

Trusting the Spirit

Acts 11:1-18

SS Lesson for 10/25/2015

Devotional Scripture: Rom 15:1-13

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines how to recognize that Christians can live godly lives by **Trusting the Spirit**. The **study's aim** is to teach us to be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's direction in our lives. The **study's application** is to trust the Holy Spirit fully when He makes His will known to us.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Acts 11:17

If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The response on the part of Jewish Christians was mixed. The expression **circumcised believers** (also used in 10:45) evidently describes Christians who still held to the Law of Moses (cf. 15:5; 21:20; Gal. 2:12). The accusation lodged against Peter was that he **went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them**. The primary problem was not his preaching to Gentiles but his eating with them (cf. Mark 2:16; Luke 15:2; Gal. 2:12). This gives even greater significance to Peter's vision (Acts 10:9-16). Eating with someone was a mark of acceptance and fellowship (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11). This problem could have caused a serious break in the church.

Peter recounted to the circumcised believers in Jerusalem briefly what had occurred (cf. chap. 10), including his **vision** (11:5-7), his response to it (vv. 8-10), and the trip to Cornelius' **house** (vv. 11-14). In recounting what happened next, Peter made an important identification of the day of Pentecost with the Lord's prediction of **Spirit** baptism (1:4-5). Luke did not state specifically in chapter 2 that Pentecost was that fulfillment, but Peter here pointedly said so by the phrase **at the beginning** (cf. 10:47, "just as we have," and 11:17, "the same gift as He gave us"). The Church Age, then, began on the day of Pentecost. Peter's defense did not rest on what he himself did, but on what *God* did. **God** had made no distinction between Jew and Gentile, so how could Peter? With Peter the saints recognized that the conversion of **Gentiles** was initiated by **God** and that they should not stand in His way. This response had two ensuing and significant results. First, it preserved the unity of the body of Christ, the church. Second, it drove a huge wedge between Church-Age believers and temple-worshippers in Jerusalem. Before this the common Jewish people looked on Christians with favor (cf. 2:47; 5:13, 26), but soon thereafter the Jews opposed the church. This antagonism is attested by Israel's response to the execution of James (12:2-3; cf. 12:11). Perhaps this concurrence with Gentiles was a starting point of the Jewish opposition.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Those who have served on church boards, as trustees of civic organizations, etc., are doubtless aware of Robert's Rules of Order. These "rules" are widely recognized in North America as the standard guidelines for parliamentary procedure—that is, as the proper way to run a meeting. The rules were first formulated in 1863 by Henry Robert, a colonel in the U.S. Army. Robert did not, however, develop these with a view to military application. The genesis of his rules arose from more mundane circumstances: he was asked to preside at a church meeting, and he realized that he did not know how to keep things moving in an orderly and fair manner (compare 1 Corinthians 14:40). Later he came to realize that meetings were conducted differently in various parts of the country, thus seeing the need for a universal standard. Robert's first attempt at formulating such a standard was released as a book in 1876. Now in its eleventh (2011) edition, Robert's Rules of Order sets forth widely accepted principles such as addressing the chair of the meeting (rather than the entire gathering) and limiting the length of debate. All this emerged from Robert's desire to run a more orderly

session of his church board. Our passage today, while not formulated as “rules of order,” reveals how the unexpected behavior of a church leader was handled in a meeting of the first-century church. As such, it may have something to say about how to go about addressing important issues in the church of the twenty-first century.

