

Acts Chapter 11

V: 1 News travels fast! The believers in Jerusalem who were primarily Jewish had heard that the Gentiles in Caesarea had received the Word of God, and that they had been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

- This follows the same general pattern as before:

Acts 2:41 “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

- In the process they also heard that Peter had gone into the house of a Gentile. All three of these facts were very controversial from a Jewish standpoint. Actually “scandalous” might be a better word!

This was all part of God's plan from the beginning:

Isaiah 42:6 “I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.”

V: 2 When Peter got back to Jerusalem the Judaizers, “of the circumcision” were waiting for him. These were the ones who believed that you had to become a Jew through the rites of baptism, circumcision, and obedience to the Mosaic Law first in order to be saved.

- They believed that you had to transition from being a Gentile, then to a Jew, then you could become a Christian.
- They were Christians, but they were very legalistic, “strict legalists” - we don't call them “Judaizers” today, today we call them “7th Day Adventists”, or different kinds of “Baptists”, or some “hyper pentecostals” or adherents to the “Church of Christ”, “Roman Catholicism” fits into this description - **or any other group** that claims to be Christian, and who declare that you have to be part of their group to be saved, and you have to believe this and or do certain things the way they it do to be saved - otherwise you're going to hell.
- Actually there is a pretty decent argument whether these different groups are in fact actually Christian in spite of their obvious claims to be Christian in light of their professed doctrines. I only say that because of what Paul teaches on the subject.

Galatians 1:6-8 “⁶I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel. ⁷Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But though we,

or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

- The Judaizers are still running around doing the same thing, trying to put burdens on people that God never intended.

Jesus addressed this mentality in rebuking the Scribes and Pharisees:

Matthew 23:15 “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”

- Often times opposition will arise when God is doing something, just as often that opposition happens when people’s traditions are threatened, when the church starts doing things differently.
- Usually those who contend with the work of the Spirit are usually not the most devoted followers of the Lord, they don’t attend the prayer meetings, or minister or serve in the fellowship - yet they want to challenge the direction the Lord would take us.
- The Judaizer’s would be Paul’s constant companions as he brought the Gospel to the Gentiles.

V: 3 The accusation: “you went in and ate with uncircumcised men, Gentiles.”

- In that culture, sharing a meal with someone was a very significant act. In fact they considered eating with someone, communing with someone, the same as becoming one with them. Most meals were eaten with bare hands and shared from common bowls set on the table. They ate from the same loaf of bread, tearing peaces off, dipping into the sauces, double dipping, triple dipping was all the norm.
- As they ate from the same loaf and so on their bodies assimilate the same bread and food, becoming part of our bodies, not quite like passing the same cheeseburger around, but close.
- For these reasons Jews would never eat with the Gentiles, because they would then be defiled, at least according to the Law.
- I think it’s kind of interesting that the Judaizers are jacking Peter up over his going into Cornelius’ house but Peter doesn’t mention that he was staying at the house of Simon the Tanner, which would make him unclean, nor does he mention that he invited the Gentiles into the house to eat and spend the night before having gone into Cornelius’s house - but who needs to mention that, right?

- As Peter answers the charge he does so by presenting 3 pieces of evidence:
 1. The vision from God vv: 5-11
 2. The witness of the Holy Spirit vv: 12-15
 3. The witness of the Word vv: 16-17

V: 4-10 Peter tells / re-retells the story of his vision. Interesting that almost the entire account is repeated from Ch. 10, Luke wasn't sparing the parchment.

- Possibly to emphasize the critical lesson imparted here by the Holy Spirit; captured in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

Jesus commanded His disciples:

Mark 16:15 "... go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

- Not just to the Jews.
- God's heart has always been for the whole world. His grace has now been opened to the Gentiles which is now emphasized by writing it twice.

V: 11 As we read in Chapter 10, Peter has his vision and he hears the word of the Lord "Don't call unclean, that which I have cleaned..." then three Gentiles show up at the front door. An opportunity to put into practice what he was then learning.

- Peter really was learning that lesson because even though it's not mentioned here in chapter 11, chapter 10 describes his inviting these three messengers / gentiles into the house to spend the night, and presumably to have a meal in the process.

