

Acts Series

Lesson #110

May 28, 2013

Dean Bible Ministries

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# The Acts of the Apostles “To the end of the earth” Acts 1:8

## What About the Role of Circumcision and the Law? Acts 16:1–5



## **Conclusion:**

**The source of the prohibitions was related to Jewish social custom shaped by a combination of rabbinic teaching, the Mosaic Law (Lev. 17–18), and/or the Noahic Covenant.**

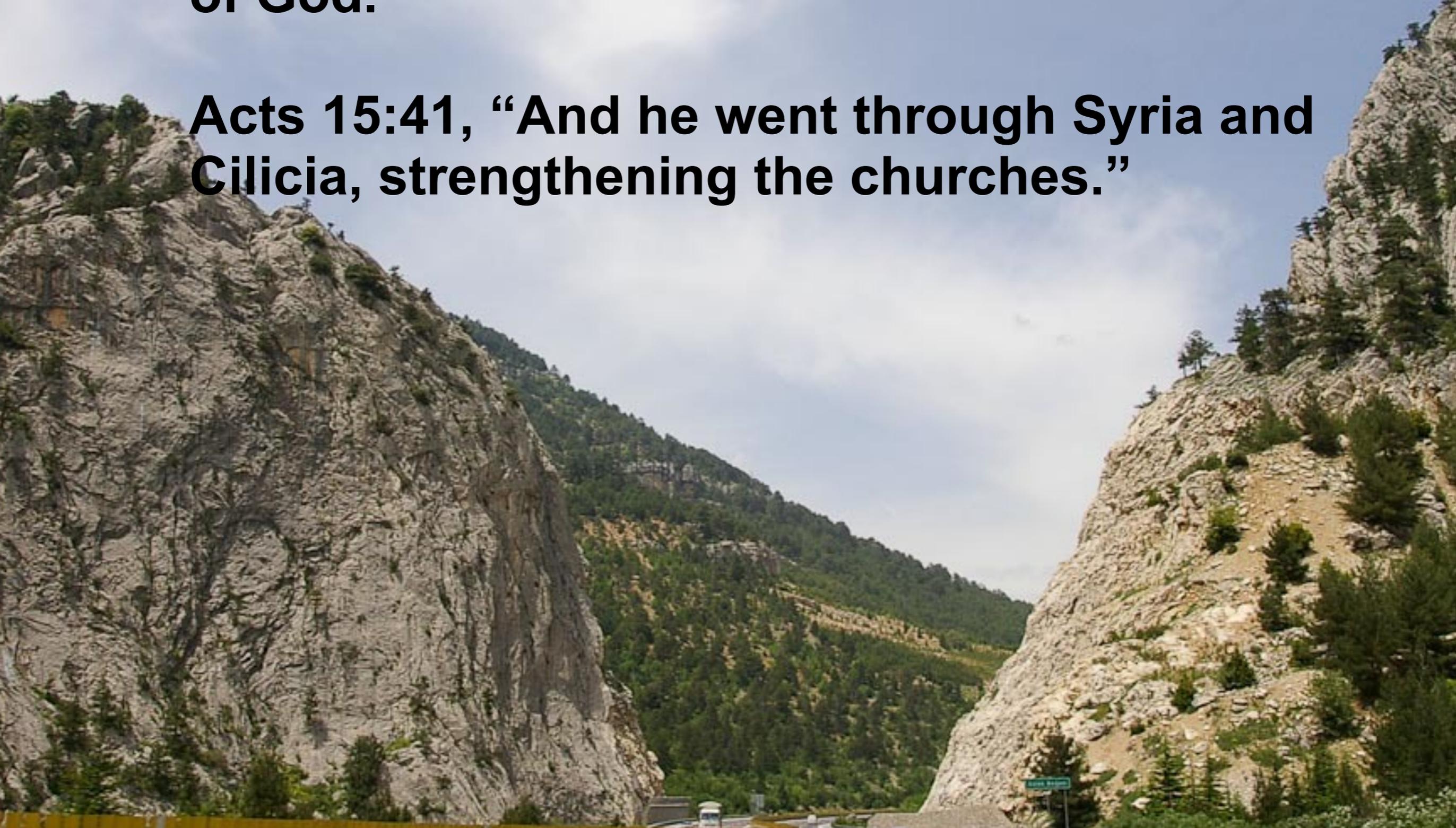
**These three influences together had developed a mentality among the Jewish background believers where certain social and eating practices by Gentiles were a problem for the Jews. Not a theological problem, but a cultural problem.**

