

Title: **The Jerusalem Council: A Church Grounded in the Gospel**
Text: **Acts 15:1-18**
Date: **June 1, 2025**

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Big Idea

Above anything else in this life, the gospel—the good news of the free grace that’s available to us in Jesus through faith—is worth fighting for. In our text, men are trying to add to it, twist it, corrupt it. But the early church fought for it . . . so they could hand it down to us!

1. The Controversy

As a follower of Jesus, one of the most important things you need to learn is what you should and shouldn’t fight about. So often in the church we fight about things we should be compromising on and we compromise on things we should be fighting about. So we argue about the style of the worship music, the color of the carpet, the dress code of the congregation, the flow of the services, the order of events in the end times, the right way to administer baptism or take communion, the right day and time and place to meet for worship, and all of this. But, meanwhile, we let in all manner of doctrinal and moral corruption that we should have kicked to the curb on day one. We need to know when to compromise and when to confront, when to make peace and when to fight. And, as we learn from our text, if there’s anything at all worth fighting for . . . it’s the gospel!

But why exactly is this idea of requiring circumcision (v. 1) such a threat to the gospel? What’s the big deal?

Reason #1: It's Refusing to Go Forward with the Plan of God

Circumcision was a *sign* and *symbol* of the old flesh cut off and the new life coming forth, but Jesus is the *substance* of it. What circumcision *pictured*, Jesus *delivered*. Circumcision was the *shadow*. Jesus is the *reality*. Because he was cut off for our sin on that cross, treated as the unclean flesh, we can be born again, a new creation in him—circumcised now, not by the hands of men in the flesh, but by the Spirit of God in the heart (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Col. 2:11-12). So to insist on

circumcision, then, is to retreat back from the substance to the symbol, from the fullness to the picture, from the reality to the shadow. It’s to go backwards when God is moving forward.

Reason #2: It's Falling Away from the Grace of Christ

“Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace” (Gal. 5:2-4).

2. The Council

Warning #1: You Are Putting God to the Test

These Jewish Christians in our text, their logic sounds so good on the surface. Their whole argument is: “We need to add our own good works to Jesus’ work if we’re going to get saved.” And it sounds so nice and even righteous and holy. But the dark underbelly beneath such logic is this: they’re saying that Jesus’ work isn’t enough.

Warning #2: You Are Putting an Unbearable Yoke on Others

In the gospel, Jesus doesn’t come to put more burdens on you. No! He comes to lift all the burdens off (Matt. 11:28-30).

3. The Conclusion

The equation is not Jesus + _____ = salvation. Anything else you try to add to Jesus is subtraction by addition. It’s Jesus + nothing. That’s it. That’s the gospel.

“The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it” - Martin Luther



Reflection Questions

- The gospel is somewhat easy to grasp with the mind, but very difficult to take into the heart. We struggle to believe that because of Jesus God can freely forgive and embrace and love us right where we are. Why do you think this is? In what ways do you personally struggle with this? What would it look like for you to “fight for faith” this week?

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Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.

FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate presses our church *upwards* in love

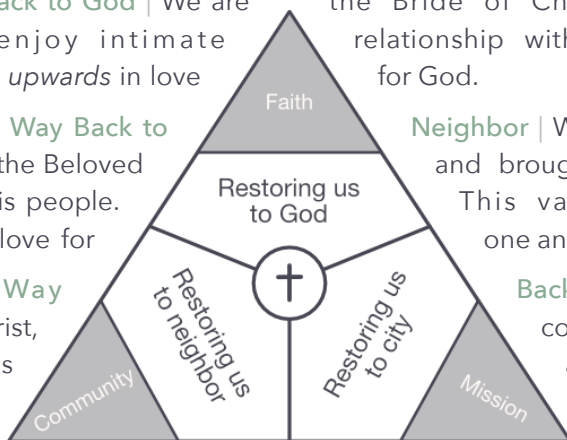
the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our in love for the

Back to City | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

All Church Campout - Register by 6/8!

We are excited to announce that we'll be hosting an All Church Campout at Mount Madonna County Park over the weekend of June 20-22! We have a huge group campsite all to ourselves and lots of options in the park for having fun together. Whether you love to camp or you'd rather still sleep in your own bed, we have something for everyone. Because the park is only a 45 minute drive from south San Jose, people can feel free to come and go as it works with their schedule and preference.

- **Option #1: Day-Use:** For those not wanting to camp but still wanting to participate, the Day-Use option is best. You can come in for the day, enjoy activities, meals, etc., and then head home to your warm bed while the rest of us "rough" it :).
- **Option #2: Camp:** This option is for those who want the full camping experience. We have the site for Friday and Saturday nights. You can choose to camp for one or both of these depending upon your availability and desire.

Scan the QR code below for more info and to find a link to sign up!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us
at info@mercyhillchurch.org.

All Church Hangout - Today!

All Church Prayer - Tonight!

Mercy Hill Kids New Volunteers Training - Next Sunday!

From the GO! Team - CityTeam and the Philippines!

Scan the QR code below for more info!

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