

Acts 11:1-18

- **No PARTIALITY...**
 - Obeying the Lord...
 - At this point in the book of Acts everyone in the church was Jewish...
 - The assumption was to be saved - someone first had to become part of Israel...
 - Having been given a VISION from the LORD - instructed by the HOLY spirit to go - **Acts 10:20**
 - Peter reluctantly left Joppa from Caesarea - but brought brothers from the CHURCH with him...
 - When he arrived at the house of Cornelius - it was PACKED with people...
 - Peter kept saying [imperfect] it was NOT lawful - for a JEW to enter the house of a GENTILE...
 - But God had told him NOT to call anyone UNCLEAN!
 - Gentiles Pentecost...
 - When he heard the story of the ANGEL who visited CORNELIUS...
 - He made realized the God has NO partiality - but that ANYONE could be saved...
 - So he gave the GOSPEL [death and resurrection of Jesus] - and the CHOICE...
 - God would JUDGE the LIVING and the DEAD [spiritually] - and only FAITH in Jesus could save...
 - While he was still PREACHING [ῥῆμα] - they heard the WORD [λόγος]
 - And the HOLY Spirit fell upon them - a Gentile PENTECOST...
 - Therefore - Peter commanded that they be BAPTIZED in the name of Jesus!
- **1ST - NOT HAPPY... vs. 1-3**
 - 1st - Breaking the rule... vs. 1
 - Rumors...
 - Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard.
 - The Gentiles had also received the word of God!
 - It did NOT take long for the news to SPREAD [κατά] about GENTILES being baptized...
 - And all the APOSTLES and BROTHERS in Judea heard about it...
 - Because it should come as no SURPRISE that BAD news travels VERY fast!
 - Ever notice how GOSSIP always seems to be about BAD things...
 - You will never see people whispering in corners about how GREAT someone is...
 - But the moment someone makes a MISTAKE - it spreads like WILD fire!
 - People GOSSIP about others – to make themselves look better...
 - Thinking they are more righteous – because at least they did NOT to that...
 - But we must remember the word for GOSSIP - comes from the word DEVIL [διάβολος]
 - So when we go around spreading RUMORS - we are working for the ENEMY...
 - Because the only thing GOSSIP does - is cause DIVISION!
 - **Leviticus 19:16** - “Do not spread... gossip among your people.” [NLT]
 - Religion...
 - The question must be asked - why was this BAD news...
 - We know that GENTILES getting saved was a reason to REJOICE...
 - But that was NOT the case for the JEWS in the early church [THREE reasons]
 - FIRST - their RELIGION led them to believe they should be SEPARATE...
 - Everything about how they lived their lives made them DIFFERENT from GENTILES!
 - They could NOT work on SATURDAYS [sabbath] - **Exodus 20:8**
 - They could NOT eat certain FOODS [pork - shrimp] - **Leviticus 11**

- They were NOT allowed to marry outsiders [gentiles] - **Deuteronomy 7:3**
- God did all of this to make them HOLY [set apart] - as an EXAMPLE to the world...
- But the Jews used these LAWS to create a WALL of separation between them and the world!
- History...
 - SECOND - the GENTILES had NOT been kind to Jews!
 - Going all the way back to EGYPT - the GENTILES had enslaved the JEWS - **Exodus 1:11**
 - They were SCATTERED by the ASSYRIANS [diaspora] - **II Kings 17:6**
 - Carried into CAPTIVITY [and the temple destroyed] by the BABYLONIANS - **Jeremiah 25:11**
 - Faced GENOCIDE at the hands of the PERSIANS [Haman] - **Esther 3:13**
 - Had their temple DESECRATED by the GRECIANS [Antiochus] - **Daniel 11:31**
 - And were currently under the OCCUPATION of the ROMAN empire...
 - With a HISTORY like that - there was understandable MISTRUST between the TWO peoples!
- Faith...
 - THIRD - the JEW believed [rightly so] they had the TRUTH...
 - They were the CHOSEN people of God - who had been given the WORD of God!
 - **Deuteronomy 7:6** - "You are a holy people to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself - a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."
 - But rather than seeing this as an opportunity to be an EXAMPLE to others...
 - The Jews [because of their Religion and History] became RECLUSIVE...
 - They saw their position as the CHOSEN people as EXCLUSIVE...
 - And therefore came to believe that God did NOT want to save GENTILES...
 - Because it THREATENED their - RELIGION - HISTORY - and their understanding of FAITH!
- o 2nd - The Attack... vs. 2
 - The Circumcision...
 - When Peter came up to Jerusalem those of the circumcision contended with him!
 - In light of their BIAS - and dislike of the GENTILES...
 - WHEN [ὅτε] Peter came back to Jerusalem [you know he was dreading coming home]
 - Immediately - he faced constant [imperfect] ATTACK [διακρίνω] from the CIRCUMCISION...
 - ATTACK [διακρίνω] - thorough [διὰ] condemnation [κρίνω]!
 - The promise...
 - It is worth noting that those who ATTACKED were called the CIRCUMCISION...
 - When Abraham was NINETY years old - God gave him a PROMISE...
 - He would be the FATHER of MANY nations [Isaac had NOT been born] - **Genesis 17:4**
 - The PROOF of that PROMISE - was the covenant of CIRCUMCISION...
 - It was meant to show how the JEWS were NOT to follow the FLESH [sinful nature]
 - From then on - every JEW - would be circumcised on the EIGHTH day - **Genesis 17:12**
 - This became the SYMBOL for the JEWS - of who were allowed to be SAVED!
 - The Symbol...
 - But CIRCUMCISION was never meant to SAVE anyone...
 - There is NO ritual [baptism] - or RELIGION that can get us to heaven...
 - It was meant to be a SYMBOL - of cutting off our sinful life!
 - There is a reason why sins bother us NOW when it did NOT used to...
 - It used to be if we lied - or cheated - or were mean to others - it did NOT matter...
 - Yet now these things bother us - because we have been CIRCUMCISED in our heart...

