

Remembering the Word of the Lord

Acts 11:1-18 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.” 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. 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.’ 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?” ¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

❖ Recap

- **Chapter 7** Stephen is stoned for preaching about Jesus
- **Chapter 8** Saul is ravaging the church
 - We see Philip (not the apostle) preaching in Samaria
 - We read about Simon the Magician who it says believed
 - And was baptized
 - But then tried to buy the Holy Spirit...
 - In the end, it seemed as if he was a false convert
 - Even in the beginning they were dealing with false believers
 - We see Philip (not the apostle) evangelizing the Ethiopian eunich
- **Chapter 9** Saul is converted
 - He has an experience with Jesus on the road to damscus...
 - God picks saul out to be a preacher of the gospel
 - Saul immediately begins preaching the gospel after his conversion
- **Chapter 10** – The Gospel is For All People - Peter and Cornelius
 - **I enjoyed ch 10 so much I almost want to preach it again**
 - 1) A man drawing near to God – Cornelius
 - 2) A man ready to be used by God
 - 3) The Gospel is for All People
 - 4) The Simple Gospel Message
 - 5) The Work of the Holy Spirit
 - My favorite tidbit: Cornelius generous giving went up before the Lord...

❖ Intro

- **Much of ch. 11 is a recounting of ch 10**
 - So.... We will not spend a lot of time on verses 4-15

- But, there are lots of really good things before and after the retelling of what happened in ch. 10
- **We will not get through all of these verses today...**
 - When I first sat down to look through these verses I thought...
 - I will spend very little time on verses 1-18... and mainly dive into 19-30
 - But as God would have it... He decided I should spend all the time on 1-18
 - And come back to 19-30
- **Outline:**
 - **1) Forgetting the Word of God Led to Criticism in the Church**
 - **2) Remembering the Word of God Led to Obedience**
 - **3) Remembering the Word of God Changed Hearts**
 - **4) Learn From Their Mistake**

❖ 1) Forgetting the Word of God Led to Criticism in the Church

- **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.”**
- **1st – I would like to say for the record:**
 - I do not understand why anyone who knew Peter would ever criticize him...
 - I mean... One guy fell dead before Peter because he lied to God.
 - And God through Peter had brought people back from the dead
 - **I would think by now people would say:**
 - ◆ That Peter guy is being used by the Lord... let me get out of his way...
 - ◆ But that was not the case
- **The Criticism came from a heart of legalism or Pharisaism**
 - They were trying to be exculsive
 - They were hindering the advancement of the gospel to all people
 - **Legalism kills:**
 - It says... here... here is a list of things you must do to be acceptable to God
 - These things make you more holy...
 - Legalism tries to add to the gospel...
 - In its adding, it becomes another gospel...
 - **Pharisaism was condemned by Jesus...**
 - He never got along with those Pharisees...
 - He did not get along with them because they put a burden on the people...
 - They put a yoke around the neck of the people, that even they were unable to live up to...
 - **Their exclusiveness was anti-Gospel**
 - The purpose of Jesus coming was to seek and to save the lost...
 - They were holding on to the gospel for only a select few...
- **It is Clear: They were being very disobedient to Jesus Command...**
 - **Acts 1:8 ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**
 - Notice:
- **Why were they like this?**
 - Short answer...: As Jews... they had lived by the law of Moses...
 - And they were supposed to set themselves apart from the nations around them
 - They had strict dietary laws
 - They had strict ceremonial laws...
 - The keeping of the laws kept them clean, and not keeping them made them unclean

