



ZLC TEXT MESSAGE

Exploring the Bible One Text at a Time

The Mighty Acts of God: There's No Fight Like A Church Fight

Note: If you would enjoy an overview of the Book of Acts, and to have the stage set for what has happened in the book prior to this week's reading, extra copies are available near the sermon copies in the narthex.

Acts 10:44-11:18

10 44 While Peter was still speaking [to the Gentiles], the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, 46 for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 47 "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48 So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

11 1 Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. 2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, 3 saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" 4 Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, 5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. 6 As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. 7 I also heard a voice saying to me, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' 8 But I replied, "By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' 9 But a second time the voice answered from heaven, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' 10 This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. 11 At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea **zeh-suh-REE**, arrived at the house where we were. 12 The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. 13 He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, "Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; 14 he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" 18 When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

Scripture

Reflect

At this point in Acts, God is getting out of control. I mean, really...*anyone* can be part of what God is doing? Even those Gentiles? This was earth shattering to some believers, especially the Jewish apostles who were still following all the traditions and faith practices of their ancestors. The story of Jesus can't just stick with one little homogenous group of people though. God won't let that happen. It seems that God's work is bigger than one little community can handle.

Like those first debates among early Christians, faithful people today try to determine how God works and who God works through by establishing boundaries and rules about who's in and who's out. It's easier to think that God works through the ways we are most comfortable, and simply not pay attention to how God might be working in others lives. But maybe that's not the point of being the church. Maybe instead of clinging to rules that make us comfortable, maybe we are called to look with fresh eyes at the work of the Holy Spirit is doing around us.

It isn't easy to shift our focus from the boundaries that humans build to the holy work that God is doing, and it's bound to be stir up more conversation and debate among believers. But isn't this the kind of conversation the church should be having?

Food for Thought

1. When have you been surprised by seeing God working in someone else?
2. What's a boundary that you've clung to that has kept you from seeing God at work in someone not like you?

