

Bible e-Study on the book of Acts (11)

Here it is in black and white!

‘So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.’

Acts 11:18b

NUGGET – This is The Watershed Verse for us Gentiles. With these words the church on earth acknowledges that what God has done through the Jews is for the whole earth. Here is where the church moves once and for all beyond the walls of Jewish Jerusalem. God has always wanted the Jews to be His people that reveal the love of God to all the nations of the earth, and here, in black and white, the church states clearly that same intention and purpose.

This pivotal verse helps us to put into a heavenly perspective not only what has just happened with Peter and Cornelius, but also everything that will now follow, both in the book of Acts and in the church down to today. By this statement the church – salvation – is opened forever to anyone who trusts in the repentance that comes from God's guidance through the Holy Spirit. It's the leadership of the church realizing that God desires all people on earth to know Him and the restoration that comes through Jesus Christ alone.

Peter, by explaining to the church all that God did and what God directed him to do with Cornelius, fulfills in part what Jesus said of him when Jesus told him *that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church*. We believe and understand that Jesus in Matthew 16:17-19 is speaking these words on more than one level. And that it is both

- Peter *and*
- the confession he makes to Jesus that,

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, that are the rock that Jesus builds His church on. And here again the church is growing by what God does in changing and moving the leadership in ways they would not have understood before this.

It is amazing to me how it is that God orchestrates all things in His time for His purposes. Here God has brought this new church through difficulty and joy, growth and persecution to the point that it sees God's plan to include Gentiles who before would not have been fully welcomed. And as we will see later, this still was something the church had to wrestle with to finally get right.

But here today it begins. And this tipping point is immediately acted on by God in what takes place in the rest of the chapter. The church, hearing of the new Greek believers in Antioch sends Barnabas, the Jewish Cypriot, once known as Joseph the Levite (Acts 4:36) to see if indeed God was granting His grace to the Greeks there. And in Barnabas' going, and in what he does in bringing Saul into the picture, the church is about to move forward in new and uncharted ways. Ways known only to God who has revealed that repentance unto life is for all!

APPLICATION -

1. It is interesting for us to make note of the fact that *God* is the one who moves the church in His way, not the church asking God to bless what *they're* doing. How often do we put our plans ahead of waiting on God? One of the things that we may apply from this lesson is that God will act and will move us, but only in His time and at His pace so that *His* purposes are accomplished.

PRAY – Give God glory and praise that He has made it clear that we Gentiles are a part of His church according to His plan and action. Rejoice and give thanks that we can trust God to move us as He sees best. With gratefulness, bow in heart and mind to acknowledge that God has granted us repentance unto life eternal with Him.