

THE POWER OF A PRAYING CHURCH

The Acts Series #8

September 6th, 2026

TEXT: Acts 15:1-3

CONSIDER THIS: Every church has problems. This is an inescapable fact of life because the church consists of fallen human beings (although gloriously redeemed by the grace of God!!) who won't be perfect until they reach Heaven. Like every other church, Grace Community Church will never be problem free. However, we will never have problems like the one that nearly destroyed the early church in Acts 10-15. Thank God they understood **THE POWER OF A PRAYING CHURCH**. The only problem that can't be fixed is the one that is not covered in devoted prayer.

AN OUTLINE OF ACTS 10-15 AND THE BIGGEST
CHURCH PROBLEM IN HISTORY (and the lesson
in it for Grace Community Church).

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| Acts 10:1-7 | A Gentile Roman centurion named Cornelius (he was stationed in Caesarea) genuinely worshipped the God of Israel. He was a man of prayer! God answered Cornelius through an angel who instructed him to send for Peter who was at Joppa (45 miles away) |
| 10:8-16 | Peter is given a vision by God of a huge sheet filled with animals that according to the Old Testament (the Law of Moses) no Jew was allowed to eat. |
| 10:17-27 | Peter accompanied Cornelius' messengers to Caesarea |
| 10:28-33 | Peter meets Cornelius and his family in their home (Gentile) which was breaking Jewish tradition. Cornelius tells of the angelic visit |
| 10:34-44 | Between Peter's "sheet vision" and Cornelius' testimony, Peter realized the gospel of Jesus (Israel's Messiah) was actually meant for all nations and peoples |
| 10:45-48 | The Gentiles gathered in Cornelius' home believed the gospel and were saved, received the Holy Spirit and after that they were baptized... all this without adopting Jewish laws and traditions |
| Acts 11:1-3 | Certain Jewish "Christians" in Jerusalem were upset by reports about Peter mingling with Gentiles |
| 11:4-17 | Peter explained the "sheet vision" he had in Joppa and all that God had done in Caesarea |
| 11:18 | The Jewish Christians accepted Peter's account and marveled at what God was doing |

BUT THE CHURCH PROBLEM WAS NOT OVER

11:19-30 The gospel reaches the Gentile city of Antioch. There were many Jews there who accepted the gospel and became Christians, but eventually the church became a Gentile “megachurch.” Saul, now the Apostle Paul, was becoming a powerful evangelist to the Gentile world

NOTE: Acts 12 is very important but it is not directly connected to the story. We will study it separately.

Acts 13:1-3 At the thriving church in Antioch God calls out Paul and Barnabas to form the first true missionary team. Notice how an atmosphere of devoted prayer characterized the Antioch church

13:4-14:28 The exciting account of the famous “first missionary journey” deep into the Gentile world, although even here there was Jewish activity and opposition (see 13:42-51)

Acts 15:1-2 **ALERT:** *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.” 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 elders about this question. **HUGE CHURCH PROBLEM.***

15:1-35 The urgently important “Jerusalem church council.”

15:4-6 The Antioch church (Gentile) meets with the Jerusalem church (Jewish)

15:7-12 Peter, Paul and Barnabas support Gentile Christians

15:13-35 James, the Senior Pastor/Elder of the Jerusalem Church, issues a decision in 15:18-21 that preserves the true gospel that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. There were things the Gentiles could voluntarily set aside so as not to offend Jews, but the gospel itself is a gift, apart from any works

PROBLEM SOLVED? YES! WAIT A MINUTE, LOOK AT GALATIANS 2:11-16. PETER ALMOST RUINS EVERYTHING!
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Q: Can you imagine the anxiety of the Apostle Paul rebuking the Apostle Peter, while at the same time Gentile Christians were being told they weren’t saved, that the gospel of “faith alone” was not true? Can you imagine the dark cloud that hung over all the churches because of this gigantic PROBLEM? How did the church survive?

A: 1. Jesus keeps His promises (Matthew 16:18)
2. The church was **praying!** (Acts 12:5)
3. Church problems are an opportunity to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:15-18). Praise God!

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