

Clarity Breeds Confidence

Acts 11:1-30

Phil de Martimprey

9/25/22

We all experience changes in our lives and plans, some bigger than others. Some common changes are: moving, getting married, starting a new job, buying a house, having a child, etc. These changes can be life altering, and for many, very difficult to navigate and confusing. One thing that can dramatically assist in these changes, is clarity. Clarity of what is expected at the job, clarity of the character of the person who you are marrying, clarity of the challenges awaiting you when you move. The more information you have, the greater the level of clarity, resulting in a much higher level of confidence. In our study today, we will see how God clarifies a massive change in His program, and how this clarity results in unshakable confidence in the early church.

Confusion Clarified (11:1-18)

When Peter got to Jerusalem, word of his incredible experience in Caesarea preceded him. However, it wasn't the incredible work of God's grace that had the fellow Jewish believers in awe, rather, it was the fact that Peter (an ardent follower of the Mosaic Law) had entered the house of a gentile and eaten with those unclean, uncircumcised men! This was clearly in violation of God's Law and will!

This accusation spurred on Peter's almost verbatim recounting of the events that took place regarding Cornelius and his gentile friends. I am convinced that Luke records this event twice in such close proximity, because of the massive change it represents to the Jewish believers, and God's program. It is clear from Peter's story that God was working to bring people to Himself, without bringing them to Judaism at the same time. This was a massive change in God's program, and one that would prove to be very difficult for Jews to understand and embrace as the story of the Church moves on.

Peter's actions brought great confusion to these Jewish believers, but the climax of his story brought perfect clarity. Not only did God miraculously work in both Peter and Cornelius' life, but, by the grace of God, *"the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning" - Acts 11:15*

What Peter was referring to, was the fact that the Holy Spirit entered these gentiles at the point of faith, *without any* adherence to the Mosaic Law or Jewish practice. The undeniable truth of this indwelling was clear when they began to speak in tongues in the same way that the Apostles had, when they received the Holy Spirit in Acts 2! This was the point of clarity for these Jewish believers that allowed them, not only to accept this massive change, but to actually glorify God in it. This gift of tongues, was not a random gift given to these gentiles, but was *the evidence needed* for Peter, his companions, and these early church leaders, to clearly see and believe, that God was doing something entirely new and apart from the Mosaic Law and their Jewish practices and traditions. It was the new revelation of what Paul would later write: *"There*

is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” -Galatians 3:28

Confidence In Action (11:19-20)

We see this new found clarity in action right away. These Jewish believers in Jerusalem once again hear of God delivering gentiles apart from Judaism. Apparently, some of the Jewish believers who were scattered abroad, had been preaching among the gentiles in Antioch. This time the report is not met with skepticism or accusations, but rather the believers in Jerusalem send Barnabas to see what God was up to, and in what ways he might be able to help. Upon his arrival, Barnabas saw the “Grace of God”. This is a powerful way to communicate how Barnabas interpreted his findings. He saw the Grace of God at work, he saw men and women trusting in Jesus, both Jew and Gentile. He then proceeded to go and get the man who he knew would be a perfect fit for what God was doing. A man who had been hand selected by Jesus to be a *“chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel” - Acts 9:15*

Paul and Barnabas spent a year together, teaching and building up the church family in Antioch. In fact, it was so mature after just a few years, that when they heard of their “brothers” in Judea about to face a famine, they gathered together a relief package to send to them. These gentiles were sending relief to the Jewish believers in Judea?! God was radically redefining what it mean to be part of His Family.

In closing our study, I would encourage us, to follow Barnabas’ example, as well as his exhortation. May we be on the lookout for the “Grace of God” around us, for He is surely working in places we would never expect. Also, may we “remain faithful to Lord with steadfast purpose”, seeking to let the truth of His word transform our lives, and the lives of those we are discipling.

Grace Family Needs, News & Notes

- ❖ **Mens Ministry:**
 - **Today is the last day to sign up for the Men’s Conference (9/30-10/2). Sign up on the patio.**
- ❖ **Youth:**
 - **Today is the last day to sign up for the River Trip (10/7-10/10) See Matt Smith to sign up.**
- ❖ **VOM September Donation Needs: Shipping boxes and packing tape.**