- That change of heart – CIRCUMCISION of the heart – is the SIGN that we are SAVED!
- **Colossians 2:11** - “When you came to Christ you were circumcised - but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision - the cutting away of your sinful nature.” [NLT]

o 3rd - The Complaint... vs. 3

- Eating...
 - Saying: You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!
 - The one COMPLAINT of the CIRCUMCISION [Jews] had of Peter...
 - He ATE [aorist] with men who are [present] NOT circumcised...
 - Although there is NO law in the Bible that forbids eating with GENTILES...
 - The MISHNAH [oral teachings] does state it is forbidden [bishul akum]
 - Because GENTILES might use non-KOSHER ingredients [unclean animals]
 - And the GENTILES themselves were considered UNCLEAN!
 - The Law called the Jews to be HOLY – separate from sinners – **Leviticus 19:2**
 - And in those days everyone would eat from a COMMON bowl...
 - There were NO rules about DOUBLE dipping - so you really shared the meal...
 - So in the EYES of the JEWS - Peter had become ONE with UNCLEAN gentiles...
 - But their RULES [Mishnah] - kept them SEPARATED - rather than being an EXAMPLE!
- Variety...
 - Sadly - many still have this sense of SEPARATION today...
 - People cling to their DENOMINATION - and decry everyone else as WRONG...
 - Yet God has allowed there to be many DENOMINATIONS within His Church...
 - Each with a slightly different FLAVOR - all with the same Lord...
 - The reason is so that the church can minister to all different kinds of people!
 - **I Corinthians 9:22** - “All things to all men that I might by all means save some.”
 - Christ is NOT divided - so therefore the Church of Christ should NOT be divided...
 - There is only ONE Jesus - ONE cross - ONE salvation - ONE heaven - **Ephesians 4:4-6**
 - We are going to spend eternity together – we should start getting along now!
- Maturity...
 - **I Corinthians 3:4** – “When one of you says - I am a follower of Paul and another says I follow Apollos - are you not acting just like people of the world?” [NLT]
 - People in the world love to DIVIDE - they have their groups...
 - In the world it is all about our family - our town - our county!
 - When people argue over being Catholic - Baptist [religions]
 - They reveal they are either NOT saved - or have NEVER grown in the Lord...
 - Because they are acting NO differently than BEFORE they knew Jesus...
 - There is nothing wrong with enjoying a particular CHURCH...
 - The problem comes when we make that CHURCH our identity...
 - It causes division within the BODY of Christ - hindering the power of the Gospel...
 - We wonder why more people do NOT believe in Jesus - why churches are EMPTY...
 - It is because the CHURCH of God is DIVIDED - busy fighting itself...
 - No wonder God included this story THREE times in the Bible [important]
 - Just like the Jews - we love to DIVIDE – and God has called us to break down the walls!
 - **John 13:35** - “All will know you are My disciples - if you have love for one another.”

