

Encourage Friends  
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PETER are you ready for what's next? Acts 10

CHURCH are you ready for what's next? Acts 11

***Peter Explains God's Grace v1-18 or Gentiles are so "In"  
Barnabas and Saul at Antioch v19-30 or Spreading the Word in Antioch***

## Gentiles Are So In

- Back in Judea, word reaches the apostles and Jewish followers of Jesus that Peter has been baptizing Gentiles. The horror!
- Later, when Peter comes back into town, he has some 'splaining to do.
- Peter tells them all about the vision and that God said unclean things are now a-okay.
- He explains that it was God who let the Holy Spirit fall on the Gentiles while he was speaking. What was Peter supposed to do? Stop God from giving out his gifts? Not likely.
- The other apostles are speechless, but then they realize this is actually a great thing. God wants to save everyone.

## Spreading The Word In Antioch

- Lots of disciples are still traveling around. Some only preach the good news to fellow Jews, but others started telling Gentiles, too.
- And it's working!
- The church in Jerusalem sends [Barnabas](#) to [Antioch](#) to check out the new [Gentile](#) converts.
- Things looks good, so Barnabas heads to Tarsus to pick up Saul and bring him to Antioch. The two men stay there for a year and help the church get up and running.
- This is the first place that the disciples were called "Christians." Memories. Awww.
- Around the same time, a prophet named Agabus comes to Antioch and says that there's gonna be a really terrible famine soon.
- The disciples decide it's up to them to make sure that fellow believers are cared for if this happens, so they send supplies with Barnabas and Saul. Way to think ahead, guys.

[Act 11:1](#) Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. [v2](#) And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, [v3](#) saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"

Peter did not head back to Jerusalem right after meeting Cornelius ([Acts 10](#)). If he had done that, the news wouldn't have beaten him to Jerusalem. Peter stayed with Cornelius in Caesarea "a few days" (Acts 10:48) as they asked him to. Surely Peter taught Cornelius, but if teaching

been the main objective, the Lord probably would have waited until Peter had finished teaching to fall upon them. Moreover, instead of bringing Peter all the way from Jerusalem, He probably would have used Philip (see Acts chapter 8) who was already living in "Caesarea" ([Acts 8:40](#) & [21:8](#)) and therefore could teach him for more than just "a few days" ([Acts 10:48](#)).

"those of the circumcision" (Acts 11:3) were The Jewish Christians - "brethren" (Acts 11:1) - and may have even included one or more of the other "apostles" (Acts 11:1) who were in Jerusalem "contended with him".

## con•tend

(kən-tĕnd')

v. **con•tend•ed, con•tend•ing, con•tends**

v. *intr.*

1. To strive in opposition or against difficulties; struggle: armies contending for control of territory; had to contend with long lines at the airport.
2. To strive in competition, as in a race; vie: two runners contending for the lead.
3. To strive in controversy or debate; dispute.

How happy were they to hear "that the Gentiles had also received the word of God" (Acts 11:1)? They weren't: their statement, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" (Acts 11:3) wasn't a question but an accusation to Peter, with whom they "contended" (Acts 11:2). As discussed, Jewish Christians still held to the long-held Jewish belief that Gentiles were unclean. No where in the Old Testament does it command Jews not to eat with Gentiles. That was tradition dictating that behavior. Peter did not break a command of Moses. They seemed more concerned with Peter's behavior than with what God was doing by the Holy Spirit. "Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4) but they had gone "preaching the word to no one but the Jews only" (Acts 11:19 below); until now, they had skipped over all of the Gentiles.

[Act 11:4-18](#) v4 But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying: v5 "I was in the city of [Joppa](#) praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. v6 When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. v7 And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' v8 But I said, 'Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.' v9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' v10 Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. v11 At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

v12 Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. vv13 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,

v14 who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.' v15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. v16 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.' v17 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?" v18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

What lent credibility to Peter's testimony? Peter didn't say "I'm the Pope"

It was backed by the "six brethren" ([Acts 11:12](#)) - Jewish Christians - who had accompanied Peter "from Joppa" ([Acts 10:23](#)) to Cornelius' house.

Did God's plan work? As always, yes. What is remarkable is that God spent days preparing with Peter, having him lodge with someone who works with unclean, dead animals, showing him visions, and talking to him. God let the six Jewish Christians at least witness the Holy Spirit falling upon Cornelius' household. But God turned the hearts of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem so fast that they went from "contending" with Peter for dealing with Gentiles one moment to glorifying God for it the next. Prejudices deeply-ingrained over many centuries had been neutralized during a single conversation about the love of God being poured out on the lost.

What prejudices toward Christians of other social, racial and national groups remain in your heart?

[ACTS 11:19-21](#) 19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as [Phoenicia](#), [Cyprus](#), and [Antioch](#), preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. 20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and [Cyrene](#), who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

[Phoenicia](#) was the coastal province located north of Galilee. It is roughly the modern nation of Lebanon, to the north of Israel.

[Cyprus](#) is an island, still called, "Cyprus", off the coast of Lebanon in the Mediterranean Sea.

[Antioch](#) was a fairly common name for a city in the ancient world, which had over a dozen cities named Antioch, not unlike many cities with nice views (or even without nice views) being named "Fairview" today. The Antioch referred to above was founded in the 4th century BC by [Seleucus](#), one of Alexander the Great's five officers who divided his kingdom after his death. It was named after Seleucus' father and located north of Phoenicia on the Orontes River about 15 miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea.

