

Sharing the Same—Acts 11:1-18—4/26/26
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Open your Bibles to Acts 11 as we see how Peter applied the truths of the narrative of Acts 10—let’s begin by reading Acts 11:1-18. [READ]

Maybe you have asked why all this gets repeated once again.

It’s because this was a **drastic shift** from the **Old Covenant** to the **New**, from God’s Law through Moses to new life in Jesus.

The Old Covenant was given to Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai to govern them as a nation set apart to God.

It was a path for living by faith in God’s grace & His promises & it was never meant to be a means of salvation by works.

Salvation was always & only by grace through faith in God’s promised Messiah & Jesus came & proved to be that Christ.

And Jesus’ coming brought a new era when God **replaced** the Old Covenant Law with His New Covenant.

That should have been **expected** as **promised** in passages like Jeremiah 31 where God said the New would replace the Old.

But that transition would **take time** to grasp as Jews learned what freedom in Christ looked like & what Gentiles coming to Christ meant.

Laws like those for cleanness were deeply entrenched in the consciences & practices as divine commands for God’s people.

When Jews had followed God rightly by faith in His grace & promises, they had rightly kept God’s Old Covenant laws.

So new revelation explained those New Covenant emphases & what that meant for faithfulness in this new era.

The book of Hebrews explains much of that & yet Acts 10 opened a different door of difficulty that also had to be explained.

That door allowed Gentiles into God’s people without any expectations of following the Old Covenant.

It was hard enough for Jews to feel free from those ceremonies, but accepting Gentile believers without **any** ceremonies was shocking.

We can imagine they had questions about festivals & Sabbath days & Temple worship & how Gentiles could be admitted.

To begin this transition, God gave the Spirit as **undeniable evidence** of the New Covenant to prove the passing away of the Old Covenant.

That proof came in Acts 2 with the Jews & again in Acts 10 when Peter went to the Gentiles.

Yet the conflict of whether Gentiles had to be circumcised & cleansed before being accepted had to be clarified again in Acts 15.

As Jewish & Gentile believers came together, they struggled with how & when to accept or correct others’ differences.

We find teaching about such challenges in many NT books that not only helped them when the new mystery of the church began.

Such teaching **also** helps us **now** as we are tempted to be impatient or ungracious with believers with differences.

Romans 14-15 has insightful truths on those challenges in the context of different convictions about foods & which days to observe or not.

When you understand Acts 10-11, you can better feel the tensions of Romans 14-15 & imagine the conflicts.

And such teaching should **also** prepare **us** to love one another & to address the tensions & conflicts & counseling sessions **of our time**.

When I entered Romans 14 in preaching through that book, I began with like 7-8 minutes of speed talking through lists of issues that could divide genuine Christians in our times.

They were issues of **conscience**, of convictions where there truly **may be** a right and wrong answer—a strong mature answer versus a weak answer—but where the **overall call is to accept one another**.

Romans 14:1 begins by saying to **accept the one who is weak in faith** & Romans 15:7 caps that section by saying to **accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God**.

So even when immature believers may need teaching & time to think & change, we are **commanded** to **accept** them as Christ accepted us.

And that application is **still** desperately needed & continually powerful for the life & testimony of believers in every church.

It's needed not only because we all have **issues**, right?—as we've said before, because we are all **weird** in one way or another.

But it's also needed because we are all also **annoying** in one way or another—we are **frustrating** in what we do or don't do.

So today we'll consider how to address that as we walk through Acts 11:1-18 with **4 unifying anchors** that all true Christians share.

We'll note **4 anchors of unity** that can help us strengthen our love & battle the temptations that our differences can bring.

Look back at Acts 11:1 where we find the 1st anchor. [READ]

As we saw last week, God awakened, affirmed & accepted **the Gentiles also—even the nations**, as that can also be translated.

And how had that occurred?—by Peter preaching the Word.

Verse 1 says **the Gentiles also had received the word of God**.

Those outside the nation of Israel heard of Jesus the Christ, as Acts 10:43 said, “*Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.*”

All the prophets testified that faith in Him brings **forgiveness**.

And that's for **everyone who believes in Him**—including Gentiles.

