

IN[🔥]POWERED DISCIPLESHIP

An Inductive Study of the Book of Acts

Confident Discipleship
Acts 15:1-35

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Acts 1:8

“But you will receive **POWER**
when the Holy Spirit has come on you,
and you will be My witnesses in
Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth.”

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THE PROBLEM

Acts 15:1-5

¹Some men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom prescribed by Moses, you cannot be saved.” ²After Paul and Barnabas had engaged them in serious argument and debate, Paul and Barnabas and some others were appointed to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this issue. ³When they had been sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and they brought great joy to all the brothers and sisters.

⁴When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, the apostles, and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ⁵But some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

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The Problem

What did the church do to resolve the conflict?

What was the problem?

- Gentiles were accepting Christ and becoming members of the church without circumcision.
- A few Jewish men insisted that circumcision was necessary for salvation.
- They argued that faith alone was insufficient for salvation.
- To them: Faith + Works = Salvation

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THE DEFENSE

Acts 15:6-10

⁶The apostles and the elders gathered to consider this matter. ⁷After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you are aware that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the gospel message and believe. ⁸And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he also did to us. ⁹He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now then, why are you testing God by putting a yoke on the disciples' necks that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way they are."

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The Defense

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift – not from works, so that no one can boast."

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What was Peter's defense?

- God knows their hearts and He gave them the Holy Spirit.
- God makes no distinction between Jewish believers and Gentile believers.
- Demanding circumcision for Gentiles would be akin to testing God.
- Gentiles are saved the same way as Jews, by grace through faith.

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THE DEFENSE

Acts 15:12

¹²The whole assembly became silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul describe all the signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Who else gave testimony on behalf of Gentile believers?

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THE DELIBERATION

Acts 15:13-14, 19-20

¹³After they stopped speaking, James responded, "Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simeon has reported how God first intervened to take from the Gentiles a people for his name.

* * * * *

¹⁹Therefore, in my judgment, we should not cause difficulties for those among the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰but instead we should write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from eating anything that has been strangled, and from blood.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, was the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

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PRACTICAL MATTERS OF FELLOWSHIP

- James was concerned not only that Jews not trouble Gentiles, but also that Gentiles not trouble Jews.
- The danger was that Gentiles, reveling in their freedom in Christ, would pressure Jewish believers to exercise the same liberty and violate their consciences.
- So, James and other leaders urged Gentiles to abstain from four things to promote fellowship:
 1. Things polluted by idols,
 2. Sexual immorality,
 3. Eating anything that has been strangled, and
 4. Blood.

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The Decision

The Law of Love

ROMANS 14:13-22

¹³Therefore, let us no longer judge one another. Instead **decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister.** ¹⁴I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. Still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean, to that one it is unclean. ¹⁵For if your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy, by what you eat, someone for whom Christ died. ¹⁶Therefore, do not let your good be slandered, ¹⁷for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Whoever serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God and receives human approval.

¹⁹So then, **let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another.** ²⁰Do not tear down God's work because of food. Everything is clean, but it is wrong to make someone fall by what he eats. ²¹It is a good thing not to eat meat, or drink wine, or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble. ²²Whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God.

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THE RULING

Acts 15:23-29

From the apostles and the elders, your brothers,
To the brothers and sisters among the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:

Greetings.

Since we have heard that some without our authorization went out from us and troubled you with their words and unsettled your hearts, we have unanimously decided to select men and send them to you along with our dearly loved Barnabas and Paul, who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who will personally report the same things by word of mouth. **For it was the Holy Spirit's decision—and ours—not to place further burdens on you** beyond these requirements: that you abstain from food offered to idols, from blood, from eating anything that has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. **You will do well if you keep yourselves from these things.**

Farewell.

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THE IMPACT

Acts 15:6-10

³⁰So they were sent off and went down to Antioch, and after gathering the assembly, they delivered the letter.

³¹When they read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. ³²Both Judas and Silas, who were also prophets themselves, encouraged the brothers and sisters and strengthened them with a long message. ³³After spending some time there, they were sent back in peace by the brothers and sisters to those who had sent them. ³⁵But Paul and Barnabas, along with many others, remained in Antioch, teaching and proclaiming the word of the Lord.

The letter was well received and encouraged all the believers in Antioch.

The first major crisis in the church was averted and the Gospel message continued to be preached in Antioch and beyond.

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INPOWERED DISCIPLESHIP

Confident Discipleship

The Early Church Taught us Two Permanent Lessons

- ➔ Salvation is by Faith alone and not by Faith + anything.
- ➔ Self-restraint is often required in order to preserve fellowship and/or advance the gospel
 - ❖ *Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. (1 Cor 9:19-20)*

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INPOWERED DISCIPLESHIP

An Inductive Study of the Book of Acts

Liberated Disciples

Acts 16:1-40

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