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Trusting the Spirit

Definitions in **bold letters** are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance
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or Roget's Thesaurus – **October 25, 2015**

Acts 11:1-18

Introduction: In chapter 1 we were told of Jesus command that **His apostles** go out as WITNESSES to Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth. Subsequently we have seen how this has partially been accomplished as first Jerusalem and then the surrounding area in Judaea and Samaria, including Galilee, have received their witness. We have even learned how it has gone out to **Ethiopia**. But in all cases the evangelizing has been among the Jews and their adherents. For the church in Jerusalem were still **limited** in their **thinking** to the evangelizing of their own people, with a few proselytes thrown in. They aimed through Christ to make Jews better Jews in readiness for Christ's second coming.

Of course, Gentiles would be accepted if they turned from being Gentiles and become Jewish proselytes, bathing in order to remove the uncleanness of the Gentile world, being **circumcised** into the **covenant**, taking on themselves the responsibility of keeping the Law and the Sabbath, attending at their local synagogue, submitting to the Temple regime, and then recognizing in **Jesus** the **Messiah** of the Jews and being baptized. But otherwise the Gentile world is excluded. They must be left in **their uncleanness**.

But then unhappy rumours begin to be spread about. It was being said that one of their leaders, one of the twelve, and a prominent one at that, had entered a Gentile house and eaten with Gentiles, and had then preached there to Gentiles, and baptized them. **It appeared** as though he was simply **ignoring** the **difference** between Jew and Gentile, between 'cleanness' and 'uncleanness'. Such a shameful and blasphemous thing was, of course, hardly likely to be fully true, but it would certainly have to be enquired into. We must also remember that many of the Jerusalem Jews would be far stricter than the Apostles, brought up in Galilee where standards were not quite so strict, so that they would find such an idea even more appalling. They would certainly want to call Peter to account. And they would see it as Scripturally necessary. Scripture required that major irregularities be examined into.

The fact that **Peter** turned up complete with his **six witnesses** demonstrates that he was expecting to be called to account and had ensured that he had his **witnesses** with him. He was quite well aware that what he had done **would appear** to be IRREGULAR.

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=11#1>)

Acts 11:1, And the **apostles** and **brethren** that were in Judaea **HEARD** that the **Gentiles** had also received the word of God.

NOTE: The implication at the close of the preceding chapter that perhaps Peter **remained** a while at Caesarea leads to the supposition that the **startling NEWS** of what had occurred in the house of Cornelius had **outrun Peter**, arriving in Jerusalem before he did. Boles thought that "The news came to Jerusalem before Peter left Caesarea." In any case, an event of such vast implications was certainly one of supreme interest.

ENDNOTE: ^[1] H. Leo Boles, Commentary on the Acts (Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1953), p. 176.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=11#1>)

Acts 10:44-48, While Peter **yet spake** these **words**, the **Holy Ghost** FELL on all them which **heard** the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were **astonished**, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they **heard** them **speak** with **tongues**, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man **forbid WATER**, that these should not **be baptized**, which **have received (obtain, be amazed;** endowed with (BY)) the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be **baptized** in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to **tarry (STAY OVER)** certain days.

Acts 11:2-3, And when **Peter** was come up to **Jerusalem**, they that were of the **circumcision contended** (*chide [SCOLD; to find fault]*) with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men **uncircumcised**, and didst eat with them.

NOTE: They that were of the circumcision ... included practically all of the entire discipleship in Jerusalem, and not merely "the circumcision party" which later developed. **Peter's** views before the conversion of Cornelius were those of practically the **whole church** at that time. Furthermore, as Benson noted, "Even afterward, on one occasion, Peter withdrew himself from the believing Gentiles, for fear of the Jews (Galatians 2:12).

Galatians 2:11-14, But when Peter was come to Antioch, **I withstood him** to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did EAT with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, **fearing them** which were of the **circumcision**. And the other Jews **dissembled (act hypocritically in concert)** likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their **dissimulation (deceit ("hypocrisy"))**.