V: 12-14 Continuing, it was the Spirit that bade him, commanded him to go with them and not to doubt.

- That's a great defense if that's what he needs. "It wasn't my idea... it was God."
- Peter took six witnesses with him, possibly foreseeing the resistance that would come from certain quarters. That would appear to have been prudent on his part.
- So Peter went into Cornelius' house who then described his encounter with the angelic messenger who directed him to send for Peter by name and his location.

- Then the most important part of the message that wasn't communicated in Chapter 10 - that is that when Peter comes he "shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."

Words that lead to salvation:

Romans 10:17 "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

- Peter is going to share the Gospel, the Good news of Jesus Christ!
- This testifies to the effort God will go to, to meet the hungry soul that would seek Him in Spirit and in truth.

Jeremiah 29:13 "And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart."

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

V: 15-16 As I was speaking, all of a sudden... the Holy Spirit fell upon them just like He did upon us at Pentecost.

- In Samaria Peter laid hands on people then it happened, here God just did it.
- This isn't something that Peter did, or orchestrated in some way, this was a sovereign act of God in fulfillment of His purposes.
- As this was happening at Cornelius' house Peter remembered the Word of the Lord:

Acts 1:5 "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

Which lead up to:

Acts 1:8 "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

- You'd expect to be talking mostly to Jews in Jerusalem and Judaea, but when you get to Samaria, then farther out we're talking Gentile country and mostly non-Jews.

1 Corinthians 12:13 "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

V: 17 Peter was simply observing what God was doing and determined that he could not and should not seek to withstand God in this.

- It should be noted that those who have sought to contend with God have suffered for it.
- Pharaoh learned the hard way. Jonah went the way of pain, as many others have, it's best not to fight God, but to yield.

V: 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God.

James 3:17 "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

- This is the turning point in the church as the council has now officially recognized the fact that the Gentiles can be saved.

1 Corinthians 12:3 "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

- There will still be some issues to be worked out on specifics as we'll see, but from Acts Chapter 13 and forward the rest of this book will be devoted to God's work among the Gentiles.
- God will still keep every one of the promises that He's made to Israel. The day of the Gentiles is just a season, which is the same as the church age, and is just about over. God will at that time once again turn His attention and focus back to fulfilling all His promises to the Jews.

V: 19-20 Peter has been used to initiate opening the Gospel to the Gentiles, now it gets going in an exponential way.

Matthew 5:19 "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven:..."

- This scripture is why some people think that Peter will be at the pearly gates determining who gets in and who doesn't; the keys relate to the sharing of the Gospel and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- Peter **first** used those keys at Pentecost as he shared the Gospel with the house of Israel in Jerusalem as represented by Jews from all over the world, who were baptized by the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.

- He used the **second** key in Samaria as He joined Philip in sharing the Gospel and the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Samaria.
- Peter used the **third** key in Caesarea at Cornelius' house as he shared the Gospel with the Gentiles and as the Holy Spirit fell upon these Gentile believers.
- We're seeing a literal fulfillment of what Jesus commissioned the disciples to do, that they would be witnesses of Him:

Acts 1:8 "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the Earth."

Map:



Phenice, Cyprus, Antioch, Cyrene: speaking to the Jews and to the Greeks. (Tarsus)

- Antioch was the 3rd most important city in the world at that time, next to Rome and Alexandria. It was the center of the worship of "Daphne" / "Dianna" and had all the trappings of "temple worship" which included prostitution, and so on - meaning it was a very worldly place and environment.
- God uses the persecution to take His message all over the place.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

- Christianity starts out as a sect of Judaism, the Gospel being communicated primarily to the Jews. Then some of the men from Cyrene and Cyprus spoke to the Grecians preaching the Lord Jesus.
- We're not told the names of the men who took the Gospel to the Gentiles, they were probably Jews, and like so many heroes of the faith, they are un-named.

V: 21 The hand of the Lord was in it and a great number believed and were saved.

- It has to be a work of God:

Jesus said:

John 6:44 "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him..."

John 12:32 "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

1 Corinthians 12:3 "... no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

- So salvation is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Mark's Gospel ends with:

Mark 16:20 "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."

- The primary part or ingredient of any ministry is the necessity of the Lord being in it.

