

Pre-Sermon Remarks

- Part 2 of the season finale of Acts
- **PRAYER**

Introduction | Recap (straight to the text)

^{11:1} The apostles and the brothers and sisters who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ² When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, ³ saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." ⁴ Peter began to explain to them step by step, ⁵ "I was in the town of Joppa praying, and I saw, in a trance, an object that resembled a large sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners from heaven, and it came to me. ⁶ When I looked closely and considered it, I saw the four-footed animals of the earth, the wild beasts, the reptiles, and the birds of the sky. ⁷ I also heard a voice telling me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' ⁸ "No, Lord!" I said. 'For nothing impure or ritually unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹ But a voice answered from heaven a second time, 'What God has made clean, you must not call impure.' ¹⁰ "Now this happened three times, and everything was drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹ At that very moment, three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were. ¹² The Spirit told me to accompany them with no doubts at all. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we went into the man's house. ¹³ He reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa, and call for Simon, who is also named Peter. ¹⁴ He will speak a message to you by which you and all your household will be saved.' ¹⁵ "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came down on them, just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ 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 them the same gift that he also gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, how could I possibly hinder God?

- RECAP FROM LAST WEEK: the inclusion of the Gentiles
- We might struggle to grasp the significance of this, we need lots of context

Context #1: Understanding the Law

1. Moral law | decision (sacrifice)
2. Ritual law | death (washing)
 - a. You can't carry death into the presence of life!
 - b. Hospital / covid / power lines analogy
3. Food law | distinction
 - a. *Reasons given: those animals are less healthy, etc.*
 - b. **Leviticus 11** ⁴⁴ For I am the Lord your God, so you must consecrate yourselves and be holy because I am holy. Do not defile yourselves by any swarming creature [or unclean animal] that crawls on the ground. ⁴⁵ For I am the Lord, who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God, so you must be holy because I am holy.
 - c. Holy = set apart for God's special purposes | *classical guitar* analogy

Context #2: Israel Set Apart

- (esv) Deuteronomy 32 ⁸When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. ⁹ But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.
- (csb) Genesis 12 ¹ The LORD said to Abram: Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.
- (csb) Isaiah 42 ⁶ "I am the Lord. I have called you for a righteous purpose, and I will hold you by your hand. I will watch over you, and I will appoint you to be a covenant for the people and a light to the nations.

Context #3: Compromise vs. Legalism

- Compromise: ignoring the instruction of God to become like the world (exile)
- Legalism: adding to the instruction of God to separate from the world (Pharisees)
 - Both can come from a good motive
 - Both errors come from lack of tension, community, etc.

Context #4: Circumcision Party

Babylonian Talmud | Yevamot 46a:20

With regard to a convert who was circumcised but did not immerse, Rabbi Eliezer says that this is a convert, as so we found with our forefathers following the exodus from Egypt that they were circumcised but were not immersed. With regard to one who immersed but was not circumcised, Rabbi Yehoshua says that this is a convert, as so we found with our foremothers that they immersed but were not circumcised. And the Rabbis say: Whether he immersed but was not circumcised or whether he was circumcised but did not immerse, he is not a convert until he is circumcised and he immerses.

Criticism

^{11:1} The apostles and the brothers and sisters who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ² When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, ³ saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."

- Peter's long response, recounting the story

Big idea: God's people = different from the world + blessing to the world.

Blessing #1: Conviction & Repentance

¹⁸ When they heard this they became silent. And they glorified God, saying, "So then, God has given repentance resulting in life even to the Gentiles."

- Repentance is a blessing!
- Kindness is what leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4)

Blessing #2: Ethnic Unity

¹⁹ Now those who had been scattered as a result of the persecution that started because of Stephen made their way as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

- Jew and Greek are united in Christ
- Ethnic oneness is a central feature of the gospel

Blessing #3: Christ-likeness

²² News about them reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to travel as far as Antioch. ²³ When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged all of them to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts, ²⁴ for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And large numbers of people were added to the Lord. ²⁵ Then he went to Tarsus to search for Saul, ²⁶ and when he found him he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught large numbers. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

- The Christlikeness of Barnabas
- Christians = "little Messiahs" | originally a perjorative term

Blessing #4: Practical Care

²⁷ In those days some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them, named Agabus, stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine throughout the Roman world. This took place during the reign of Claudius. ²⁹ Each of the disciples, according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brothers and sisters who lived in Judea. ³⁰ They did this, sending it to the elders by means of Barnabas and Saul.

- Generosity to the poor is a central feature of the gospel

Still True For Us

John 17 ¹³ Now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy completed in them. ¹⁴ I have given them your word. The world hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ I sanctify myself for them, so that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

- We often focus on "us" being in/not of the world, but it was true of Jesus first!
- **GOSPEL:**
 - He sanctified himself: set apart for special use by God. Distinct, different.
 - He was sent into the world on mission to bring blessing promised to Abraham

Distinct AND a Blessing

Ditch #1: Not distinct enough | we love the things of the world

- Seeking acceptance, validation, comfort, etc. that only God can truly give

Ditch #2: Too distinct and distant | fear being corrupted by the world

BOTH DITCHES are selfish and self-focused

- “I want things from the world that will satisfy me”
- “I will keep myself clean and feel superior or safe”
- We forget the power of Jesus that is in us | HE MADE THE UNCLEAN CLEAN

Benediction

From 1 Corinthians 6:11 We once were unrighteous. But we have been washed, we have been sanctified, we have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. All glory to his name.