Embracing and Empowering God's Work

Acts 11:1-30

Introduction: Significant issues the early Church wrestled with; New Testament writings, which took more than 300 years to confirm.

> **Concept**: The Jews and now the Church were all people of the 'book' and that book revolved around the covenant that God made with his people; first, the Old Covenant contained in the books we know as the Old Testament and the New Covenant that we now know as the books of the New Testament.

Dealing with Change – Acts 11:1-18 – The early Church began as a movement within Judaism so it was natural to think that part of what was important to Judaism should come along in this new community, with this new covenant relationship with God.

> **Precept**: The arrival of the Holy Spirit in a new way is an important foundation for the early Church and it spans Jews and now Gentiles—no partiality; and this is all of God. It definitively spans the Old Covenant and brings us to the New Covenant. (Ephesians 3:4-6)

Summary: In the New Testament two things will become part of the story of salvation; a divine provision of the Holy Spirit that directs a person's mind to the truth about Jesus and a human response of repentance and belief.

Following a New Leader – Acts 11:19-30 – The efforts of certain men of Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch working amongst the Hellenists, result in significant spiritual increases and eventually the center for the advance of the Church relocates to Antioch.

> **Precept**: The Church will always need men like Barnabas. He was all in and the result was they had people needs; specifically people who could disciple the new believers coming into their fellowship; so Barnabas goes to Tarsus and brings back Saul who knows the Old Testament.

Conclusion: This is the second time that the account of Cornelius is recorded (Acts 10; 11:3-16) and Luke will allude to it one more time in Acts 15. He is making a point; this event is important and each time he speaks of it he is telling us that what was once a distinction no longer matters. God chose the Jews, they, like any other ethnic group, dropped the ball. (Galatians 3:28); the door is open by grace through faith.

God has brought the Jews to himself, first in Abraham and the Patriarchs and they are reconciled at the cross. The New Testament Church will wrestle with God bringing Gentiles to Himself who are also reconciled at the cross and then the early Church will wrestle with Jews being reconciled to Gentiles as they serve God together. That has turned into a challenge amongst Gentiles—to be reconciled to each other in the same Church.

The purity laws of the Old Testament are replaced by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. All of this was at the direction of the Holy Spirit (11:11-14).

In a world where everyone is looking out for number one, Barnabas is exemplary—we need many "*Barnabas like*" characters. He had Godly Character and was filled with encouragement and the Church thrives with these kinds of men, these kinds of people. Be an encouraging man/woman in the local Church. (Acts 11:19-26)