But when I **SAW** that THEY **walked not uprightly** according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter

BEFORE THEM ALL, If thou, being a Jew, **LIVEST** after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the **Gentiles to live** as do the **Jews?**

Contended with him ... Alexander Campbell translated this place, "Disputed with him," declaring that this "is more appropriate in questions of **debate**, and especially in such a category."^[3] Goodspeed's translation is, "The advocates of circumcision **took him to task** with having visited and eaten with men who were not Jews."^[4] As so many have not failed to point out, "**Peter was not regarded** as any kind of **'pope'** (eminence) or **overlord**."^[5] "It is evident that the Jewish Christians had no idea of the **supremacy** of Peter, much less his infallibility."^[6]

The complaint against Peter does not seem to have been that he had baptized a Gentile, but that he had baptized a Gentile without **first requiring** him to **submit** to **circumcision** and **come under** the **law of Moses**.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=11#1>)

Romans 2:28-29, For he is **not** a **Jew**, which is one **outwardly**; neither is that **circumcision**, which is outward in the **flesh**: But he is a Jew, which is one **INWARDLY**; and **circumcision** is that of the **heart (MIND)**, **IN** the **SPIRIT**, and **not** in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Acts 11:4-6, But Peter **rehearsed** the **matter** from the **beginning**, and **expounded** it **by order** unto them, saying, I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a **TRANCE** I saw **a vision**, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and **saw** fourfooted

beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

NOTE: Peter replied by describing what had happened to him ‘in order’, just as it had happened. The detail is repeated because of its importance. Note how each point that he makes emphasizes that it was through **God’s initiation**. He wants them to know that it was not he who had made these choices. Nor was it Cornelius. **It was God** Who had insisted on each step that was taken.

He points out that **God had first spoken** to him through **a trance**. He pictured to them the great sheet coming from heaven with its content of a variety of four-footed beasts, wild beasts, birds and creeping things. Each one present would probably shudder at the thought of such a mass of unclean things together. Here was something definitely needing to be avoided at all costs. Here was indeed an example of the uncleanness that they were concerned about.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=11#1>)

Acts 11:7-10, *And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.*

NOTE: Then he described how **three times** God had called on him to eat, and how three times he had refused because he had considered that such things were UNHOLY and UNCLEAN. And then he explained how three times God had rebuked him and declared, ‘**What God has cleansed you must not make common.**’ Note the verb ‘make’. The point was that Peter was trying to make common again what God **had cleansed** and **made holy**, for God can cleanse what He will. Thus God had made clear that somehow these creatures coming down from heaven, which would normally be seen as unclean, were not to be seen as unclean or unholy, and the reason was because God had cleansed them. They came from God, from heaven. How could they be unclean?

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=11#1>)

1 Corinthians 6:11, And such WERE some of you: but ye are **WASHED**, but ye are **sanctified (purify)**, but ye are **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Acts 1:5 ...John truly **baptized (WASH)** with water **but** ye shall be **baptized (WASH)** with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Ephesians 4:4-5, There IS one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, **ONE baptism** (holy water)...

Thought 1. The baptism (WASHING) of the Holy Spirit is the ONE baptism that SAVES. Jesus commanded believers to be baptized in WATER because they have BEEN “baptized” by the Holy Spirit and placed IN his body. So, “water baptism” is NOT the ONE baptism that SAVES.

Mark 16:15-16, And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that **believeth** **AND** is **baptized** **SHALL BE SAVED...**

AND defined 2532, SO THEN.

So, for this reason. Then, therefore.

SHALL BE SAVED defined 4982, SAVE (to rescue from a state of condemnation and spiritual death, and bring into a state of spiritual life.

Thought 2. As you can see, “shall be saved” does NOT mean “WILL BE” saved. It means “SAVED.” So, the conclusion is Mark 16:16 is saying:

“He that “BELIEVETH for this reason, therefore is baptized is SAVED.”

1 Peter 3:21, The like figure whereunto even **BAPTISM** doth also now **SAVE us** (NOT The putting away of the **filth of the flesh (body)**, but the answer of a good **conscience** toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

Acts 8:32-38, The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and **preached** unto him Jesus.