- Certain animals were off limits...
- **When did it all change:**
 - When Jesus came and died...
 - In Jesus life and death:
 - ◆ He fulfilled the requirements of those laws...
 - **Matt 5:17b I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.**
 - ◆ He then set His people free from the keeping of the law
 - **Romans 8:3³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us,**
 - ◆ They were keeping it to remain in right standing with God
 - ◆ Which was impossible even from the beginning...
 - ◆ **And we see that one of the main purposes of the law... that I think they overlooked...**
 - Because it was not given with a disclaimer...
 - Was that they could not live up to it...
 - **Galatians 3:22²² But the Scripture (law) imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.**
 - The law's purpose according to Galatians...
 - Was not to make one righteous... because it could not
 - Rather... it was to imprison them... to show them their need for Christ...
 - It in fact acted like a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ
- **They were supposed to be a light to the nations:**
 - **Isaiah 49:6 "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."**
- **The Early Church Was Not Perfect**
 - Do you see this? We have such a Romantic view of the early church...
 - But here we see that they had already begun to drift away from the Word of the Lord...
 - Right? It is clear from **Acts 1:8** they were to go out to everyone from every nation...
 - Maybe they could have also remembered Matt 28:19...
 - Where Jesus told them specifically to **make disciples of all nations...**
- **Are We like this in any way?**
 - Have we drifted away from the teachings of Jesus
 - Do we look down on others because they are not like us?
 - Do we only try to reach certain people?
 - Are we even being purposeful at all about reaching the lost?
- **God has His way of making sure His people are doing His work...**
 - Remember that He allowed the death of great Servant (Stephen)
 - To bring about great persecution...
 - To providentially scatter the believers away from Jerusalem...
 - God did that... He used people's hatred for His own good purpose...
 - **Here:**
 - We see God using a vision to Peter and Cornelius to make sure the gospel get to the Gentiles...
 - God accomplishes His purpose...

❖ 2) Remembering the Word of God Led to Obedience

- 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's Response Indicated an Emphasis on the Word of God**

- Peter had obviously fallen into this idea of giving the gospel only to Jews...
- There was an error in his thinking...
- He must have forgotten Jesus Words in Matt 28 and Acts 1

➤ **Maybe: Peter did not understand...**

- Maybe he did not realize what Jesus meant by making disciples of all nations...

➤ **He Remembered:**

- **And I remembered the word of the Lord...**
- He remembered Jesus telling them that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit...
- And then He remembered back to that happening...
- And Peter says... yes... this happened to me... I was baptized with the Holy Spirit...

➤ **Then Peter drew some conclusions from the word of God...**

- If I was baptized by the Holy Spirit...
- Then God gives them the same gift that He gave me...
- Then He must be wanting them to have the same salvation as me...

➤ **So Peter says:**

- **Who was I that I could stand in God's way...**
- Answer... a nobody... nothing... that is what is indicated here...

➤ **Notice:**

- Peter recognized that this way of thinking was standing in the way of God.
- **By not remembering the Word of God,**
 - and not being obedient to His command to take the gospel to all nations...
 - Peter is saying in effect: This is trying to stand in the way of God...

➤ **Many of Us: There is a lot of application here folks!**

- Try to stand in the way of God...
- We do it all the time...
- God gives us promises... He calls us to trust Him...
- He gives us commands to do and go and be...
- And we don't do, and we don't go, and we are not what we are called to be...
- **And we set up new rules to make us feel better and more holy...**
 - And we put these things in place so we can judge others...
 - And it usually causes us to see people as less than us...
 - And to miss out on the ministry that we could be doing...

❖ **3) Remembering the Word of God Changed Hearts**

- ¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

➤ **This is what God can do...**

- Shut our mouths... Shut up our criticism...
- We have so much to say, and think we are so smart and right so often...
- Then God comes along and shuts our mouths...

➤ **These guys had their mouths Shut...**

- There was nothing more they could say...
- God's Word, and God's actions had proved these guys wrong...

➤ **These guys then had their mouths reopened...**

- To glorify God...
- They made a 180 degree turn...
- From criticism to concurring
- They shut their mouth of criticism and it turned into a mouth of praise and adoration for God
- **This is what God's Word will do, if you will listen to Him...**
 - He will change our sinful ways of thinking...
 - And we will think one way, and have God turn us around to see things His way...
- **Notice:**
 - These guys were the cream of the crop...
 - These were some of the big guns... some of the first Christians...
 - It wasn't like they had just become a believer...
 - They were big names in the church... big enough to criticize Peter...
 - **Sometimes those of us that have been in the church the longest...**
 - Need a refresher on what it means to be a follower of Jesus...
 - And these guys took the course
- **In the End they say:**
 - **God has granted repentance that leads to life...**
 - **Notice they recognized:**
 - God was the one that gave these people the ability to repent...
 - ◆ Granted means given...
 - **Notice also Repentance leads to life**
 - Repentance was played a role in their salvation...
 - In case anyone was wondering...
 - ◆ Without repentance, there is no salvation...
 - **Notice as Well:**
 - Repentance is not a work to help you gain salvation of your own doing
 - It is a gift from God... Just like faith
 - Repentance led to life...
- **What is Repentance?:**
 - It seems like there is some confusion in Christianity as to what repentance is...
 - And what its role is in the conversion of sinners...
 - **Some are considering it a work... and that including it in a gospel presentation**
 - Is in essence the same as telling a person they must clean up their act if they want to be saved...
 - **Repentance is:**
 - A work of God
 - A gift from God
 - A Response by man
 - An inner change that leads to godly behavior
- **Three Definitions of Repentance from three Great men of God**
 - **Charles Spurgeon writes:**
 - Repentance is a discovery of the evil of sin, a mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it. It is, in fact, a change of mind of a very deep and practical character, which makes the man love what once he hated, and hate what once he loved.
 - **J. I. Packer writes:**
 - Repentance means turning from as much as you know of your sin to give as much as you know of yourself to as much as you know of your God, and as our knowledge grows at these three points so our practice of repentance has to be enlarged.
 - **John Piper writes:**

