A chalkboard background with a red cross and the word 'JEW' written in white chalk. The cross is positioned in the upper left quadrant, and the word 'JEW' is written in large, white, uppercase letters across the middle of the board. The chalk has a slightly grainy texture, and the background is dark and slightly textured.

Acts 15:1-21

JEW AND GENTILE HARMONY IN
THE CHURCH

People don't need to clean up to experience saving grace in Jesus (15:1-5)

¹ 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." ² 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 the elders about this question.

- Paul and Barnabas return to their sending church in Antioch and give a report on the gospel mission trip they just completed
 - Acts 14:27
- A group of men from Judea, and likely the city and church in Jerusalem, came to Antioch and taught that circumcision is necessary for salvation
 - Paul and Barnabas recently returned from a gospel mission trip where God brought many Gentiles to salvation
 - These new Gentile converts are not circumcised, but they are saved and are being sanctified
 - Legalists fear antinomian (lawless and unfettered) frivolity and barbarism that shame Jewish sensibilities
- Paul and Barnabas know this is adding works-righteousness to the gospel of God's grace
- The church in Antioch appoints Paul, Barnabas, and a few others, to go to Jerusalem

People don't need to clean up to experience saving grace in Jesus (15:1-5)

³ *So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.*

- Followers of Jesus in congregations in Phoenicia and Samaria rejoice to hear how God brought Gentiles to faith
- Jesus encourages this type of celebration in the parable of the lost sheep
 - Luke 15:3-7
- Finding joy in God's work is a good thing to do

People don't need to clean up to experience saving grace in Jesus (15:1-5)

⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. ⁵ But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."

- To these Jewish minds, if Gentiles converts aren't required to keep the law, godless moral laxity will run rampant
- Paul, who had also been a Pharisee, didn't have these same concerns
- He believes that God's power to save is also God's power to sanctify
 - Galatians 5:1-3
- We should not think people need to look like us, dress like us, and talk like us to come to faith in Jesus

Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (15:6-11)

⁶ *The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.*

- The apostles and elders in Jerusalem are the council considering the expectations on Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus
 - Do they have to keep the law of Moses to be saved?
 - Or are they accepted by the Lord without the works of the law?

Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (15:6-11)

⁷ And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ⁹ and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

- God chose Peter to be the Apostle to take the gospel to a Gentile home
- There was no difference between the conversion of these Gentiles and the conversion of Jews prior to them
- Cornelius and his household were not circumcised keepers of the law of Moses prior to salvation
- Peter witnesses to all this and the Jewish church in Jerusalem confirms it

Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (15:6-11)

¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

- None of the Jewish predecessors were able to keep the law flawlessly
- None of them keep the law flawlessly
- The purpose of the law is to expose sinfulness, removing all hope of sinlessness
 - Romans 3:19-20
- The law held governing authority until Christ came
- Now that the authority of Christ has come, believers are no longer under the authority of the law
- Peace with God does not come by the good works of legalistic achievement, but by faith in Jesus Christ
 - Galatians 3:23-26
- Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is the sole hope of Jews and Gentiles
- This is the glorious hope of your salvation

Keeping the Law is not required to become followers of Jesus (15:12-21)

¹² And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

- Barnabas and Paul speak up, not as members of the council, but as witnesses to the council
- Their testimony describes the miraculous power of God on display through them as witness to the Gentiles
- Many Gentiles came to faith without keeping the law of Moses

¹³ After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.

- James affirms what God did among the Gentiles through Peter sharing the gospel with the household of Cornelius
- The salvation of Cornelius and his household is God calling Gentiles from among Gentiles, to gather them by faith as a people for His name

Keeping the Law is not required to become followers of Jesus (15:12-21)

¹⁵ And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, ¹⁶ " 'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, ¹⁷ that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things ¹⁸ known from of old.'

- James quotes the prophet Amos to show what is happening with Gentile conversions fulfills the promises of Scripture
 - Amos 9:11-12
- God is calling out Jewish and Gentile people for salvation to restore the tent of David
- Jesus is a son in the Davidic line giving saving hope to Jews and Gentiles in the New Covenant

Keeping the Law is not required to become followers of Jesus (15:12-21)

¹⁹ Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰ but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.

- Jews need to understand that Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior should not be troubled with requirements to keep the law of Moses
- Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus need to honor the Lord and to be aware of Jewish sensibilities
 - *abstain from the things polluted by idols* - Gentiles are to refrain from going to a temple of idols for the sake of eating a meal
 - *from sexual immorality* - connections with people in the presence of sexually immoral practices should be avoided (Gentiles are desensitized while Jews are not - pray for renewed sensitivities)
 - *from what has been strangled* - killing an animal for food without bleeding it out
 - *from blood* - pagan ceremonies where partaking of blood happens

Keeping the Law is not required to become followers of Jesus (15:12-21)

