

## **The Heart of the Gospel**

### **1. The Debate Gets to the Heart of the Gospel.**

### **2. What Do They Do with the Question?**

### **3. Why Is the Gospel So Difficult?**

**CONCLUSION:** Paul and Barnabas have faced all kinds of opposition, but this question from within the Jewish Church is the most dangerous. Is Christ's blood sufficient for Gentile salvation or do converts still need to be circumcised? This may seem like a minor point of doctrine, but it is actually the very essence of the gospel. How are we living out the reality of Christ's sacrifice as the once-for-all atonement? How does God preserve this critical truth through His Church?

## **Romans 2: 25 – 29**

<sup>25</sup> For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. <sup>26</sup> So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? <sup>27</sup> Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. <sup>28</sup> For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

## Genesis 17: 1 – 14 (Initial explanation of Circumcision)

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,<sup>2</sup> that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”<sup>3</sup> Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him,<sup>4</sup> “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.<sup>5</sup> No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.<sup>6</sup> I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.<sup>7</sup> And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.<sup>8</sup> And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

<sup>9</sup> And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.<sup>10</sup> This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.<sup>11</sup> You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.<sup>12</sup> He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring,<sup>13</sup> both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant.<sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

## Deuteronomy 10: 12 – 22

<sup>12</sup> “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,<sup>13</sup> and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?<sup>14</sup> Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.<sup>15</sup> Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.<sup>16</sup> **Circumcise** therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.<sup>17</sup> For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.<sup>18</sup> He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.<sup>19</sup> Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.<sup>20</sup> You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear.<sup>21</sup> He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen.<sup>22</sup> Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

## Acts—Series Overview

### *The Expansion of the Gospel Witness with Power*

*Acts* records God’s faithful accomplishment of all that He promised in taking the gospel to the nations. It lays the groundwork for all that will take place as His Church awaits His return. Just as Jesus lived and spoke as the Father commanded, we now are called to do in the power of His Holy Spirit. While Jesus did this perfectly, we will strive imperfectly, constantly in need of the Holy Spirit’s direction, power, and correction. Nevertheless, our faithful God will work even through our failing efforts and His gospel witness through us will prevail and penetrate every nation, tribe, & territory. For the praise of our King!

# Taking Gathered Worship Home

We believe this and you believe that. To each his own, right?! Not according to Scripture. If Jesus didn't do everything for our salvation, then what else do we need to do? Is baptism enough? Is keeping the law? How much? How perfectly? Does Jesus help us save ourselves or does He gloriously, by grace through faith, save us entirely?

*Please use the devotional material below each day this week to praise Christ. Ask Jesus to teach us His ways that we may walk in them to accomplish His purposes.*

## Sunday Morning

READ **Acts 15:1-11; Genesis 17:1-14; Romans 10:8-13**. DISCUSS, What makes the gospel so difficult to accept? How do you personally struggle to accept Christ's work entirely? Why do we seek to add to Christ's work? How are you thanking Him for His sufficiency? PRAY "Jesus, Thank You for loving us and redeeming us completely. Thank You that none of our salvation depends upon us for we have demonstrated our utter faithlessness. You alone are trustworthy."

## Monday

READ **Acts 15:1-11; Romans 2:25-29; 5:1-8**. DISCUSS, How are we justified before the holy God? How did Jesus accomplish this? How much has God done to secure our salvation? How much have we done? MEDITATE on **Galatians 2:15-16**. PRAY, "Thank You, Lord, for the gift of salvation. Make us praise You with every breath."

## Tuesday

READ **Acts 15:1-11; Genesis 2:16-18; 3:1-21; 6:8-18; 12:1-8; Hebrews 11:1-40**. DISCUSS, Do you see the common factor in each of these testimonies of God's grace? God saves. He sets His love upon His people. He rescues them from themselves. From what did God rescue you? How much depended on your efforts? How does that relate to Acts 15? MEDITATE on **Galatians 2:15-16**. PRAY, "Jesus, thank You for rescuing us from our rebellion and sin against You. Teach us to depend upon You entirely."

### Wednesday

READ **Acts 15:1-11; Jeremiah 4:1-4; Deuteronomy 10:12-22; Romans 3:1-8**. DISCUSS, If circumcision was the mark of entrance into God's people, why was it necessary to circumcise their hearts too? What is the corollary with baptism now? If neither saves us, what do they matter? How are you demonstrating God's work within you? MEDITATE on **Galatians 2:15-16**. PRAY, "Lord Jesus, we long to love You with the purity with which You love us. Change our hearts!"

### Thursday

READ **Acts 15:1-11; First Corinthians 15:1-11**. DISCUSS, What is this gospel? How does it give Jesus all the praise? How are you living in light of it? MEDITATE on **Galatians 2:15-16**. PRAY, "Jesus, help us to give You all praise, honor, and glory."

### Friday

READ **Acts 15:1-11; Genesis 17:1-14; Romans 10:8-13**. DISCUSS, How has God been teaching you from these passages this week? MEDITATE on **Galatians 2:15-16**. PRAY for renewal and revival across our land.

### Saturday

PREPARE today for the worship service tomorrow. *Both live-stream & in-person services are available.*

READ **Acts 15:1-41**. Invite others to join you tomorrow for either the *live-stream or in-person service*. Ask Jesus to help us love our neighbors well.

## Galatians 2: 15 – 16

**"...yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified."**