● 2ND - PLAN OF GOD... vs. 4-14

o 1st - The Explanation... vs. 4

- But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning!
- [δὲ] But Peter - did NOT argue or debate...
- Instead he took the time to EXPLAIN to them WHY he ate with GENTILES...
- He did so by CALMLY going back to the BEGINNING [ἀρχομαι] of the story!
- When people ATTACK us - it is only natural to become DEFENSIVE...
- We want to react in KIND - and ATTACK back because we are UPSET...
- In the MOMENT we often are full of EMOTION - and need to COOL down before we speak...
- Because if we let HURTFUL words come out - they will NOT help ...
- But if we respond instead in LOVE - then we will bring HEALING!
- **Proverbs 15:1** - "A soft answer turns away wrath - BUT a harsh word stirs up anger."
- o 2nd - The Vision... vs. 5-10
 - Details... vs. 5
 - I was in the city of Joppa praying - and in a trance I saw a vision.
 - An object descending like a great sheet let down from heaven by four corners - it came to me!
 - As Peter begins to recount the EVENTS - he does alter a few details...
 - While he EMPHASIZED that he was PRAYING [seeking God]
 - And in response God gave him a VISION from the [τοῦ] HEAVEN [οὐρανοῦ]
 - He conveniently leaves out the part where he was HUNGRY - **Acts 10:10**
 - I can image this was to remove any questions about the validity of his VISION...
 - Seeing FOOD when you are HUNGRY might lead some to question what he saw!
 - Unclean... vs. 6-8
 - When I observed it intently and considered.
 - I saw four-footed animals of the earth - wild beasts - creeping things - and birds of the air.
 - And I heard a voice saying to me: Rise Peter - kill and eat.
 - But I said: Not so Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth!
 - As Peter was FOCUSED [ἀτενίζω] on the sheet...
 - He SAW that it was filled out ALL kinds of ANIMALS [clean and unclean]
 - As he tried [imperfect] to FIGURE out [κατανοέω] what it meant [it confused him]
 - A voice commanded [imperative] him to KILL and EAT!
 - No doubt in the story - the CIRCUMCISION were looking very UPSET...
 - So Peter makes sure to emphasize he had the right JEWISH response...
 - He told the Lord [κύριος] - he could NEVER [μηδαμῶς] do that...
 - Because nothing COMMON [κοινός] or UNCLEAN [ἀκάθαρτος] had EVER entered his mouth!
 - Not common... vs. 9-10
 - But the voice answered me again from heaven:
 - What God has cleansed you must not call common.
 - Now this was done three times - and all were drawn up again into heaven!
 - The same voice from HEAVEN [the Lord] answered Peter...
 - What God [θεός] has [indicative] CLEANSED [καθαρίζω] - is NOT common [κοινός]
 - This was done THREE times - before the sheet was taken back up into heaven...
 - In Jewish tradition - THREE is a very important number...
 - It represented an ABSOLUTE confirmation of the TRUTH!
 - **Deuteronomy 19:15** - "By the mouth of... three witnesses the matter shall be established."
 - I have to wonder if telling the story again - further confirmed it for Peter...
 - As he retold the story of what God had done - it established it in his heart!

- There is a benefit to sharing with others what God has shown us...
- As we recount His Word - it gives us a change to remember and reflect...
- We get to see things from a different perspective [looking back]
- And that often strengthens our resolve - makes us confident in the Lord!
- **Psalm 105:5** - "Remember His marvelous works which He has done."
- o 3rd - Doubt nothing... vs. 11-12
 - Three men... vs. 11
 - At that very moment three men stood before the house where I was.
 - Having been sent to me from Caesarea - the Spirit told me to go with them doubting nothing!
 - And [καί] - IMMEDIATELY [ἐξαυτῆς] - behold [ἰδού]
 - Peter did NOT want the CIRCUMCISION to miss the timing [not a coincidence]
 - THREE men stood at the house - sent from Caesarea to find HIM [με]
 - And [δέ] the SPIRIT then spoke to Peter - GO with them...
 - He was NOT to DOUBT [διακρίνω] - why they had COME [ἦλθον]!
 - There is a SUBTLE change here in the STORY...
 - Where the SPIRIT commanded [imperative] Peter to GO [πορεύω] - **Acts 10:20**
 - Peter here tells us the SPIRIT said [no command] to GO [συνέρχομαι]
 - GO [συνέρχομαι] emphasizing they were to come [έρχομαι] together in UNITY [σύν]!
 - Accountability... vs. 12
 - Moreover these six brethren accompanied me!
 - But [δέ] Peter took SIX brothers [ἀδελφός] with him...
 - Presumably those same SIX men were still standing next to Peter confirming the story!
 - Men should not be alone with women [unmarried]
 - There are TWO teachers in every classroom...
 - The reason - because we want to make sure there is ACCOUNTABILITY!
 - **I Thessalonians 5:22** - "Abstain from all appearance of evil." [KJV]
 - The problem with doing things without ACCOUNTABILITY...
 - When [not if] something happens - it is our word against the other person...
 - We have an ENEMY who loves to make false accusations - **Revelation 12:10**
 - And we want to be READY with WITNESSES when those accusations come!
- o 4th - The command... vs. 12-14
 - Generic... vs. 12
 - And we entered the mans house!
 - Peter conveniently leaves out a few details...
 - He does NOT mention that Cornelius is a CENTURION...
 - It was bad enough it was a GENTILE home - much less a solider from ROME...
 - He also did NOT mention how FULL the house was [packed]
 - Because he was trying to make a POINT - not PROVOKE the Jews!
 - The Angel... vs. 13-14
 - He told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house who said to him:
 - Send men to Joppa, -and call for Simon whose surname is Peter.
 - Who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved!
 - The man [Cornelius] gave Peter the MESSAGE [ἀπαγγέλλω]
 - Telling him about the ANGEL that stood in his home...
 - And how he commanded [imperative] him to send to Joppa - for SIMON called PETER...

