

Putting Feet to Your Faith

Acts 11:1-30

- Word has quickly spread to Jerusalem that Peter had preached the gospel to the Gentiles and that they have gotten saved, but instead of a joyful shout that could be heard throughout the Roman Empire, there's skepticism and resentment, that those who had been such a thorn in the Jewish people's side for so long are now being accepted as equals into the Kingdom of God. **Acts Ch 11** is going to describe three responses Jewish believers had toward Gentile Christians and as we study these responses we'll better understand how we were suppose to relate to one another.

V1-30

- **V1-3** so Peter returns to Jerusalem and no sooner that he is there he hears objections from those who still held strong legalistic views and prejudices against the gentiles, and they charge Peter with not only keeping company with the enemy but also having the audacity to eat with them as well! To eat with someone in their culture meant fellowship and that you were in league with how they thought and how they lived, so their charge against Peter is that he not only was in their presence but also in agreement with everything they were doing against his countrymen, so they are absolutely appalled that one so esteemed as an Apostle would do this.
- This is a classic case of jumping to conclusions without hearing all the facts, we do this all the time don't we, someone tells us something and it perks our senses, we can't believe that this individual or individuals has acted like that, it seems out of character, but we hold onto it. Then when they try and present the facts we already have a preconceived idea as to how we view this and when we approach them it's with a already tainted opinion as to what has happened. When you study the complaint you can see they were **more concerned with what Peter did** than with **what God was doing** with the Gentiles and in furthering the gospel, that's what's important.
- **V4-12** Peter begins at the beginning that's always the best place to start, for its where we can retrace our steps and then track where we may have miss-stepped, the problem is often were so busy trying to be right that we have no room to admit that we may have been wrong. In telling the vision he includes the six witnesses that he took with him, upon seeing their reaction we can clearly see how wise it was of Peter to take these men with him to meet with Cornelius.
- **V13-15** in his story Peter admits that he did enter the house which was an admission of guilt to the first charge as it was against Jewish custom and tradition, but he was careful to add that before he ever entered Cornelius house the Spirit told him to do it and it was confirmed first by Cornelius who said an Angel told him to send for Peter, and secondly how the Spirit fell upon the gentile listeners in the same way that it came upon all of us at Pentecost as a stamp of approval. **V16-17** Peter then interprets these events by remembering the words of Jesus and declaring that if God is reaching out to the Gentiles who are we to withstand the Lord > **Is 42:6-7**.

- In **Ch 10** after seeing the vision of the ceremonially unclean animals and told to kill and eat, after hearing the Spirit of God telling him to go with these men doubting nothing, Peter had a choice whether he would obey and experience greater things than this or stay in his shell and be content with where he is spiritually the decision is up to him. Now those who have accused Peter is faced with the same decision, they have the same view he had toward the Gentiles, the Law, and what is clean and unclean, but that's the past, will they enter into the future and grow with the New Testament Church and let their prejudices go and be a part of the body of Christ?
- **V18** at first they were silent, stunned is a better definition, because this was a huge decision they were making in letting go all that they had been taught to grab onto something that was entirely new. But then they couldn't resist the truth, God was at work in the Gentiles hearts and minds and it was evident so they glorified God, this is a powerful passage, because it shows we can enter a conversation hard hearted and stubborn but leave it soft hearted and rejoicing once we've received the correction from God. It is a glorious thing when God's people allow their prejudices and traditions to be overcome by God's Word and God's work Amen!
- **V19-21** when the saints first were scattered after Stephen's stoning they only preached to the Jews, in Antioch that all changes as it's here where a base was established for Gentile missionary work. It's interesting that it's in Antioch where this work for the Gentiles start, because Antioch was a notoriously wicked city in the Roman Empire probably second only to Corinth, known for its corruption and immorality it was the third largest city in Rome similar to Chicago or L.A. a place where Roman officials who have retired would go to bask in their luxury and wealth, and yet it's in this wicked place where the Gentiles are first targeted for evangelism.
- **V22-24** the news of the Gentiles conversion reaches Jerusalem and just as they did in **Acts 8** with the Samaritans in sending out people to help disciple and in the work of spreading the gospel they do the same thing for the Gentiles. Sending able men like Barnabas previously known for his generosity in giving now is giving of his time and knowledge to go and help in Antioch. Upon coming to Antioch he sees the grace "**he was glad**" God's grace and our joy should go hand in hand, afterward he encourages them to continue with the Lord, and to do it with "**purpose of heart**" I love this phrase for it implies that we follow with great determination.
- It takes a lot to continue in the Lord, we will be opposed with intellect, fear, threats, doubt, circumstances, situations, people were close to, others we barely know, not including the world, the flesh and the spiritual warfare of Satan and his fallen angels, all these will work in unison to attempt to get us to stop trusting in the Lord, so we need to cleave with everything we have in our faith to God. **V25-26** Barnabas after fulfilling his role departs and goes to Tarsus to seek Saul for again God is working on both ends for it is Saul who will become Paul that will minister to the gentiles and become their teacher and missionary starting churches throughout the world. **V27-30** we see Elder oversight and each person doing what God called them to do within the body.