V: 22 The church in Jerusalem again gets wind of what's happening in the church overall.

1. The church heard about what was going on in Samaria and sent Peter and John.
 2. They later heard what was going on in Caesarea and investigated.
 3. Now they're aware of what is happening in Antioch and they send Barnabas.
- We need to be aware of what is happening in the church overall - then be responsive as the early church was.
 - Missions / people, support / finances - prayer.
 - The church in Jerusalem sends Barnabas - the "son of consolation."
 - We're first introduced to Barnabas in **Acts 4** where we learned that he was a Levite from Cyprus, who sold some property and laid it at the Apostles feet.
 - In **Acts 9** he is the one who when everyone else was afraid of Saul, received him and brought him to the Apostles. Barnabas later accompanies Saul to Caesarea seeing him off to Tarsus.

V: 23 When Barnabas got to Antioch and saw what God was doing, how his grace and favor were being poured out he encouraged the believers that "with purpose of heart" to "cleave" unto the Lord.

- Purpose of heart: The purpose of your heart is stronger than the decision of your mind.
- Something that you've decided in your mind can be reasoned away; but to purpose something in your heart is to make it firm and steadfast.

Daniel 1:8 "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself..."

- We need to purpose in our hearts to cleave unto the Lord!

Romans 10:10 “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;...”

- Cleave:

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 “¹⁹I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: ²⁰That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey His voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto Him: for He is thy life, and the length of thy days:...”

- The word “cleave” in Acts is a variation of the word “abide” in **John 15:5**, and even though it’s a different word in Hebrew in Deuteronomy they all share a very similar definition: to cling to, to join with, to say with.

Genesis 2:24 “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

- Barnabas was the ideal man to send to Antioch, he understood the grace of God. Had they sent a Judeizer, someone who was legalistic it would have hampered the work of God.

V: 24 Biblical characteristics of a “good man:”

1. Full / (complete) of the Holy Ghost - born again.
 2. Full of faith, faithful. Faithful to do those things that God’s called him to do.
- Barnabas is used as a good example for us to follow:

V: 25-26 Barnabas assesses the situation and concludes that Paul is the man for the job.

- God calls the right man, the specific man for the specific flock, like using a 1/2 wrench on a 1/2 bolt - the right tool for the right job.
- Paul was familiar with the scriptures, he was familiar with the Grecian culture, he’d be perfect for this ministry - which God later appointed him to.
- Paul waited about 10 years for this opportunity, for the Lord’s calling.
- After Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch they spent their time teaching. Teaching is distinct from preaching. Preaching is presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the hope that the people listening will repent of their sins, receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior, becoming “born again.”
- Teaching follows that commitment, learning about the commitment they’ve made and learning about the God they now serve.

2 Timothy 2:15 “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

That is why God gave us pastors and teachers:

Ephesians 4:11-12 “¹¹And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹²For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”

- None of us like being lied to or deceived - but that is just exactly what people try to do:

Ephesians 4:13-14 “¹³Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: ¹⁴That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

- Those who won't be taught generally will be deceived.
- “**Disciples**”: Characteristics - a follower of Jesus, a God seeker who actively pursues a deeper relationship with Christ, a learner, willing and teachable, not “just a believer.”
- “**Christian**” - Christ like... it was supposed to be a derisive name, but it stuck. Kind of like “Jesus freak” - intended to be insulting, but it became a badge of honor.

V: 27-28 Prophets, those that would be called to speak for God went from Jerusalem to Antioch (support from Jerusalem to the church at large).

- One of them, Agabus speaking in the spirit foretold of a famine to come - which came to pass during the reign of Claudius Caesar. There were actually several famines that occurred during his reign.
- The OT test of a prophet was fulfilled in that what he foretold actually came to pass.

V: 29-30 Then the believers in Antioch purposed to help the church in Judaea which was suffering because of the famine. They sent their help back with Barnabas and Saul / Paul.

Paul would later write:

1 Corinthians 12:25-26 “²⁵... there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. ²⁶And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it...”

- **As every man purposed in his heart to help:**

Ezra / Nehemiah 5:8 "... according to their ability they gave..."

1 Corinthians 9:7 "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."