And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain WATER: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be **baptized?** And Philip said, If thou **BELIEVEST** with ALL thine heart, thou mayest.

And he answered and said, **I BELIEVE** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down **both** into the WATER, both Philip and the eunuch; and he **baptized him**.

Thought 3. He was baptized because he believed on Jesus and was saved. Notice, he did NOT LEAD him in what's called the “prayer of salvation.”

1 John 5:1, Whosoever **BELIEVETH** that **Jesus** is the **Christ** IS **BORN** of God...

Acts 11:11-12, And, behold, **immediately** there were **three men** ALREADY COME unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. And the Spirit **bade (command)** me go with them, **nothing doubting**. Moreover these **six brethren** accompanied me, and **WE** entered into the man's house...

NOTE: Then he described how three men had arrived who had been sent from Caesarea by Cornelius, and *how the Spirit had bade him go with them*, and not to make a distinction because they were **Gentiles**.

After which, indicating the **SIX Christian Jews** who had been with him, he stated, ‘these **six brethren** also accompanied me and WE entered into their house.’ So he had not been alone in his decision. There had been **unity** of thought among these Jewish Christian leaders, and they had **all AGREED** that they should enter the house. And including himself that meant that there had been **seven of them**, the perfect number to make any such decision. Compare the sevenfold seals of witness on important documents of the time (see Revelation 5:1). We note here the emphasis on UNITY of thought and united action. Peter claimed no unique authority for himself. He had depended on the combined decision of the seven.

‘In which we were’, referring to Simon’s house, need not involve the six, it may simply mean ‘myself and Simon’. There is no suggestion that the six were also staying with Simon the Tanner.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=11#1>)

Thought 1. Peter should’ve **OBEYED** God and gone to Cornelius’ house as he was commanded, even IF the six brethren had not been willing to go with him.

Acts 11:13-14, And he shewed us how he had seen an **angel** in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall **tell thee** **WORDS**, whereby THOU and all THY HOUSE shall **be saved**.

NOTE: He then explained how once they were in the house they had been told that the reason that Peter had been sent for was *because of an angel who had told them to send for*

him, so that they might hear his words and be saved, along with their households. This confirmation of an angelic messenger, and therefore the clear piety of those involved, would ease the fears of those who were listening. Those who were most Jewish in their thinking would interpret 'saved' as meaning becoming faithful adherents to **Jewish Christianity**, and would thus temporarily be satisfied.

'Standing in his house.' If a holy angel was willing to enter Cornelius' house, then surely it was acceptable for a mere human.

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=11#1>)

Thought 1. Peter's statement about Cornelius being saved and his house also being saved reminds me of the words of Paul and Silas in Acts 16:31. When we examine the principles in regard to HOW a person is saved, they were NOT saying because Cornelius, or any parent believes and is saved, this guarantees the salvation of his family.

Acts 16:31-34, And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,** and **thou** shalt be SAVED, and thy house. And they SPAKE unto him the WORD of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, **BELIEVING in God** **WITH ALL** his house.

Thought 2. They ALL believed, so, for this reason, they were ALL baptized.

Acts 11:15-16, And as **I BEGAN** to speak, the Holy Ghost **fell on them,** as on us at the beginning. Then **remembered I** the WORD of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed **baptized** with WATER; but ye shall be **baptized** with the HOLY GHOST.

NOTE: As I began to speak" (and perhaps he felt some secret reluctance in his own breast, doubting whether he was in the right to preach to the uncircumcised), "presently the Holy Ghost fell on them in as **visible signs** AS ON US **at the beginning**, in which there could be no fallacy." Thus God attested what was done, and declared his approbation (approval) of it; that preaching is certainly right with which the Holy Ghost is given. The apostle supposes this, when he thus argues with the Galatians: **Received you the Spirit** by the **works of the law**, or by the **hearing of faith?** Gal. 3:2 .

Galatians 3:2, This only would I learn of you, **Received** ye the **Spirit** by the **works** of the LAW, or by the **hearing** of **FAITH?**

Thought 1. Paul attacks the error, not the people, with the evidence of the fact ALL believers on Jesus Christ as the Son of God, have received the Spirit of God.