So these Gentiles had believed in Jesus as that Promised Savior, prophesied King, & suffering Servant.

That was the same object of faith as the Jews who were saved.

That was Luke's point in saying **the Gentiles also**.

So as a **1st anchor of Christian unity** for us to protect & prize & promote, note 1st today that we **share the same promised Word**.

Acts 11:1 says the Gentiles also shared in receiving the **same Word of God** with its **promises** of forgiveness in Christ.

Anchor #1—all true Christians share the same promised Word.

We can anchor ourselves together in the same promises of God in Christ & we can submit to the same authority of the Word.

We can come together to study & apply the same standard from the same revelation & unify under the promised grace of the one true God.

And I praise God for how you all practice this as a church.

I'm amazed each week as I watch you & hear you seeking & sharing God's Word as our common source of truth & hope & wisdom.

And that's important because unity gets **attacked**, doesn't it?

It gets attacked in our heart reactions to others' preferences & convictions & it gets attacked by issues of diverse backgrounds.

And it **was** attacked **immediately** as described in Acts 11.

Acts 11:1 says the Apostles as the leaders of the Jerusalem church & also the brethren, meaning other believers, had heard this report.

The news had spread throughout Judea while Peter was still away in Caesarea with those new Gentile believers.

Then the attack began when Peter returned—read verses 2-3. [READ]

Since Caesarea was by the Mediterranean Sea, it was a journey upward in elevation for Peter to return to Jerusalem.

And when he arrived, conflict arose from those who were circumcised.

That likely included **all** believers in Jerusalem at that time.

Later we find a group of “*those of the circumcision*” in Acts 15 and in Galatians that is separate from other believers as marked by that issue.

But here it was likely too early for such a group to form.

You recall that Luke described the men who accompanied Peter & witnessed Gentile conversions were called circumcised in Acts 10:45.

Since circumcision was the foundation block of ceremonial cleanness that set Israel apart as God's people, it was **the** issue.

Remember in Exodus 4:24 God was going to put Moses to death because he had failed to circumcise his son.

If that was true for Moses, it matters for those who read Moses.

Verse 3 says they either questioned or indicted Peter that, literally he **went into the men having uncircumcision & ate together** with them.

The idea is that Peter entered their home & joined in fellowship as if he were one of them, like there was no distinction.

And that word translated ‘*took issue*’ in verse 2 is the same word for **misgivings** in Acts 10:20 that's repeated in Acts 11:12.

It can mean doubt or delay or waver, but it can **also** mean to **differentiate** or **make a distinction** or separate or judge.

Looking back now, I probably should have emphasized those other meanings in Acts 10:20 to help add to the picture of what God said.

God said to go with Cornelius's messengers, **without judging, without making any distinctions, without passing judgment.**

In contrast, the circumcised believers **were** judging, **were** making distinctions & passing judgment & separating.

But that was understandable because they likely had not heard the full story & they had not had the revelation God gave Peter.

So that's how Peter handled the conflict—he summed up what God had revealed & how God had proven that this was **His** work.

Read verses 4-14 where Peter retold the story. [READ]

Peter was explaining to them in the order of his experience, as he lived it, which is why he told of his vision first.

As we learned in Acts 10:9-23, Peter was in Joppa praying & he saw a vision in some kind of out-of-body experience.

The vessel he saw coming down was like a large linen cloth let down by its four corners from heaven as far as Peter himself.

Intently staring at it, Peter contemplated it & saw four groups.

He mentioned 3 in Acts 10:12—quadrupeds & reptiles & birds—& here he added wild beasts to emphasize **unclean** animals.

Then verse 7 reports the voice telling him to get up, kill & eat.

His respectful refusal recounted his cleanness, saying nothing common or unclean had even **entered his mouth**.

Then came the heaven-sent command not to commonize what God had cleansed.

What God declared clean was not to be treated as common or unholy.

That happened three times to solidify the point & verse 10 clarifies that **everything was pulled up** again to heaven.

Then came the attention-grabbing “Behold” at the arrival of the men.

Cornelius is named in Acts 11, but he was the sender of the 3 men & the owner of the house into which Peter entered.