As we saw in last week’s lesson, the earliest Christians were Jews, who had been taught to remain separate from pagan Gentiles (Acts 10:28). Gentiles might be welcome to observe and learn at synagogue meetings, but they could not be accepted fully until they had rejected their ancestral gods and (for men) received circumcision, the sign of Abraham’s covenant (Genesis 17:9-14; compare Exodus 12:48; Ezekiel 44:9). The first followers of Jesus, being Jews, seemed to have assumed that the same would be true in their new religious movement. They expected Jesus, the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, to return one day to judge the world and destroy the powers of evil (that is, the Gentiles). As a result, the earliest Christians did not attempt to evangelize Gentiles at first (Acts 11:19). God, however, had a different idea. As was often the case, he set his plan in motion in an unexpected way. Acts 2:1-6:7 shows the church growing exponentially in Jerusalem and Judea as the gospel was proclaimed, being verified by miraculous signs. All this brought the church into conflict with the Jerusalem authorities, eventually leading to the first Christian martyrdom (6:8-7:60). A widespread persecution, led by Saul of Tarsus, immediately followed. Many Christians fled Jerusalem for safety (8:1-3; 11:19). As they traveled, they continued to spread the good news about Jesus. The result was that Samaritans (lesson 5) and Gentiles (lesson 7) began to learn about Christ—a classic instance of God’s bringing good from tragedy. The leaders of the first-century church needed new thinking—God’s thinking—to see the inclusiveness that he intended for the gospel.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Trust During Questioning (Acts 11:1-3)

1 Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.
2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him,
3 saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"

Questions about receiving God's Word (1)

Receiving God's word as the actual Word of God (1 Thess 2:13)

13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Receiving God's word as truth and believing it (Eph 1:13)

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

Receiving God's word through the Gospel (Col 1:4-7)

4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints— 5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. 7 You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,

Receiving God's word through correctly handling God's word (2 Tim 2:15)

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Questions about association with Gentiles (2-3)

Questions about association because it previously was against the law (Acts 10:28)

28 He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.

Questions about association because unbelief that Gentiles could receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45)

45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.

Questions about association because Gentiles were not circumcised (Rom 2:26)

26 If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?

Questions about association because of fear from the Jews (Gal 2:12)

12 Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.

Trust For Providing Responses (Acts 11:4-11)

4 But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying:

5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me.

6 When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

7 And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.'

8 But I said, 'Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.'

9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.'

10 Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11 At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

Responding about revelations (4-6)

Revelations through Jesus (John 14:9-10)

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

Revelations of God's will (Eph 1:9)

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

Revelations through the prophets (Rom 16:25-26)

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—

Revelations through the Church (Eph 3:10)

10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

Responding about misunderstandings (7-8)

Misunderstandings because of hidden things (Luke 9:42-45)

42 Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, 44 "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men." 45 But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

Misunderstanding of Jesus (John 13:6-9)

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." 9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Misunderstanding of spiritual things (1 Cor 2:14)

14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Misunderstanding because of human ideas (Acts 17:16-21)

16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. 18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbling trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. 19 Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." 21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

Responding about God's corrections (9-11)

Corrections through discipline (Prov 6:23)

23 For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life,

Corrections through God's Word (2 Tim 3:16-17)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Corrections through preaching the Word (2 Tim 4:2)

2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.

Corrections through teaching (Titus 2:15)

15 These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

Trust and Obey the Spirit's Leadership (Acts 11:11-17)

12 Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.

13 And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter,

14 who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.'

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning.

16 Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

17 If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

Leadership through guidance (12-14)

Guidance into insight (Ps 119:99-100)

99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

Guidance as a light for our path (Ps 119:105)

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Guidance into understanding (Ps 119:130)

130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Guidance through counsel (Ps 73:24-26)

24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Leadership through providing gifts (15-17)

Gifts that are different (Rom 12:6-8)

6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Gifts that are from the same Spirit (1 Cor 12:4)

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.

Gifts that are for the common good (1 Cor 12:7)

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

Gifts that are to serve others (1 Pet 4:10)

10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

Trust the Spirit's Impact on Others (Acts 11:18)

18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Impact of glorifying God (18)

Glorifying God is part of praise and worship (Ps 34:3)

3 Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.

