

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

XXV. God's Pattern For Credible Testimonies

(Acts 11:1-18)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 351.
- B. Accordingly, we can learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the Early Church era as it is presented in the book of Acts.
- C. Acts 11:1-18 records how Peter credibly testified before a group of critical fellow Hebrews how God had shown in his ministry that Gentiles who trusted in Christ were saved by faith alone apart from circumcision.
- D. This passage thus offers God's pattern for credible testimonies in the Church, and we view it for our insight:

II. God's Pattern For Credible Testimonies, Acts 11:1-18.

- A. When Peter returned to Jerusalem from ministering to the Gentile Cornelius and the Gentiles in his house, some of the "so-called 'circumcision party'" criticized him for having gone to uncircumcised men and eaten with them, Acts 11:1-3. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Acts 11:2)
- B. Peter responded by rehearsing the events that had occurred that led him to go and fellowship with these Gentiles, and what he said in that testimony provides a pattern for giving credible testimonies, Acts 11:4-16:
 1. Peter noted that he was in fellowship with God in prayer when the Lord had given him a vision, v. 4-5a.
 2. That vision about the Lord's directing Peter to eat animals forbidden to Hebrews under the Mosaic Law occurred when Peter was ceremonially unclean for living for many days in a tanner's house (Acts 9:43; 10:6), it occurred **three** times to **correct** Peter's refusal to eat them, and God's **threefold** work to **correct** Peter was common knowledge in the Church after his threefold public denial of Christ and Christ's public threefold work to restore Peter to ministry after His resurrection, Acts 11:5b-10; Matthew 26:33-34; John 21:15-19. These clear, public precedents of God's work with Peter certified the truth taught in this vision!
 3. The three Gentiles who arrived at Joppa looking for Peter with their message from Cornelius satisfied the Mosaic Law's requirement that two or three witnesses verify every fact, Acts 11:11; Deuteronomy 19:15.
 4. The Holy Spirit's directing Peter to go meet these men without reservation over his former bias against contacting Gentiles also fit the teaching of the credible, correcting vision Peter just reported, Acts 11:12a.
 5. Besides, six Hebrew believers joined Peter in his journey with the Gentiles from Cornelius as Scripturally credible witnesses of events that would occur once Peter met Cornelius, Acts 11:12b; Deuteronomy 19:15.
 6. When Peter entered Cornelius' house, Cornelius told how he had seen an angel in his Gentile house, what would further testify of the need for Hebrew believers to fellowship with Gentile believers, Acts 11:13a.
 7. Cornelius' awareness that Peter was the surname of a man called Simon indicated that Cornelius had received supernatural insight, indicating that this information was from God, Acts 11:13b.
 8. Also, Cornelius reported that the angel said that Peter would speak words by which he and his kin would be saved, obvious revelation from God about the Gospel that Cornelius had not yet even heard, Acts 11:14.
 9. When Peter began to speak, he said that the Holy Spirit had fallen on his Gentile hearers as He had on the Hebrews on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 11:15 with Acts 2:1-11.
 10. Peter added that the Lord had said (in Acts 1:5) that they would be baptized by the Holy Spirit, what would certify the reality of the working of God in the coming of the Spirit on these Gentiles, Acts 11:16.
- C. Peter concluded that since God had obviously given uncircumcised Gentiles the same gift of the Holy Spirit as He had given the Hebrew believers, Peter could not withstand God's work, Acts 11:17. This statement put Peter's critics on the defensive, for neither were they supposed to withstand the work of God in these Gentiles!
- D. In response, Peter's critics quieted down, acknowledging that God had also granted to uncircumcised Gentiles repentance of mind to believing in Christ, resulting in their salvation, Acts 11:18.

Lesson: *To answer critics of his meeting and fellowshiping with Gentiles, Peter told how (1) he was praying in fellowship with God (2) when he received a publicly verifiable vision from Him on the matter, (3) that there were multiple witnesses of God's will on the matter, (4) that the Holy Spirit's promptings fit God's other signals on the matter, (5) that there was obvious supernatural insight on the matter, (6) the Holy Spirit had come on the Gentiles, (7) there were Biblical precedents on the matter, and (8) a fulfillment of Christ's prophecy on the matter.*

Application: *May we follow Peter's example to testify effectively of God's true work in our lives and ministries.*