As we said last week, verse 12 gives the number of the **6 men** those who accompanied Peter to Caesarea & returned to Jerusalem.

So Peter & his 6 traveling companions made **7 witnesses** who did **not** initiate this entering & eating with the uncircumcised.

Peter resisted, but they went because of the Spirit’s command.

As in Acts 10:20, the Spirit had said to go without any judging or doubting or delaying or making distinctions or separating.

In verse 13, Peter’s report sums up what Acts 10:22 reported about the angel’s appearance & instructions.

But then in verse 14, Peter added something more clarifying that was not in Acts 10—**the expectation of salvation**.

Notice the angel said Peter would speak words by which Cornelius & his extended family & household servants would **be saved**.

Get that—the Gentiles were **saved**—they were **forgiven** as Peter had proclaimed & as Jesus had promised in Luke 24:47.

The New Covenant promise of forgiveness of sins was going to the Gentiles & they received **salvation** from sin’s penalty & power.

That’s what Peter told Jews in Acts 2:21 as quoted from Joel, that **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved**.

In Acts 2:40, Peter told the Jews to **be saved from this perverse generation** & then Acts 2:47 tells of **the Lord adding to their number day by day those who were being saved**.

And in Acts 4:12, Peter had said “*there is **salvation** in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men **by which we must be saved**.”*

So here after Acts 10, **Gentiles also** had been **saved** like the Jews had.

The Gentiles or nations had been **made clean** spiritually & **freed & rescued** from their sins.

That happened from Peter’s message just as the angel predicted.

So Peter **no longer** treated them as **unclean**.

He had **eaten** with them like they were **purified, cleansed, & saved**.

Peter could **fellowship** with them because they **shared the same purifying salvation**.

And that **purifying salvation** is a **2nd unifying anchor to note today**.

Not only do all true Christians **share the same promised Word**—we also **share the same purifying salvation**.

Anchor #2 to treasure & deepen & guard our unity as believers: **#2, all true Christians share the same purifying salvation.**

That was true of believing Gentiles & Jews in the 1st century & it's also true of all believers in Jesus now in the 21st century.

We share the **same promised Word** & the **same purifying salvation.**

We share the same **authority** in Scripture as God's revelation.

And we share the same **washing** from the shame of all our failings.

We share the same release from guilt & cleansing from sin.

We share the precious relief that our sin's penalty has been paid & God's wrath has been satisfied by Jesus' death in our place.

Oh how marvelous is our purifying salvation in Jesus!

We can praise God together that we will never be punished or forsaken by our heavenly Father who keeps His promised Word.

And that means we can confess our sins & seek forgiveness & grant forgiveness & know that we share in true forgiveness.

No other religion can offer & guarantee such complete forgiveness.

Such truths are why we **must accept one another** just as Christ also has accepted us—**not** partially or reluctantly or angrily.

Not with grudges held or axes to grind or eyes to roll.

When we see issues of sin or immaturity or weakness in each other, we must not respond with rejection or avoidance.

As Romans 14-15 describe, we should respond with love & patience & instruction & understanding & persevering grace.

I know that's not easy—we all deal with temptations to seethe or sulk or quit or give up hope or write people off.

We all have to fight such temptations as we meet believers from different backgrounds & try to make sense of how they function.

And we should pray for others & seek to speak truth in love in ways that show grace & are timely & striving to help.

Of course, we know unity is built on truth & we do not sacrifice truth or holiness for some façade of unity that fails to address sin.

But we must rehearse how God walked patiently & graciously with us through all our issues & immaturities & failings.

So we can be patient & gracious with others.

And I know you know all this & are striving to live it out, but let this passage remind us all to excel still more.

Remember the unity we share that's more important & lasting than the sin struggles & petty preferences that can frustrate or annoy us.

And read Acts 11:15-16 to see another area of unity. [READ]

We must remember that we share (1) the same promised Word, (2) the same purifying salvation, & then (3rdly) the same proven Spirit.

Point #3 that we see in verses 15-16 is that Jewish & Gentile believers—all Christians—**share the same proven Spirit.**

Anchor #3 is that all Christians share the same **proven Spirit.**

We covered this confirming miracle by the Spirit last week.