All Christians should glorify God (1 Peter 2:12)

12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Sometimes sickness is used so that God might be glorified (John 11:4)

4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

Glorifying God through Jesus glorifying Himself in His Church (2 Thess 1:10)

10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Impact of submission to God (18)

Submission to God is feeling chastised and burdened by sin (Ps 51:17)

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Submission pleases God (1 Sam 15:22)

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Submissiveness comes for God (James 3:17)

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Submission to those in authority (1 Peter 5:5)

5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Christians are to be submissive (Col 3:12)

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Word of what had happened in Caesarea quickly reached the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem, even before Peter himself had returned. It is obvious that his Jewish brethren were distressed with what they had heard. The accusation they made against Peter is interesting:

“You went to uncircumcised men and shared a meal with them” ([Acts 11:3](#)).

They faulted Peter for having eaten with men who were uncircumcised. Had those who had gathered in the home of Cornelius been Jewish proselytes, rather than mere “God fearers,” they would not have had grounds for objection. They don’t challenge Peter for preaching the gospel to Gentiles. They don’t question why he did not circumcise these believers. They don’t object to the fact that he had them baptized. But in my opinion, these things are really not what they objected to. They really objected to him preaching the gospel to Gentiles and to his accepting them as “**clean.**” Notice the conclusion these “concerned brethren” reached after Peter explained what happened:

“So then, God has granted the repentance that leads to life even to the Gentiles” ([Acts 11:18](#)).

The real issue then was the evangelization of Gentiles, as Gentiles, without first requiring them to embrace Judaism by becoming Jewish proselytes.

Peter wisely and patiently retold the entire story to his Jewish brethren from the beginning. He started with his vision and reported how the Spirit had directed him to accompany the messengers Cornelius sent to bring him to Caesarea. God was in this from beginning to end. How could Peter do anything else? He clinches his defense by focusing on the baptism of the Spirit which he and his Jewish companions witnessed:

16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, as he used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ 17 Therefore if God gave them the same gift as he also gave us after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to hinder God?” ([Acts 11:16-17](#))

How does this make a compelling concluding argument? There are at least two forceful points contained in Peter’s argument. *First, Peter asserts to his Jewish brethren that what happened to Cornelius and his associates was precisely the same thing that happened to them at Pentecost.* These Gentiles received the gift of the Spirit in exactly the same way the Spirit fell on those who had gathered at Pentecost. My sense is that many of those who challenged Peter were present at the first Pentecost. One must conclude, then, that God did not distinguish between the first Jewish believers at Pentecost and these Gentile believers in Caesarea. How can one prohibit what God has produced? How can one view Gentiles as outsiders when God has placed His seal upon them?

Second, Peter argues from the words of the Lord Jesus:

“And I remembered the word of the Lord, as **he used to say**, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” ([Acts 11:16](#), emphasis mine).

We know our Lord spoke these words to His apostles in [Acts 1:5](#), but Peter’s wording implies that Jesus made this statement at other times as well. How do these words justify Peter’s actions? Jesus promised that the Spirit would baptize them in the near future. This happened to Jewish believers at Pentecost. Now it has happened

again, to Gentile believers in Caesarea. But more than this, our Lord's words indicated a relationship between John's baptism with water and the subsequent baptism of the Spirit.¹²

I believe Peter's logic works something like this. The Lord Jesus regarded John's baptism as important (remember that our Lord's disciples baptized as well – [John 4:1-2](#)), but He also indicated, as did John,¹³ that there was to be a greater baptism than this, a baptism of the Spirit. The normal sequence at that point in time had been water baptism, then Spirit baptism.¹⁴ If Spirit baptism followed water baptism in Acts, and if Spirit baptism was greater than water baptism, then how could the former (water baptism) be denied when the latter (Spirit baptism) had already occurred? How could Peter say "No!" to water baptism when God had already said "Yes!" to Spirit baptism? Peter's actions were in response to what God had said and done. No one could condemn Peter for acting consistently with God.

Just as Peter had no choice but to baptize these believing Gentiles, the circumcised believers who had initially objected to Peter's actions now had no choice but to change their minds as well.

When they heard this, they ceased their objections and praised God, saying, "**So then, God has granted the repentance that leads to life even to the Gentiles**" ([Acts 11:18](#), emphasis mine).

