



## Acts 15:8-9

(8) So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us, (9) and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

*New King James Version*

The Gentiles' conversion resulted in a serious controversy in the church over whether they should be required to be circumcised. This major issue resulted in the convening of the first ministerial conference in the history of God's church (Acts 15). At this conference, the ministry was led to decide that the Gentiles do not need to be circumcised.

God revealed to the apostles that, under the New Covenant, He makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Regardless of race or ethnic origin, He extends the promises of salvation to any and all whom He chooses to call. Under the New Covenant, physical descent from Abraham no longer matters because God is concerned only over the person's repentance and faith in Christ. Those who receive the Holy Spirit after repentance and baptism become "the seed of Abraham." Additionally, because the purpose and meaning of physical circumcision have been superseded by the New Covenant, there is no need to inflict pain and possible psychological distress on an adult male through this operation.

Peter emphasizes that God looked upon the hearts of the Gentiles and saw their repentance. Although they were not circumcised, God forgave their sins because of their repentance and faith in Christ and granted them the gift of the Holy Spirit. They were, therefore, justified by faith and spiritually

circumcised, that is, in heart and mind ([Romans 2:28-29](#)). During the Jerusalem conference, God revealed to the apostles that *justification fulfilled the spiritual symbolism of circumcision.*

— Earl L. Henn (1934-1997)

**To learn more, see:**

**[Why We Must Put Out Leaven](#)**

**Related Topics:**

[Abraham, Descendants of Circumcision of the Heart](#)

[Faith](#)

[Gentiles](#)

[Justification](#)

[New Covenant](#)

[Repentance](#)

Commentary copyright © 1992-2021 [Church of the Great God](#)  
New King James Version copyright © 1982 by [Thomas Nelson, Inc.](#)