Acts 10:45 called it the outpouring of the Spirit on **the Gentiles also.**

This was first the regenerating work of the Spirit to grant faith & salvation in drawing them to Christ.

The Spirit indwelt them as He does all believers as **1st Corinthians 12:13** & other passages explain.

But **more so**, when Peter had said in Acts 10:47 that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit **just as we did**, he was referring to the **miraculous proof** that the last days had begun.

That **attesting miracle** was speaking in formerly unknown languages that were understood by people gathered in Jerusalem in Acts 2.

Peter explained those as **signs** proving the Spirit had come & the last days had begun like Joel & other prophets predicted.

Here that same phenomenon had happened when **the Gentiles** heard Peter begin to speak & they trusted in Jesus.

Peter testified here that the Holy Spirit fell upon them **just as He did** on the Jewish believers **at the beginning**.

Peter rooted that certainty as fulfillment of promises about being baptized with the Holy Spirit in Luke 3:16 & 24:49.

Luke quoted that promise from Jesus in Acts 1:5 before His ascension & then here Peter pointed to its fulfillment.

So note how Peter had to point to Jesus & the Scriptures as the authority since he was **not** infallible on his own authority.

The believers in Jerusalem were convinced by the Spirit's miracles as fulfilling the promises of Jesus & the prophets.

And John's baptism was a sign of repentance to prepare for the Messiah, but Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit brought the permanent indwelling by the Spirit.

So water baptism in Jesus' name symbolized cleansing from sin & dying to the old man & rising to new life in Christ.

Peter here affirmed that the Gentile believers had received the **same** coming of the Spirit as Jewish believers had.

The **same** new life for Gentiles was **proven** by the Spirit's miraculous sign of languages among the Gentiles also.

Today we don't expect miraculous signs when someone trusts Christ, but we do expect a changed life & the fruit of the Spirit.

So there's still a sense that we share the same proven Spirit.

We share that together now as brothers & sisters in Christ.

We can encourage & counsel & pray for one another with the assurance that God's Spirit will work in His people.

You know that—so remember to keep it in mind in our relationships.

We point to **the same promised Word** with those who have the **same purifying salvation** trusting that the **same proven Spirit** will do His sanctifying & keeping work in His people.

We can do so finally because we also **share the same penitent life**.

That's the 4th anchor for our unity to note today—that **all Christians share the same penitent life**.

And by penitent, I mean **repentant**—I mean a new spiritual life of turning from sin to Christ in ongoing repentance & faith as we grow.

I **don't** mean any kind of penance or rituals to make up for sins or add to Christ's atonement or try to merit God's forgiveness.

I mean what verse 18 describes as the repentance that leads to life.

We share the same (1) promised word, (2) purifying salvation, (3) proven Spirit, & (4) penitent life, or provision of life.

Peter concluded his answer to those who took issue with him by summing up the sameness of the gift to the Gentiles also.

Verse 17 begins with ‘therefore’ to sum it up.

And the ‘if’ in verse 17 might better be translated as ‘since’ because it was a condition that had been fulfilled.

Read verses 17-18 to see that conclusion. [READ]

The conclusion is that God gave the equal gift—the same gift—so the Gentile believers are counted as equals in relationship with God.

Of course, that’s not all Gentiles—it’s only those who had believed into the Lord Jesus Christ AFTER they had believed.

Since God so clearly demonstrated this equal status, Peter posed the question whether he should stand in God’s way.

He used the same word he used in asking if anyone could refuse or prevent baptism for the believing Gentiles in Acts 10:47 after they received the Spirit.

God had overcome Peter’s hesitancy to fellowship with unclean Gentiles & to no longer make such external distinctions.

God had proven His plan to Peter & so Peter was passing it on.

If anyone took issue with Peter, their issue was actually with God.

Peter clarified that preventing acceptance of Gentile believers would be trying to prevent God from advancing His plan.

Since that was neither wise nor possible, those listening went silent.

Then as Peter’s undeniable explanation settled in, the quiet turned to worship of God for granting Gentiles new life.

God had graciously given them repentance unto new life.