For some reason, it had never occurred to these circumcised saints that God had purposed to save Gentiles as Gentiles, without having first become a Jewish proselyte. To us, this seems like a minor point. To these Jewish saints, it was a complete paradigm shift which turned their theology and practice upside-down. To the New Testament epistles and to us, this revelation is a foundational truth concerning the church.

I have struggled with this passage previously because I could not understand why Luke did not make more of [Mark 7](#):

14 Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand. 15 There is nothing outside of a person that can defile him by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles him." 17 Now when Jesus had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 He said to them, "Are you so foolish? Don't you understand that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him? 19 For it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and then goes out into the sewer." (**This means all foods are clean.**) 20 He said, "What comes out of a person defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the human heart, come evil ideas, sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, evil, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, and folly. 23 All these evils come from within and defile a person" ([Mark 7:14-23](#), emphasis mine).

Why did Peter and Luke leap from his thrice-repeated vision about clean and unclean animals (food) to accepting Gentiles as fellow saints? I now see that I was reasoning in the wrong direction. I was reasoning that because Jesus had declared all foods clean, Peter was now free to preach the gospel to Gentiles. But the reasoning is really the reverse. Gentiles are clean, not because of what they eat, but because of the saving work of Jesus Christ on their behalf, a work they have embraced by faith. In [Mark 7](#), Jesus taught that it was not food that defiles men; what defiles us is what comes out of us (wicked thoughts, words, deeds), not what goes into us (food). The reason fellowship with Gentiles is allowed (including eating their food) is because God has saved them; God has given them clean hearts. Because He has made believing Gentiles clean, we can fellowship with them as peers. It is not about external things like food, but about internal things like a changed heart. God made Gentiles clean by saving them, and thus neither Peter nor any Jewish saint should dare to call them unclean by refusing fellowship with them.

Let us conclude by considering some of the implications and applications of this text for Christians today.

(1) This is the gospel, by which all men can be saved. I don't know of any text that summarizes the gospel more concisely than Peter's words, spoken to Cornelius and those with him. This is the gospel in a nutshell. Our Lord came to this earth, was baptized by John and by the Holy Spirit. In this way, He was designated as God's Messiah and was empowered to carry out His earthly ministry. Jesus did many miracles, setting Himself apart from all others. He was the Messiah, but He was rejected and crucified by those He came to save. God

overruled this by raising Jesus from the dead. He provided convincing proof of this resurrection by many appearances to those appointed as witnesses. The apostles were witnesses of the resurrection, appointed to proclaim the gospel to all who would believe, Jew or Gentile. Jesus will come again to judge those who have rejected Him. He is Lord of all. Have you trusted in Jesus?

(2) *There is but one gospel, by which Jews and Gentiles alike must be saved.* There are some today who would suggest that while Jesus may be “a way,” He is not “**the way**.” The Bible teaches that Jesus is the only way to heaven:

Jesus replied, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among people by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Jews and Gentiles alike can find the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of heaven only through faith in Jesus.

(3) *The gospel is only for those who are unclean and completely unworthy of it.* One of the reasons why we are disobedient to the Great Commission is that we do not wish to preach the gospel to those we deem unworthy of it. Earlier in our service today, one of our missionaries told us that some of the tribes where he serves questioned the wisdom of going to this one particular tribe with the gospel. What was worse, some fellow missionaries even questioned going to this tribe. We all have people whom we deem unworthy of the gospel, or unsavable. Our text should remind us that the gospel is only for those who are unworthy of salvation and who cannot make themselves acceptable in God’s sight. May I ask you to consider those whom you may have deemed unworthy of the gospel? *God wants to teach us that all men are unworthy of the gospel, but that the gospel is for all men. That is because the gospel is the good news that salvation is a gift, given by grace through faith in Jesus.*

(4) *Salvation is of the Lord.* It wasn’t Peter who took the initiative to bring the gospel to Cornelius and his household; it was God. God prepared Peter and those who would hear his message. It wasn’t Peter who persuaded Cornelius and friends to believe; God did. They came to faith apart from an invitation. And it wasn’t Peter who baptized them in the Spirit. Peter was an instrument in the hands of the Redeemer, but he wasn’t the cause of these conversions.

