

## “When folks criticized the Apostle Peter”

Acts 11:1-18 NIV

“The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. <sup>2</sup> So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him <sup>3</sup> and said, ‘You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.’

<sup>4</sup> Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: <sup>5</sup> ‘I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. <sup>6</sup> I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles and birds. <sup>7</sup> Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’

<sup>8</sup> ‘I replied, ‘Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ <sup>9</sup> The voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ <sup>10</sup> This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again. <sup>11</sup> Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. <sup>12</sup> The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. <sup>13</sup> He told us how he had seen an angel appear

in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter.’ <sup>14</sup> He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.’”

<sup>15</sup> ‘As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup> Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>17</sup> So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?’

<sup>18</sup> When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, ‘So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.’”

**Did you ever look at a jumbled mess of items and forlornly wonder whether it was worth sorting?**

**About a year ago, I scanned a box of items my mother left for me 30 years ago but didn’t come into my possession until three years before.**

**Because of other pressing matters, I didn’t pay attention to the box until then.**

When I finally looked, I found some personal items from my childhood my mother saved for me.



I also discovered some diaries my great grandmother wrote 98 years ago.

I don't know if my mother knew what her maternal grandmother wrote in her 1924 diary. Some fascinating family secrets came to light.

**I'm glad I took time to look in the jumble.**

**In some ways, Acts 11 resembles that *old box*.**

**At first it appears like a boring mishmash.**

**Yet Acts 11 gives life-saving, time-saving insights that help us avoid needless fretting.**

**Want an example of its time-saving advice?**

**The Holy Spirit led Peter to face a divisive issue.**

**Folks severely criticized him for his actions.**

**The Apostle realized he needed witnesses to testify that he made a godly decision.**

Peter knew Bible standards concerning testimony:

**"A single witness shall not rise up against a person on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed."**<sup>1</sup>

**In Matthew 18, Jesus affirmed this principle.**

**Some preachers forget this biblical code and the world totally neglects it.**

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 19:15 NASB

**Every day, media publish and broadcast accusations against folks on the basis of "unnamed," "reliable," or "anonymous" sources.**

**The world loves hearsay, gossip, and blather.**

**One of the world's most famous newspapers boasts that it publishes, "All the news that's fit to print."**

Yet that paper often features information about public figures that they base on single, so-called "informed" and unnamed sources.

**The Bible warns us to not waste time with such drivell.**

Christians should walk away, hit the mute button, or trash the news source, and not be a part of such rot.



**Jesus said that everything should be confirmed by two or three persons who saw the offence.**<sup>2</sup>

**In our text, Peter chose six men, who showed up in person, to confirm what he said and did--twice what the Bible requires.**

**Verses 13 and 14 of chapter 11 give us a second bit of vital information.**

**A few days prior while he was praying, Roman Army Captain Cornelius saw an angelic vision.**

**The Lord heard his prayer and gave the captain this order:**

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 18: 15-17

“Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter.  
14 He will bring you a message through which  
you and all your household will be saved.”

The angelic vision didn't mean that the  
captain was saved.

**A warm, fuzzy feeling doesn't save us.  
Cornelius needed to send for Peter, who  
would bring him a message through which  
he and his household would be saved.**

We start by obeying God and putting  
him first, not following our own  
desires or someone else's will.



**Many think the Apostle Paul was saved on his  
way to Damascus, when Jesus appeared to him.  
The process began that day, but wasn't finished.  
Until Jesus spoke to him, Saul-Paul didn't  
believe Jesus had been raised from the dead.  
The Lord told Saul-Paul to go into Damascus  
and ask for a man named Ananias.**

**Saul's associates led him into Damascus,  
where he prayed for three days.**

Note that Jesus himself appeared to Saul and  
Saul prayed three day, but he still wasn't saved.

**How do I know that?**

Saul wasn't cleansed of his sins.

