

Trusting God's Holy Spirit

Key Verse:
***“Forasmuch then
as God gave them
the like gift as he
did unto us, who
believed on the
Lord Jesus Christ;
what was I, that I
could withstand
God?”***
—Acts 11:17

Selected Scripture:
Acts 11:1-18

ing degrees of insight into God's plan.

In the opening verses of Acts 11, we find that Peter had returned to Jerusalem following the completion of his special mission on behalf of Cornelius and his family. Upon his arrival, some of the brethren “that were of the circumcision [Jews] contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.” (vss. 2,3) It is worth noting that they did not criticize Peter for recognizing Cornelius as a Christian, but for eating with him. Peter, realizing the Jewish brethren's confusion, told them of his vision and rehearsed to them his entire experience concerning Cornelius.—vss. 4-17

It would still be some time before the apostles, even

IT IS CLEAR FROM THE

scriptural record that, as Jews, the apostles at first wrestled with the idea that the message of the Gospel and the “high calling” of God could now go to the Gentiles. Because of their inborn prejudices, as well as the tendency to remain under the influence of Old Testament arrangements, it took time for them to grasp God's recognition of Gentiles as his people. This was also impacted by their vary-

Peter, had a clear understanding of the work to be done and the blessings that were to go to the Gentiles. Through the Holy Spirit, however, their enlightened minds began to see that while their nation had been promised great blessings by the promises given to father Abraham, “all families of the earth” would also be blessed by those same promises. (Gen 12:2,3; 22:18) Peter’s own initial lack of understanding is shown by the fact that he had to be given instructions by a special vision from God prior to his work on behalf of Cornelius.

In recounting his experience, Peter explained that he “remembered . . . the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 11:16; 1:5) These words, spoken by Jesus just before his ascension, showed that the baptism of the Holy Spirit, “in the name of the Lord,” was now of much greater importance than John the Baptist’s baptism unto repentance. (Acts 10:44-48; 19:4) It was this baptism of the Holy Spirit which had come upon Cornelius. After Peter ended his report, the account states: “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”—Acts 11:18

Paul wrote concerning this subject, contrasting God’s law of faith with the old Mosaic law of works. “Before faith came, we were kept under the law. . . . Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” (Gal. 3:23-25) Being “justified by faith,” one is considered a son in the family of God, and not a servant under the Law. Thus Paul further states: “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. . . . There is neither Jew nor Greek, . . . bond nor free, . . . male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. 3:26-29 ■