- Gentiles need to be aware they are desensitized, and their Jewish brothers and sisters are sensitive to these practices
- Being willfully offensive is to be avoided
- For the sake of being intentional with the gospel, we need to live with people in an understanding and patient manner
 - 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

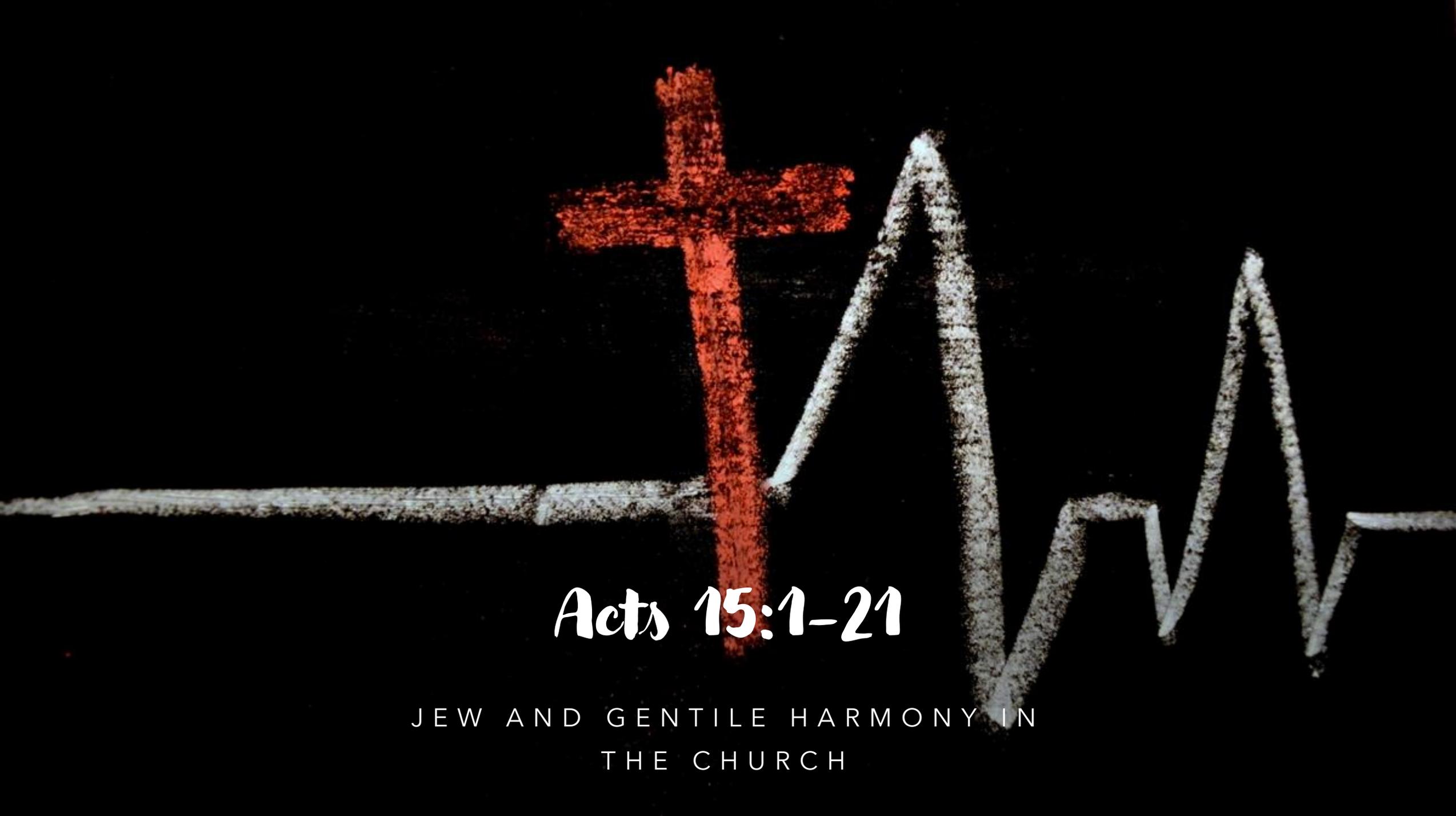
Keeping the Law is not required to become followers of Jesus (15:12-21)

²¹ For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

- Gentiles are to be aware that Jewish people and synagogues are prevalent in the Roman Empire
- The law of Moses is familiar to Jews because they hear it every Sabbath day
- Graciousness needs to be displayed in both directions

Questions to Consider

- How well do you trust the God who saves to be the God who sanctifies?
- In what ways do you find joy in seeing and hearing of God's activity in others?
- What is the purpose of the Law?
- For the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel, how are you living with others in an understanding manner?

A chalkboard background with a red cross and the word 'JEW' written in white chalk. The cross is positioned on the left side of the board, and the word 'JEW' is written in large, white, uppercase letters on the right side. The chalk is slightly smudged, giving it a hand-drawn appearance.

Acts 15:1-21

JEW AND GENTILE HARMONY IN
THE CHURCH