be Jews there where Paul and Timothy were going.. but where is it written to trick people or to be deceitful in fooling them into believing in the Gospel? Do you truly think for a moment that our Messiah or his Father would agree to tricking people into believing in him? I submit to you that he would not.

And for those who proclaim that Jesus changed Gods laws at the cross let me simply remind you what our Messiah said with his own breath, his own words, and his own tongue in red letter words my friends:

Mat 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Mat 5:18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Mat 5:19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

My friends are you still standing on the earth? Has Heaven passed away yet? Are all things accomplished yet? How could we be so foolish as to allow these wolves in sheep's clothing to suggest to us that our Messiah was a liar?

If he says that not one crossing of a "T" or dotting of an "i" will pass from the law until heaven and earth pass away and all things are accomplished... I'm going to believe that not one crossing of a "T" or dotting of an "i" has passed away from his law until heaven and earth pass away and all things are accomplished.... How about you?

What did Paul himself say about the Law?

*Rom 2:13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, **but the doers of the law who will be justified.***

*Rom 3:31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, **we uphold the law.***

Rom 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

*Rom 6:2 **By no means!** How can we who died to sin still live in it?*

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*Rom 7:12 So **the law is holy**, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

*Rom 8:7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, **for it does not submit to God's law;** indeed, it cannot.*

Rom 8:8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

*Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from **the law of sin and death.***

But you see today's modern day version of Christianity says that Gods laws are all nailed to the cross and done away with and Jesus did it all for me at the cross and all I have to do is believe and I can live a “Do as thou wilt is the whole of the law” lifestyle because I live in a dispensational state of grace!

Even though that's not what the scripture truly says anywhere.

I understand those who are confused by the writings of the Apostle Paul, but lets take heed to the warning that Peter gives concerning the writings of the Apostle Paul:

2Pe 3:15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,

2Pe 3:16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

2Pe 3:17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.

There is so much to understand when it comes to the writings of the Apostle Paul that I could not cover it all here in one setting, but for more information on the truth of what Paul taught I would invite you to visit us at HolyImpactMinistries.com and go to our “Holy Impact Teachings” page and watch our parts 3,4, and 5 of our 5 part series “Gods Laws Still Stand” and use these as a springboard into your own investigation.

Paul never taught against the law of God or circumcision which is part of Gods law. How do we know? Well lets take a look at what James the brother of Yahshua Jesus had to say about Paul keeping the law himself:

Act 21:18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

Act 21:19 After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

Act 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law,

Act 21:21 and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs.

Act 21:22 What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.

Act 21:23 Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow;

Act 21:24 take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told

about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law.

So according to James and the elders at Jerusalem Paul always lived in observance of the law, and notice that we see in the next few verses that Paul took the four men, and went into the Temple and purified himself along with the men, gave an offering for each one of them.

Act 21:25 But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality."

(Remember this was James judgment back in Acts chapter 15 that the new converts had to do right away while learning the rest of the law in the synagogues every Sabbath).

Act 21:26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them.

So let there be no doubt in your mind about whether Paul kept the laws of God himself.. for just as James the brother of Yahshauh tells us in Acts 21 verse 24: *"Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law.*

SAYS... THE SCRIPTURE!

In closing... lets recap what we've learned here tonight in this study:

1. All people including the Gentiles were commanded by God our Father to be circumcised from the very beginning, and we saw that in **Exodus 12:48-49** and in **Numbers 15:14-16**.
2. Paul himself circumcised Timothy in **Acts chapter 16 verse 3**
3. Paul himself proclaims that we do not nullify the law by our faith.. on the contrary.. we uphold the law in **Romans 3:31**, and we already know that circumcision is part of the law.
4. James give the new converts 4 things to do directly from the law and proclaims that they will here the law of Moses read every Sabbath in the Synagogues **Acts 15:19-20**.
5. Our own Messiah commands us to “do and observe” the law of Moses in **Matthew 23 verses 1 and 2**.
6. Yahshua himself with his own tongue says he would not abolish the law or the prophets until Heaven and earth pass away and all things are accomplished in **Matthew 5:17-18** .

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And just for an extra kicker not listed here because we didn't have room we also know that our Messaiah clearly tells us that not everyone who calls on him is going to enter into the kingdom of Heaven... but only the one who does the will of his Father is going to get in in **Matthew 7:21**.

And we could go on and on and on my friends.. but once again here's what you need to do next:

Take these things that you have heard and seen in the scripture here today to your prayer closet and bow you head and bend your knee, and face the holy promised land of Jerusalem and ask in the name of Yahshua Hamashiach if these things be true... or not. And I promise you my friends that if you ask, seek, and knock... the door will be opened to you.