- Who said Peter would speak [λαλέω] to him - **Acts 10:6**
- The fact Cornelius knew both of his NAMES was proof the Angel had spoken to him...
- And Peter then interprets the SPEAK - as he was to tell [ῥῆμα] him how to be SAVED [σώζω]
- Peter took the time to explain all of this - so the Jews could understand the PLAN of God...
- There ideas about who could be SAVED were wrong - the Gospel is for EVERYONE!
- I have known people who ATTACK the traditions of other denominations...
- But attacking their belief will likely only end up putting us into an argument...
- Like Peter – we need to be sensitive on how we share...
- Be sensitive to our listeners – gently giving them the Word of God!
- **Ephesians 4:15** - “Speaking the truth in love.”

● 3RD - SALVATION FOR ALL... vs. 15-18

o 1st - Confirmation... vs. 15-17

- Began to speak... vs. 15
 - As I began to speak the Holy Spirit fell upon them - as upon us at the beginning!
 - Peter does NOT repeat his Gospel presentation to Cornelius - instead jumps to the END...
 - Because no sooner had he started speaking [ἄρχομαι] - NOT his words that had the power...
 - The HOLY Spirit fell upon the GENTILES - just as He had upon the Jews - **Acts 2:4**
- The Word... vs. 16
 - Then I remembered the word of the Lord how He said:
 - John indeed baptized with water - but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit!
 - As Peter saw them SPEAKING in other languages [like Pentecost]
 - It caused him to REMEMBER [passive] the words [ῥῆμα] of our Lord [κύριος]
 - **Acts 1:5** - “John truly baptized with water - but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”
 - Peter was NOT just looking at one verse – he looked at the whole teaching...
 - Jesus told the disciples the Spirit would come – so that they could be WITNESSES!
 - **Acts 1:8** – “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you - and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem - and in all Judea and Samaria - and to the end of the earth.”
 - Peter now understood the plan of God was to bring the GOOD news to everyone...
 - The Gospel had gone to Jerusalem [Acts 2] - Judea [Acts 3-7] - and Samaria [Acts 8]
 - Now God was fulfilling His Word and bringing the Jesus to the World!
 - When we go to the Bible for answers – we need to look at the context...
 - Not just taking a verse - or a part of a verse – and making it fit our interpretation...
 - But instead letting the verse be interpreted by the surrounding passage!
- Will of God... vs. 17
 - If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us.
 - When we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ - who was I that I could withstand God?
 - SINCE [indicative] God gave the GENTILES the same GIFT [δωρεά] of the Spirit...
 - How could Peter have [imperfect] the POWER [δυνατός] to stop [κωλύω] God!
 - We may NOT like the idea that God can save WICKED people...
 - We might think that MURDERERS - BAD people - deserve to be JUDGED...
 - But in spite of what we THINK - who are we to ARGUE with God...
 - The truth is there are NO levels with the LORD - we are ALL sinners - **Romans 3:23**
 - And the same GRACE that saved us - can save ANYONE!

o 2nd - Silent... vs. 18

- When they heard these things they became silent!
- They glorified God saying: Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life!
- When the CIRCUMCISION heard the WORD [Jesus] and the EVIDENCE [Spirit]
- They chose [active] to stop ARGUING [ἡσυχάζω] with Peter...
- They did NOT like it - they still did NOT want the GENTILES to be saved...
- And this was NOT the end - the debate would come up again - **Acts 15:1**
- But for the moment there was NOTHING more they could say...
- Therefore [καὶ] they gave [imperfect] GLORY to God [τὸν θεὸν]
- Who had GIVEN [δίδωμι] the GENTILES [ἔθνος] repentance to life!
- It is NOT our responsibility to convince people...
- Or to try and make people from different denomination get along...
- All we need to do is follow Jesus – and stand on the Word – God does the rest!