Besides being lead of the Holy Spirit---There were at least a couple of reasons why Antioch drew those "preaching the Lord Jesus". **For one**, it had a large Jewish population where the Jewish Christians, including those born in "Cyprus and Cyrene" (Acts 11:20), a city in North Africa, who had left Jerusalem could both resettle among and target fellow Jews, albeit those

who grew up in the Greek world - "Hellenist" (Acts 11:20) - to evangelize. ***For another***, this particular Antioch had by this time grown to be a particularly wicked city. Third largest in the Roman world after only Rome itself and Alexandria in North Africa, this port had a population of half-million, including the Syrian (Roman) legion, and was mired in temple prostitution and other pagan abominations related to various Roman, Greek and other idols. **Christians were invading Satan's stronghold as Jesus had commanded**, and as Christians should continue to do today.



Did the Lord's invasion work?

"And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord." (Acts 11:21)

**ACTS 11:22-26** v22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. v23 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. v24 For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

Antioch was about 300 miles directly north of Jerusalem. (Acts 11:22)

**Why did the church in Jerusalem this time send Barnabas instead of Peter to check up on things?**

There are at least four reasons. First, the cultural wall between Jews and gentiles had already been breached, so Barnabas wasn't being sent on a controversial mission that required apostolic leadership credibility. Second, Barnabas was a Greek Jew from "Cyprus" ([Acts 4:36](#)) and therefore would interact easily with fellow Greek Jews, including the "men from Cyprus" ([Acts 11:20](#)) who were "preaching" ([Acts 11:19](#)). Third, Barnabas, the "Son of Encouragement" ([Acts 4:36](#)) will have put his gifts to good use in having "encouraged them" ([Acts 11:23](#)). Fourth and most importantly, the leaders in Jerusalem knew Barnabas "was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith". ([Acts 11:24](#))

Barnabas undoubtedly saw much Christian activity - Christians praying, giving, evangelizing, holding meetings and activities, etc. - but he saw them not as the enabler but the manifestation of the enabling "grace of God" ([Acts 11:23](#)), which is what made him "glad".

Barnabas did not advise them to keep up their good work - their events, activities and evangelistic outreach programs, No, he simply told them to "continue with the Lord" ([Acts 11:23](#)). God was at work, and they were to remain true to the Lord, who was manifesting Himself through them and their activities, as He continues to do today through Christians and the activities of Christians who remain true to Him and His Word.

**ACTS 11:25-26** v25 Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. v26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Tarsus was another port city that served as the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia, located in modern Turkey's southern Mediterranean shores. Tarsus was about 80 miles northwest of Antioch.

Barnabas surmised that Saul would be in Tarsus. Saul/Paul was "born in Tarsus" ([Acts 22:3](#)) and had been sent "out to Tarsus" ([Acts 9:30](#)) by the church in Jerusalem after "Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles" ([Acts 9:27](#)) and they "found out" ([Acts 9:30](#)) about a plot to "kill him" ([Acts 9:29](#)).

"Barnabas depart for Tarsus to seek Saul" ([Acts 11:25](#))

When Saul told the apostles and Barnabas in Jerusalem "how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus" ([Acts 9:27](#)), he most likely included the Lord's declaration to Ananias, who baptized Saul that he was, "a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles" ([Acts 9:15](#)). It was time for the chosen vessel of the Lord to be put to full use, starting with a "whole year" ([Acts 11:26](#)) of teaching "a great many" ([Acts 11:26](#)) new Gentile believers in Antioch.

The disciples were not called "Christians" before Antioch

Until the gentiles began to believe in the Lord in large numbers in Antioch, the disciples were almost exclusively Jews and therefore could be identified as a segment of the Jews - simply as Jews "who were of the Way" ([Acts 9:2](#)). When the church began to include significant numbers of gentiles, the uniform trait shifted from Jewish heritage to belief in Christ. The original Greek word, *Christianos*, literally meant someone who belongs to Christ, and was intended as a derision / a put down back then. Now being called someone who belongs to Christ is a tremendously honorable label, in my opinion, but waning fast.

[ACTS 11:27-30](#) v27 And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. v28 Then one of them, named [Agabus](#), stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. v29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Why would the "brethren dwelling in Judea" ([Acts 11:29](#)) need more help during a famine than the brethren in Antioch?

At this time, the persecution of the church was primarily by the Jewish authorities against those within their reach in Judea, who most likely lost their fields, property and homes before being imprisoned. The Roman persecution of Christians didn't start until 66 AD, so the church in Antioch at this time had more resources to share with their suffering brothers and sisters in Christ in Judea.

## Application

God ceased to create when He had made man, and entered on His sabbath satisfied with this masterwork of His hand. As the artist rejoices when his metal, or marble, or canvas expresses his ideal — as the poet leaps with pleasure when his metaphor and rhythm breathe the inspiration of his heart — as the father glows with gladness to behold in his firstborn boy his own features — so God delighted in the image of Himself in man. So much so He gave His Holy Spirit to all who believe on Jesus Christ. He delights to work in man.

Are we letting Him? Are we walking in the Power of the Holy Spirit? Or are we a contradiction? Do we have Union without Communion? Do we have profession without experience? Do we have life without Health? Do we have battles without victories? Do we have service without success? Do we have trial without triumph? If that seems to describe us, ..

Then maybe you and I are on the right side of Easter but the wrong side of Pentecost.  
We may be on the right side of pardon but on the wrong side of power. (chain saw)

Unless we are relating to the Holy Spirit we are not fully accessing the power which Jesus gave us.

~Pastor Forrest