We live at a time when people are obsessed with methods. They wish to know the methods of those who are successful. This is not altogether a bad thing. But let us take note that the Ethiopian eunuch, Saul, and Cornelius were not saved because of some slick evangelistic approach. They were saved because God prepared their hearts and drew them to Himself by faith. More important than having the right method is preserving and proclaiming the right message. Many are seeking to modify the message of the gospel to make it more palatable. Our task is to proclaim the gospel that God has given us in His Word, the gospel that Peter and Paul have proclaimed in the Book of Acts. If salvation is “**of the Lord**” – and it surely is – then let us spend more time in His Word and in prayer, asking God to prepare the hearts of lost people and to draw them to faith.

(5) *I am amazed at the faith of men like Cornelius.* How quickly and eagerly he embraces the gospel. Here is a man who must have been an Old Testament saint at the time the gospel came to him. No wonder he is so quick to respond to the truth of the gospel. It is men like Cornelius who help me understand why Paul could so quickly appoint elders in the churches he planted. These church leaders must have been Gentiles who were very much like Cornelius, men who had considerable knowledge from the Old Testament, as well as knowledge about the life and ministry of Jesus. It was a short leap, so to speak, to trust in Jesus as the Promised Messiah, and to understand that He saves both Jews and Gentiles alike, on the basis of faith.

(6) *The baptism of the Spirit (Pentecost) and even the filling of the Spirit does not make one instantly spiritual, nor does it insure that one’s understanding of Scripture is complete.* Peter and his fellow apostles had been baptized by the Spirit at Pentecost, but they were surely wrong about the Gentiles and salvation. I

sometimes hear or read of those who seem to think that if they've experienced the Spirit as folks did in the Book of Acts, they are assured of being spiritual, and of being right in their interpretation of Scripture. Peter was an apostle, and he was Spirit-filled at Pentecost. But Peter did not have it all figured out the moment the Spirit came upon him. It took the dramatic events of our text to convince Peter that he was wrong.

This text has removed all of our excuses for not seeking to fulfill the Great Commission. May God grant us the grace to pursue the evangelization of lost men, women and children, from every people group, tongue and tribe, to the glory of God.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/gentile-faith-jewish-fears-acts-1036-1130>)

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

When my children were younger, they would often resist our instructions or try to avoid doing what we had told them to do (they still do so, incidentally). After realizing that resistance was futile, they would sometimes give in with an angry, "I'll do it, but I won't like it!" Talking with other parents, we've learned that our children weren't particularly original here—most do the same. And it's been even more interesting to realize, through many experiences at work and at church, that adults often adopt the same kind of attitude: give in only when you have to, but don't change your viewpoint even then. Unfortunately, this attitude can spread to a point where it becomes crippling for an organization. Today's passage reminds us that such a posture has no place in the church. As we've seen, Acts 11 tells the story of a highly controversial event that touched on significant doctrinal concerns, provoking strong emotions in the process. Yet the story doesn't end with one group holding a grudge and stomping off mad, or another group gloating over winning a close vote. Rather, the text shows the church carefully considering the evidence and, in the end, conceding to what God himself had done. If this is not the typical outcome of church disputes in our own experience, we can perhaps understand why the church in its very earliest days expanded rapidly, both in numbers and geographically, while divided churches today dwindle and die.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Religious traditions and preferences can bias us against things that are not wrong (Acts 11:1 -3)
2. Telling our Lord no is illogical (vss. 4-8)
3. We must not make distinctions in spiritual matters that God does not (vss. 9-10)
4. We must obey the Holy Spirit even if it makes us feel uncomfortable (vss. 11-12)
5. Although God can provide the gospel message to people Himself, He normally chooses to let His people do it (vss. 13-14)
6. God is glorified when people from diverse nations are saved and praise Him (vss. 15-18)