- Repenting means experiencing a change of mind that now sees God as true and beautiful and worthy of all our praise and all our obedience.

➤ **When Peter preached the Gospel message to those gathered in Cornelius house**

- If you remember correctly, what did their conversion look like?
- Peter has told them about Jesus and what He had done and who He is...
- He then offers an invitation to them:
 - **Acts 10:43** To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”
 - Peter tells them... in essence... EVERYONE who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name
 - Immediately following this statement from Peter:
 - ◆ the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.
 - ◆ They are saved...
 - And the proof of their salvation is the Holy Spirit...
- **When this event has finished taking place...**
 - And Peter recounts it to the early leaders in the church... as He was one as well...
 - **They conclude:**
 - ◆ God has granted repentance that leads to life...
- **These former unbelievers:**
 - Yet remember they were good folks... Devout people... Feared God...
 - They discovered they were evil...
 - ◆ And as much as they could understand it...
 - ◆ They turned from it

➤ **I therefore can conclude from the scripture:**

- That every time we see true saving faith or belief or trust or following of Jesus
 - We see repentance... it is always implied...
- And every time we see repentance
 - We see faith or belief or a following of Jesus...

➤ **Faith and Repentance are two sides of the same coin...**

- You can not have one without the other...
- And both of them are a gift from the maker of the coin

❖ **4) Learn from their Mistake:**

➤ **What was their mistake?**

- They had either forgotten or ignored the Word of the Lord

➤ **Look to the Old Testament:**

- During the time of King Josiah...
 - Mannaseh and Amnon
 - Father and grandfather of Josiah
 - Together they served as king for 57 years...
 - Amonon only 2
- They led Judah into all kinds of evil...
 - It was so bad that the Bible says it was worse than the people that God sent Israel in to get rid of
- If you have read this you notice they had forsaken the Word of God for years...

➤ **Josiah Finds the Word of God**

- When He reads it he is heart broken...
- And He realizes that his whole nation has forsaken the Lord...

- He is distraught...
- **Josiah leads his nation in revival...**
 - Josiah immediately gets rid of every idol and place of false sacrifice...
 - He leads the people to turn back to God...
- **The Word of the Lord was the key to revival...**
 - God's Word changed Josiah's ways
 - And the ways of the people...
- **Have a revival of your own through the Word of God...**
 - Be open to God changing your heart...
 - Maybe you just became a Christian...
 - Maybe you have been one for a long time...
 - Open up the Word of God...
 - And ask God to show you ways that you have forgotten His Word...
 - Ask God to show you new things
 - Be open to God breaking down some of you prior misunderstandings...
- **Remember...**
 - These critical men were leaders in the early church
 - Even Peter himself was stuck in this pattern...
 - And even fell back into it a little bit later on...
- **Let the Word of the Lord open your hearts:**
 - To the needs of those around you...
 - And that is really what this all ends up being...
 - There are undesirables that need the Lord...
 - So God makes Himself known by sending Peter...

❖ **Next Week:**

- You will see: God does not end there...
- He continues working with these gentile converts...
- These people that were likely a little bit rough around the edges...
- They were gentiles... they grew up in a culture that believed in multiple gods...
- But God sends a great man named Barnabas to disciple them...
 - And Barnabas gets Saul...
 - And God does great things
- **Notice:**
 - **And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.**
 - Something happened... Something so unique that they people that believed in Jesus...
 - Were named after Him...
 - I think this is very significant.
 - This doesn't just happen...

❖ **Invitation**