That began God’s fulfillment of His promises to bless all the families of the earth in Abraham’s seed.

That began God’s fulfillment of His promise in Isaiah 42 of His Servant bringing righteousness & light to the nations.

That began God’s fulfillment of His promise in Isaiah 49:6 of His Servant bringing salvation to reach to the ends of the earth.

Jesus was marching forward in His plan for His Apostles to be His witnesses to the end of the earth in Acts 1:8.

From this point in the book of Acts, the focus is on the Gentiles, on the Gospel going to the nations.

Jesus was moving to make disciples of all nations as He commanded His followers in Matthew 28:19-20.

God had given the Gentiles, the nations, the same salvation by grace through repentance & faith in Jesus.

And note here that repentance & faith are two sides of the same coin—to turn to Christ in faith, you must turn away from trust in self & sin.

And to truly repent—to turn away from following self & sin, you must turn to Christ & His promises & ways.

As we said last week, repentance was & always is a gift of God to turn someone from self & sin to faith in Jesus.

That entrance into a right relationship with God by the Spirit’s work that begins a life of transformation.

Repentance & faith then become the posture & pattern of the Christian life, as we're always turning away from sin & turning to Christ.

We're always growing to see the wisdom of God & the wickedness of our sins.

And we share that together as brothers & sisters in the church—we share the privilege & power of truly changing to be more like Christ.

That's amazing when we think of it—we CAN change.

We have new life by the Spirit & fellow Christians can help us change.

If we know that, we ought to want it.

We should want to escape & avoid the destructiveness of sin in our lives & we should want the blessings of God's ways.

We should want to stimulate & strengthen that in one another.

And when others are not changing as quickly as we desire, we must not forget how much we share in common & be patient.

When others are not embracing counsel, we must recall how it took time & teaching to change patterns in the early church.

The coming together of Gentiles with Jews was a newly revealed mystery of the church & they had to learn to love one another.

They had to learn to guard & grow the unity God had provided.

And we always need to be learning how to love one another similarly.

That does not mean we ignore or minimize clear sin, but it does mean we try to keep issues in proper perspective.

It does mean we recall the glory of Christ on display in how His people love one another in the church, even when we are different.

We must return to essentials we share to reset our perspective.

We must protect **practically** what is ours **objectively** in Christ.

Our unity matters because our love for one another is what sets us apart as followers of Jesus.

And our gracious acceptance & forgiveness of one another matter because it shows how we are accepted & forgiven by God.

Those are the bigger issues to keep in view.

Those are the perspectives passages like Romans 14-15 highlight.

Those are what Paul pointed out to Peter when he confronted his later hypocrisy of withdrawing from Gentile believers.

In Galatians 2:11-16, Paul wrote that Peter was not being **straightforward about the truth of the Gospel**.

Think of that—we probably never thought about our dinner fellowship as upholding or undermining the Gospel, but it can.

Our fellowship can make a huge statement one way or another because of what Jesus accomplished for all who trust Him.

So now that we've studied this breakthrough section in Acts, let's read the later explanation of it that we read weeks ago.

Turn to Ephesians 2:11-22 & let's read what I trust we understand far better now that we've walked through this section in Acts 10-11.

Follow along with me as I read Ephesians 2:11-22. [READ]

That's the church—that's us now as people from various backgrounds with different past experiences & sin struggles.

That's what Jesus has provided for us that we must recall & return to & protect & prize in our relationships with each other.

Gracious acceptance of fellow Christians in the church does matter.

I'm grateful how you show that together in this church.

So keep it up & let's not forget all Jesus has done for us.

Ephesians 2 describes us as believers from all nations who are brought near to God & reconciled to one another in Christ.

And that's the Good News we hold out to others.

You can be brought near to God—you can be reconciled to God through faith in the finished work of Jesus the Christ.

You can have hope in God & peace with God & access to God, not because you deserve it, but because Jesus deserves it & He will freely give what He earned to all who trust Him.

So turn from trusting yourself & your own path today & come to Jesus to find new life.

Come & receive His promised Word, His purifying salvation, His proven Spirit to lead you to a new life of repentance & faith.

And let us know how we can help you & pray for you.

Pray with me as we close.