[2.] Peter was hereby put in mind of a saying of his Master's, when he was leaving them (ch. 1:5): John baptized with WATER; but you shall be baptized with the HOLY GHOST, **v. 16.** This plainly intimated, First, that the Holy Ghost was the gift of Christ, and the product and **performance** of his **promise**, that great promise which he left with them when he went to heaven. It was therefore without doubt from him that this gift came; and the filling of them with the Holy Ghost was his act and deed. As it was promised by his mouth, so it was performed by his hand, and was a token of his favour. Secondly, That the **gift** of the **Holy Ghost** was a **kind of baptism.** Those that received it were baptized with it in a more excellent manner than any of those that even the Baptist himself **baptized with water.**

[3.] Comparing that promise, so worded, with this gift just now conferred, when the question was started, whether these persons should be baptized or no, he concluded that the question was determined by Christ himself. (Source: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/acts/11.html>)

Acts 11:17, Forasmuch then as **God gave** them the like **GIFT** as he did unto us, who **believed** (have faith, entrust (especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ)) on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could WITHSTAND God?

NOTE: Thus, he asked, what should he have done? If God gave to the **Gentiles** the same GIFT as He had given at **Pentecost** to all **WHO BELIEVED** on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was he to withstand God? God had thereby made it clear that **He had cleansed** these **unclean Gentiles** so that they **were acceptable to Him**. Thus they were NO LONGER common or unclean. They were precious to God and acceptable to Him, and they were that just as they were, in their uncircumcised state. And just as they were they were a part of God's holy nation.

So Peter has made clear that the initiative was God's each step of the way. It was God Who had put him into a trance and given him his vision. It was **His Spirit** Who had **bid** him go to Cornelius. It was the Angel who had told Cornelius what to do. The coming of the Holy Spirit on them had been as a result of God's direct and unexpected action.

NOTHING therefore had been of **Peter's doing**.

It should be noted that it was not Peter's authority that was being accepted here, it was his **LOGIC** combined with the **FACTS**. Thus the other Apostles were willing in the end to put their authority behind his actions. They too knew what it meant for God to direct them, so that not to do so would have been to go against God.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=11#1>)

Thought 1. The conclusion to what happened is when a person "BELIEVES" they are WASHED by the Holy Spirit, then INDWELT by the Spirit. Their faith, produced by understanding the gospel, is what caused this to happen. The person is saved when they BELIEVE, and is therefore baptized in water to SHOW that God has WASHED them.

Ephesians 1:13, In whom ye also trusted, after that ye **HEARD** the **word** of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also

AFTER that **ye BELIEVED**, ye were **sealed** with that Holy Spirit of promise...

NOTE: 'Having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.' The reception of the promised Spirit through BELIEVING is central to the Christian message. It is **His coming** to a man **when he believes** that **makes him a Christian**.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view.cgi?bk=48&ch=1>)

Acts 11:18, When they **heard these things**, they **held their peace**, and **glorified God**, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted **REPENTANCE** unto **LIFE**.

NOTE: Some people, when they have fastened a **censure** upon a person, will stick to it, though afterwards it appear ever so plainly to be unjust and groundless. It was not so here; for these brethren, though they were of the circumcision, and their bias went the other way, yet, when they heard this, **1. They let fall their censures:** they HELD their peace, and said no more against what Peter had done; they laid their hand upon their mouth, because **now they perceived** that **God did it**. Now those who **prided** themselves in their dignities as Jews began to see that God was staining their pride, by letting in the Gentiles to share, and to share equally, with them. And now that prophecy was fulfilled, Thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain, Zep. 3:11 . **2.** They turned them into praises. They not only held their peace from quarrelling with Peter, but opened their mouths to **glorify God** for what he had done by and with Peter's ministry; they were thankful that their mistake was rectified, and that God had shown more mercy to the poor Gentiles than they were inclined to show them, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life! (Source: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/acts/11.html>)