



Acts 11:1-18

REINFORCEMENT OF THE PIVOTAL TIME THE GOSPEL EMBRACES GENTILES

Jews take issue with Peter eating with Gentiles (11:1-3)

¹ Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, ³ “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

- ▶ News of the conversion of those in Cornelius' household spread among the apostles and other believers
- ▶ Jewish believers adhering to the Jewish law's demand that Jews not eat with Gentiles react negatively
- ▶ They demand that Peter explain his actions that they feel are completely wrong

Jews take issue with Peter eating with Gentiles (11:1-3)

- ▶ Peter can understand their problem with his actions because prior to the vision, he would have felt the same way
 - ▶ Acts 10:28–29
- ▶ Jesus experienced similar criticism during His public ministry
 - ▶ Luke 5:30
 - ▶ Luke 15:2
 - ▶ Luke 19:7
- ▶ Criticism is unavoidable in life and ministry

Peter recounts the vision given to him (11:4-12)

⁴ But Peter began and explained it to them in order: ⁵ “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. ⁶ Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ ⁸ But I said, ‘By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ ⁹ But the voice answered a second time from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, do not call common.’ ¹⁰ This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹ And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. ¹² And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house.

- ▶ Peter’s close observation identifies both clean and unclean animals and reptiles
 - ▶ When commanded to “Rise, Peter; kill and eat,” as a law-abiding Jew, he responds, “By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.”
 - ▶ The Lord’s response to Peter is, “What God has made clean, do not call common.”
 - ▶ This happened a total of three times before the sheet is taken back into heaven

Peter recounts the vision given to him (11:4-12)

- ▶ Immediately following the vision, the three Gentile men from Cornelius arrive at the door of the house
- ▶ The Spirit commands Peter to accompany them and he is not to view these Gentiles common or impure
- ▶ Peter can understand the criticism of these law-abiding Jews
- ▶ Peter would likely have been with them if he were in their shoes

Peter recounts the vision given to Cornelius (11:13-14)

¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'

- ▶ Peter reports the vision Cornelius received from an angel, instructing him to send for Peter who will come and share **how he and his household will be saved**
 - ▶ The God-fearer Cornelius, will hear about saving work Jesus has done
 - ▶ The work of Jesus is not done for Jews alone, but for all those who have faith in His accomplished work
 - ▶ Romans 3:20–25a

Peter recounts the vision given to Cornelius (11:13-14)

- ▶ Holiness and cleanness before God, prior to the atoning work of Jesus, is by faith displayed in the renewed ritual observances commanded by the Law
 - ▶ The work of Jesus fulfills these ritualistic laws, providing cleansing and sanctification through faith in His finished work
 - ▶ The teaching found in the account of Acts reinforces this point
 - ▶ Acts 15:9
 - ▶ Acts 20:32
 - ▶ Acts 26:16–18
- ▶ Through faith in the cleansing work of Jesus you will be saved, and your household

Peter recounts the Holy Spirit's work of bringing Gentiles to faith (11:15-17)

¹⁵ As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

- ▶ Peter informs his questioners that he hadn't completed the message he intended to share, when the Holy Spirit came up these Gentiles with spiritual life, confirmed by tongues
 - ▶ The salvation of these Gentiles is by the hand of God, not the persuasiveness of Peter or any man
 - ▶ God effectually opened their spiritual eyes and pressed them into Jesus as their Savior
 - ▶ God gave them the gift of tongues, just like the Jewish believers at Pentecost, affirming their place as New Covenant followers of Jesus

Peter recounts the Holy Spirit's work of bringing Gentiles to faith (11:15-17)

- ▶ The Lord brought to Peter's mind His teaching – *“I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’”*
 - ▶ John 14:25–26
- ▶ The evidence of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit is the fruit of the gospel grace brought by Jesus Christ
- ▶ When Peter says, *“...who was I that I could stand in God's way?”*, he implies that if his critics deny the gospel truth has come to Gentiles, they will be standing in God's way
- ▶ Fruitfulness does not reside in us, but in our Lord
 - ▶ John 15:5

Jews affirm God's gospel grace to the Gentiles (11:18)

- ▶ The testimony of God's activity to bring salvation to Gentiles stifles their criticism
- ▶ Luke's record in Acts makes the point repeatedly that life in the New Covenant is a gift of God's sovereign grace
 - ▶ Acts 13:48
 - ▶ Acts 15:14
 - ▶ Acts 16:14
 - ▶ Acts 18:27
- ▶ When God grants repentance, turning from sin and selfishness to Jesus, it is real and observable

Questions to Consider

- ▶ How do you respond to criticism?
- ▶ How do you describe your responsiveness to God's repeated instructions to you to change?
- ▶ In what ways can you be more thankful for the cleansing work of Jesus in your life and in the lives of others?
- ▶ Are you **standing in God's way** by disengaging from opportunities to share the gospel?
- ▶ How should the knowledge that repentance is a gift of God's grace impact your sanctification and your engagement in evangelism?



Acts 11:1-18

REINFORCEMENT OF THE PIVOTAL TIME THE GOSPEL EMBRACES GENTILES