

Acts of the Apostles

Week 13: Acts 10:23b-11:18

* We will return to Acts 9:32-43 in week 14.

Peter visits Cornelius's House (10:23b-33).

- Peter went with a small group of believers to meet with Cornelius (v 23b).
 - o Cornelius invited all his relatives and close friends to meet Peter – a reminder that evangelism happens through our personal networks (v 24).
 - o When Peter entered the house, Cornelius fell at his feet in reverence, revealing a genuine spiritual hunger (v 25).
 - o Peter quickly has him stand up redirecting any reverence to God.
- Peter begins by noting the strangeness of the situation – Jews did not associate with Gentiles (v 27). The strangeness of the moment pointed to the fact that God was doing something new.
- Peter asks Cornelius to explain why he sent for him (v 29).
- Cornelius recounts his vision from God and indicates that they are all there to listen to “everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us” (v 33).

Peter presents the gospel to Cornelius's family (10:34-43).

- Peter begins his sermon with a staggering confession: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.”
 - o This is a story about two conversions – Peter's and Cornelius's.
 - o Both men need to change for the gospel to move forward.
- Peter then recounts the gospel. Peace with God has been accomplished through the work of Jesus (v 36).
 - o God sent Jesus to Israel, but Peter calls Jesus, “Lord of all” (implying Lord of also the Gentiles) (v 36).
 - o Jesus ministered through the power of the Holy Spirit (v 38).
 - o Jesus died on the cross, but God raised him on the third day (v 39-40).
 - o We were witnesses to his resurrection (v 41).
 - o Jesus sent the apostles out to proclaim him as the one “God appointed as judge of the living and the dead” (v 42).
 - o The prophets testify that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins (v 43).

Cornelius and his family receive the Holy Spirit and are baptized (10:44-48)

- While Peter was speaking the Holy Spirit descended on Cornelius and his friends and family (v 44), and they spoke in tongues and praised God (v 46) like the first believers did in Acts 2:4.

- The Jewish believers (Luke calls them the “circumcised believers”) were astonished that the Holy Spirit was poured out on Gentiles (v 45).
- Peter views the descent of the Spirit as affirmation of the fact that God does not show favoritism.
 - o Peter proposes baptism in a way that preempts any opposition – “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water” since they have received the Holy Spirit (v 47).
 - o Peter’s words recall the Ethiopian Eunuch’s question to Philip, “Here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” (8:36).
- Peter ordered their baptism in the name of Jesus and stayed a few days with them (v 48).

Peter explains his actions to the Jerusalem church (11:1-18)

- Peter’s actions quickly draw the attention and criticism of believers in Jerusalem proving just how scandalous it was for a Jew to eat with a Gentile (vv 1-2).
- Peter starts from the beginning and tells them the entire story of his vision, the arrival of Cornelius’s men, the command of the Spirit to go with them, entering Cornelius’s house, Cornelius’s vision, and the descent of the Holy Spirit (vv 4-15).
- Peter adds a bit of insight to his thinking in verse 16, “Then I remembered what the Lord had said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (see Mark 1:8).
 - o Peter explains that this was God’s doing.
 - o Who was he to stand in God’s way? (v 17).
- In this text, the Jerusalem believers accept Peter’s explanation and praise God, expressing surprise that God has granted repentance that leads to life even to the Gentiles (v 18).
 - o Gentiles are not included because they are nice people.
 - o They are not even included because they are made in God’s image.
 - o They are included because God has made it possible for them to repent and find forgiveness for their sins.
- This will not be the end of this story.
 - o The spread of the gospel among the Gentiles will not be a smooth one for the Jerusalem church.
 - o Faithful Jews will struggle to accommodate new Gentile believers and arguments will erupt over how Jewish these Gentiles will need to become to be considered Christians in good standing.
 - o Reminds us that even mighty movements of God can be slow to take root in our lives.

Sources

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