**When Ananias, God's missionary, came to  
see Saul, here's what Ananias said:**

“The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know  
his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear  
words from his mouth. 15 You will be his witness  
to all people of what you have seen and heard.  
16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be  
baptized and wash your sins away, calling on  
his name.”<sup>3</sup>

**If you're still in your sins, you aren't saved,  
are you?**

**Saul had to be baptized calling on Jesus' name.  
This is exactly what Peter said to the three  
thousand or more people on Pentecost:**

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the  
name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your  
sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy  
Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children  
and for all who are far off—for all whom the  
Lord our God will call.”<sup>4</sup>

**Cornelius and his household needed to hear,  
believe and respond to that message --  
*Jesus the Son of God's death, burial,  
and resurrection and the need to  
become one with Christ in baptism.***

<sup>3</sup> Acts 22:14-16 NIV

<sup>4</sup> Acts 2:38, 39 NIV

**Finally today, we look at the primary matter in this section.**

**Centuries before, Isaiah and other prophets foretold that all nations would someday "stream" to God.<sup>5</sup>**

**Just before his ascension, Jesus assigned his Apostles the task of teaching all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup>**

**Jesus and his Apostles were all Jewish.**

The converts on Pentecost were all Jews.

**Jewish people divided the world into two groups. Jewish males were circumcised on the eighth day after they were born.**

**Gentiles or goyim were not usually circumcised.**

**In addition, Jews kept Moses' laws, including dietary, which Gentiles didn't observe.**

**Primarily, Jews couldn't eat bottom-feeding fish, birds like eagles, hawks, etc. that ate dead and decaying flesh, or four-footed animals that ate other animals.**

The Lord designated such foodstuff as unclean mostly for health and sanitation reasons.



**Add one other detail you know to be true.**

**Folks create many traditions.**

Often, those traditions become as rigid as the laws. Jewish leaders formulated many oral traditions that are now found in ancient works known as the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*.

**After a while, people fail to separate actual laws from traditions.**

**For e.g., some denominations form rules for their members that are against Bible laws.**

**Add another detail: in Matthew 24, Jesus foretold three events:**

**One, the opposition his followers would face when they taught the Gospel;**

**Two, Jesus foretold Jerusalem's and the Temple's destruction;**

**Three, he foretold the suddenness of his return to Judge all people.**

**Christians tend to misconstrue the application of his predictions, especially the ones concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.**

That terrible disaster occurred about four decades after Jesus' ascension.

Thousands tried to flee the city when Roman soldiers destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple.

<sup>5</sup> See Isaiah 2:1-5, e.g.; the Book of Jonah tells of God warning the Assyrians to repent and turn to him.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 28:18-20

**Jesus said:** "How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! <sup>20</sup> Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath."<sup>7</sup>

**The war in Ukraine and 9-11 events remind us of the horrors people face when their cities and homes are being destroyed.**

**Because of its elevation, Jerusalem can be cold and snowy in winter.**



**Yet why would it matter if people tried to flee Jerusalem on the Sabbath?**

**Jewish rabbis had long before decided that a Sabbath Day's journey could not exceed the distance of about one and a quarter miles.**

How they arrived at that notion is disputed.<sup>8</sup>

The Sabbath Day's journey was man-made.

So was the rule: **"Don't enter Gentiles' houses."**

**Still, folks accused Peter of violating it.**

**Ten years may have transpired since Jesus' ascension yet the church was still all Jewish.**

Peter's vision meant that God ended the dietary laws and all rules separating Jews from Gentiles.

**God wanted all people to repent, believe in Christ, His Son, and enjoy eternal life.**

**He gave a definite sign that he meant business.**

<sup>15</sup> "As I began to speak, (**said Peter**) the Holy Spirit came on them (**Cornelius & Co.**) as he had come on us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup> Then I remembered what the Lord had said: "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."<sup>17</sup> So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?"

**What gift did the Apostles receive on Pentecost?**

In Acts 2, when the Apostles spoke in their own language (probably Aramaic), the Holy Spirit caused people from all nations to hear in their native languages. In Caesarea, the *same gift* allowed Cornelius and his loved ones to hear in their native tongues—possibly Latin or some Italian dialect.

**Six witnesses verified that occurrence.**

**Peter's critics:** "raised no further objections and praised God, saying, 'So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.'"

Praising God should be the major motivation of all believers. **Do you want life beyond the grave?**

**Repentance of sin and belief in Jesus, becoming one with him, bring life to us.**

**This should be our common goal in love.**

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 24: 19, 20 NIV

<sup>8</sup> It likely related to the distance land allotted to Jewish priests was from town.