**Solution:**

**The Law of Love: Don't let non-essentials become a cause for division and schism.**

**Acts 15:40, “but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.**

**Acts 15:41, “And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”**



**Cilician Gates through the Taurus Mountains near Gulek**

**Acts 15:41, “And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”**

**στερεόω *stereoō***

**imperf mid indic 3s**

**to make strong**

**Cilician Gates through the Taurus Mountains near Gulek**





Cilician Gates

Sarikli Koy  
Tarsus

N

0 25 50 mi.  
0 40 80 km

Antioch on the Orontes



Alacahoyuk Ortakoy  
 Ankara Hattusha Yazilikaya  
 Gordion Kerkenes Dag Alishar Hoyuk  
 Gavurkalesi  
 Pisidian Antioch Derinkuyu  
 Iconium Mt. Hasan  
 Lystra Catalhoyuk  
 Derbe Cilician Gates  
 Aspendos Tarsus  
 Antioch on the Orontes  
 Mt. Casius  
 Kultepe/Karum Kanesh  
 Mt. Erciyes Arslantepe  
 Nemrut Dag  
 Zeugma  
 Carchemish  
 Haran  
 Euphrates River  
 Murat River  
 Batman R.  
 Tigris River  
 Habur River  
 Mt. Ararat  
 Mt. Suphan  
 Lake Van  
 Van Kalesi  
 Chavushtepe  
 Mt. Cudi  
 Cizre





**Lystra from north**



**Derbe from west**

**Acts 16:1, “Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek.**

**Acts 16:2, “He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.**

**Acts 16:3, “Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.**

**Acts 16:4, “And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.**

**Acts 16:5, “So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.”**

- 1. Name: *Timotheos*, “God honored.”**
- 2. Paul mentions him by name, 17× and addresses 2 letters to him.**
- 3. Paul led Timothy to salvation during his first missionary journey along with his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois. 2 Tim. 1:5**
- 4. Paul affectionately referred to Timothy as his “son.” 1 Tim. 1:18**
- 5. His father was Greek, mother Jewish. Therefore, he was considered Jewish.**

- 6. He was not circumcised, which was a known fact in the Jewish community.**
- 7. His mother and grandmother trained him in the Word. 2 Tim. 3:15.**
- 8. When Paul returned to Lystra, Timothy had shown remarkable spiritual growth and maturity. 1 Tim. 4:12**

**What is going on with *circumcision*?**

**If the law no longer mattered, why does Paul have Timothy circumcised?**

**If Jewishness is no longer relevant, why does it matter?**

# **The Doctrine of Circumcision**

**1. Circumcision did not begin with Avram (Abraham) nor was it historically unique to Jews.**

## **2. God first required circumcision in Gen. 17.**

**Gen. 17:10, “This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;**

**Gen. 17:11, “and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.**

**Gen. 17:12, “He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.”**

**John 7:22, “Moses therefore gave you  
circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but  
from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on  
the Sabbath.”**

**cf., Acts 7:8**

**3. Therefore, circumcision was a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant which is a permanent covenant, not the Mosaic covenant, which was temporary.**

**4. But circumcision, under Second Temple Judaism, began to be seen as a spiritually efficacious ritual, a *mitzveh* that must be obeyed for righteousness.**

## **5. This developed as a problem in Acts.**

**Acts 10:45, “And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.”**

**Acts 11:2, “And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him,”**

**6. By 49–50 AD this was a problem, some former Pharisees were teaching that circumcision was necessary to be saved.**

**Acts 15:1, “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ ”**

**Acts 15:5, “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.’ ”**

## 7. Time line:

**Paul writes  
Galatians**

**ca. late 49**

**Jerusalem  
Conference**

**Winter 50**

**Paul has  
Timothy  
circumcised**

**Late Spring  
50**

**False  
charge  
against  
Paul**

**57 AD**

**8. Titus, a Gentile, was not compelled to be circumcised. Gal. 2:3**

## **9. Timothy was?**

**Gal. 5:2, “Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.**

**Gal. 5:3, “And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.”**

**Gal. 5:6, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.”**

**Gal. 5:12, “I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!”**

**1 Cor. 7:18, “Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.**

**1 Cor. 7:19, “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.”**

**Gal. 6:15, “For in Christ Jesus neither  
circumcision nor uncircumcision avails  
anything, but a new creation.”**

**Gal. 3:26, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.**

**Gal. 3:27, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**

**Gal. 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”**

**Col. 3:10, “and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,**

**Col. 3:11, “where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”**

**1 Cor. 12:12, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.**

**1 Cor. 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”**