



## The Acts of the Spirit

GATHERING THE CHURCH

# ACTS 11:1-18

"THE REPORT"

JANUARY 21, 2024

## CONTEXT

The Book of Acts is the theological history of the Church. In previous weeks, we explored how God's people (the Church) have become where heaven and earth meet. The Church is multiplying rapidly, and with it, opposition from the outside and obstacles from within. Despite the opposition, these followers of Christ are sown, not scattered, into areas and people groups in need of hearing the Gospel.

However, the expansion of the Church is at another turning point that crosses barriers and exceeds everyone's expectations. Peter and other apostles/teachers are moving out from Jerusalem to "the ends of the earth." As they leave Jerusalem, they find people of all backgrounds and nationalities who see the authority of and desire to worship the one true God. Moreover, as these gentiles are coming to faith, they are being filled with the Holy Spirit. This was evidence of God's power and His plan from the beginning. However complex this is for Jewish followers, Peter is leading the Church to receive this change with faith and gladness because the Gospel is for everyone!

## SERMON SUMMARY

This week, Pastor Jeff helped us investigate the most miraculous phenomena of the early Church, the moment when Jews became brothers with Gentiles. Pastor Jeff explained that this, above all the other miracles, was the most unexpected and difficult for Jewish believers to accept. Up until now, the Jewish people were God's chosen and set apart people, believing everyone else was unclean and far from God. For those people to be saved, they must become like Israel. But God has spoken in power and authority that these people are no longer "unclean" but are now to be welcomed into the family of God. Culturally, religiously, and interpersonally, this was a scandalous idea.

Pastor Jeff outlined from the text that this is due to the miraculous power of the Gospel to:

**Break Down Barriers:** Bring diverse people, far from God, near.

**Exceed our Expectations:** Power to make diverse people, far from God, into one family.

**Elicits a Response:** Invites all who hear/see it to respond with faith, unity, and praise.



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Pastor Jeff asked us to evaluate if we believe the Gospel can do this work because if we do, we must then:

**See Others:** Move towards those far from God

**Expect Much:** Expect God to do far more than we can imagine

**Rejoice and Receive:** Respond with Praise and Unity when he moves.

Our job today is, in the power of the holy spirit, to ratify our belief in the transformational power of the Gospel so we will anticipate God's activity and share it with the world.

## DISCUSSION

### Expand Your Awareness

Pastor Jeff said we, like the ancient world, are prone to build barriers and tribes based on our preferences, perspectives, and cultural practices.

- Why do we, as humans, create barriers between tribes and groups?

The early Church, like us today, found themselves at a crossroads. They had to ask themselves which was more important to them, to experience the joy of following God in expanding the Gospel or preserving their barriers and comfort.

- How do you see this question applying to us today as Faith Church?

### Extract the Truth

### Read: Acts 11:1-18

- What Jumps out to you from the text?
- Where do you see evidence of the Gospel removing barriers in the text?
- What practical implication would this have on the Jewish believers?
- Where do you see evidence of the Gospel exceeding Peter's expectations?
- What effect do you think this vision/movement of the spirit had on the early church expectations about what ministry should look like going forward?



*This document can be used for either personal or group reflection.*

*Group facilitator: you do not need to ask every question but can select the best ones for your group dynamic.*



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Where do you see evidence of the Gospel "eliciting a response" from the following people:

- Gentiles?
- Peter?
- Jewish Believers?

What do these responses teach us about:

- Non Believers?
- Yourself?

## Explore Your Experience

Peter and the Jewish believers couldn't have believed, prior to Peter's vision, that the Gospel could save Gentiles as they were. They were unclean and too far from God. They needed to become clean in order to come to God. The Gospel's power, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, proved them wrong.

- Has anyone ever made you feel too far from God? How?
- How did that affect your expectations about God and His power?
- How did that expectation affect your response to the good news about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Now, let's flip the script....

- Who are you tempted to believe is too far from God? Why?
- What does that reflect about your expectations about God and his power?
- How does that lack of belief affect your response to the Gospel in your own life?
- How does your lack of belief affect your response to the power of the Gospel in our Church?

## Explore Your Experience

To learn from this text, we must change our beliefs from:

See Outsiders TO See Insiders in God's Kingdom  
Doubt in God to Expectation of God  
Reluctance to accept Celebration/Unity



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- Who do you need to see as someone God loves and desires in his family?
- What doubt do you need to challenge to restore belief in God's power to save?
- What perspective needs to be changed so that you can respond to the Spirits actively with unity and celebration?

## Engage the World

- What is your big takeaway from this sermon?
- What is God prompting you to take action on this week?
- How and when will you do that?

## Pray for:

Help to see those in need of the Gospel.

Help to expect God to do great things.

Help to respond to God's activity with celebration and unity.



**PREPARE FOR  
NEXT WEEK:**

Read Acts 11:19-30