

Acts 11a

Verses 1-18

1-3 Word spread. As soon as Peter and the men that were with him arrived at Jerusalem, some of the Jewish believers asked what was going on. There were factions within the body of believers about the importance of observing the details of the Law. I wonder if they weren't some of the priests who converted. (Acts 6:7) They wondered why Peter wasn't preserving their faith. I imagine it like an accusation of backsliding. "How could you pollute our faith like that?" Notice that it is the circumcised believers, not the God fearers that lodge the complaint. The God fearers were probably excited about the news. To some Jewish Christians, it was watering down the faith, lowering the bar. Compare that with their distaste for Samaritans and the reasons for it.

4 – 14 Peter recounts the story. Repetition in Scripture is to emphasize the importance of the passage. Luke wasn't just wasting parchment. This is a major turning point for the church and it bore repeating.

It is important to note that in verse 14 the word "family" usually applied to three generations living together. Slaves were also considered an important part of the household.

15-16 Peter describes the Gentile Pentecost. He related it to their own experience in Jerusalem. Then he added something we didn't see in the last chapter. When he saw them filled with the Holy Spirit, the words of Jesus were quickened to him. Luke 3:16 – One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to remind us of what Jesus said. John 14:26 This had to mean that they had entered into the New Covenant just like the Jews had, only in the case of the Gentiles, it obviously had nothing to do with works or obedience to the Law. It was only by faith in what Jesus had done for them.

17-18 Recognizing what God had done, Peter had to accept the fact that salvation was by faith to all who would believe. To reject that would be to argue with God. "You shouldn't give them Your Spirit, they aren't circumcised!" Have you ever found yourself in a similar position? You had to accept something that went against your theology because God was obviously in it?

They accepted Peter's story (they couldn't do otherwise as there were 6 witnesses) and came to the conclusion that any Gentile could be saved through faith in Jesus. If God accepted them, why couldn't you eat with them and stay in their home? Who are we to reject what God accepts? Later in 15, some will argue again for the need to be circumcised. Some convictions die a long and slow death. We get things in our minds and then see everything through that mindset. It often takes repeated lessons to really transform our minds. Romans 12:2