

38. Peter Told of the Salvation of the Gentiles

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how to explain difficult passages to others to help them come to a clear understanding of the Word of God. We saw that Peter showed us how to be led by the love of Christ, so that we take the time to explain difficult passages, instead of arguing because we are controlled by fear. In our topic today, we are going to see what happened as Peter took the time to explain to the leaders and the church at Jerusalem how God had shown that the Gentiles were also to receive the message of salvation.

In Acts 11:11-14, we read, ““At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. 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, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.””” Peter had seen the vision where God had told him not to call anything common or unclean. At the very moment that the vision was complete, three men arrived at the house where Peter was staying. Those three men had been sent by Cornelius from the city of Caesarea.

Peter had explained the details of the vision exactly as they had happened and now he said that three men had come looking for him. Peter said that the reason he had gone with these men was due to the fact that the Holy Spirit told him to go with them. One of the more difficult lessons that Christians need to learn is to be led by the Holy Spirit. In an earlier topic on Acts 8:29, we read, “Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot.’” Here, we see that Peter was led by the Spirit. In Galatians 5:18, we read, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”

That raises the question, how can we know that we are led by the Spirit? Two key verses to help us understand the leading of the Holy Spirit are given in Philippians 4:6-7 where we read, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Here, we see that we can know the leading of the Holy Spirit when we come to God in prayer with our requests. This prayer should include thanksgiving for the fact that God will give us His peace as He leads us. God will answer that prayer in such a way that both our inner man (the heart) and the mind will experience that peace. Many Christians are driven by fear, instead of being led by the peace of God, because they are making natural responses to the circumstances of life, instead of making supernatural responses and asking the Lord to lead them. The Lord will give us His peace as we yield to Him.

Peter knew that many of the followers of Christ might question whether Peter had been led by the Holy Spirit. As a result, Peter had taken six other believers with him to the house of Cornelius. Peter knew that these men would be able to confirm what the Lord had done in the house of Cornelius. They had all entered the house of Cornelius, the Gentile, because they all had that peace and wanted to be obedient to God.

These six men heard Cornelius tell how he had seen an angel who instructed him, “Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter.” These six men also heard Cornelius say that the angel had said that Peter would tell him words by which he and his entire household would be saved. We saw in Acts 10:24 that the household that day also included the relatives and close friends of Cornelius. That verse says, “And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.” Here, we see that the Lord had chosen to save this entire extended family as well as the close friends.

Acts 11:15-16 goes on to say, ““And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. 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.””” Here, we see that Peter said the Holy Spirit interrupted his sermon, because he had only begun to speak when the Holy Spirit fell on all the people who were gathered at the house of Cornelius that day.

Peter said that what happened at the house of Cornelius was the same thing that had happened to the 120 that were gathered in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:1-4 says, “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” The word translated “beginning” means *the first person or thing in a series*. Several passages mention the fact that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. However, Acts 2:4 is the only place that it mentioned that the one hundred and twenty spoke in tongues (other languages that they did not know). As a result, that was the thing that had happened only at the beginning.

Peter said that when he saw the people in the house of Cornelius speak in tongues, he remembered what Christ had said. Christ had said, “John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” John the Baptist had said in Matthew 3:11-12, ““I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”” Those who are baptized with the Holy Spirit receive the Holy Spirit from Christ as a gift and the down payment on their eternal salvation. Those who are baptized with fire are those who experience eternal judgment, because they have not turned to Christ for salvation and experience eternal judgment as a result.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit means that Christ puts the Holy Spirit in us at the moment of salvation with the exceptions mentioned in the book of Acts where the Holy Spirit came on each group – Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles and Old Testament saints (those who had not yet heard of the death and resurrection of Christ) when that group first was baptized with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the

praise of His glory.” Then, Romans 8:9 adds, “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” We are given the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation as the down payment and guarantee of that salvation. If we do not have the Holy Spirit, we are not yet Christians.

Acts 11:17-18 says, “‘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?’ When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’” Peter recognized that the gift the Jews received at the beginning was the same gift the Gentiles had received at the house of Cornelius. The people at the house of Cornelius spoke in a language that they did not understand. Peter and the six Jews with him recognized that it was the same gift, because those Gentiles praised God in the Hebrew language. The Jews knew that they were praising God and not just making sounds.

Peter said that for him to deny what had happened at the house of Cornelius would be to withstand God. The word translated “withstand” means *to forbid, deny or refuse a thing* and is usually translated “forbid”. 1 Thessalonians 2:16 says, “Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up *the measure of* their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.” In this verse, the Jews who rejected Christ forbid the believers from speaking to the Gentiles. Peter said that he could not forbid what God chose to do the first day that the Gentiles received the message of the death and resurrection of Christ.

The Jewish believers who had contended with Peter when he first began to speak to them became silent when they recognized that what had happened was the same thing that had happened in their lives the day the Holy Spirit first came on them. Then, they began to give glory to God. Instead of trying to shame Peter any longer for eating with Gentiles, they began to glorify God for what God had chosen to do in the lives of the Gentiles.

That day the Jewish believers recognized that God had also granted to the Gentiles the opportunity to repent of their sin and receive the gift of eternal life. The word translated “repentance” means *a change of mind* and also produces a change in attitudes and actions. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” This change of mind caused the Thessalonians to turn to God from idols. The change in attitude and actions caused them to serve the living and true God. The result when any person repents of the sin of unbelief is that they receive the gift of eternal life. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly explain the meaning of repentance and the fact that true repentance causes people to place their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the meaning of repentance and faith clearly.