

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

Acts 11

August 24, 2025

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¹⁵ "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11-NIV)

She found Mr. Right and he found Cinderella. They fell in love. Got married and arrived at the hotel after a night of cake, celebration and conversations with family and friends that went on past midnight.

They arrived at the hotel and received the key from the attendant at the front desk. All was coming together just as the groom had planned. Beautiful hotel. Honeymoon suite. While they might have been tired, he purchased a romantic room with all the perfect elements.

When they entered the suite, the room was not quite like what the groom had expected.

The room was small. No freshly cut flowers. No Ghirardelli chocolate.

No romance lighting. And no romance smells. And no romance.

It did have a cramped bathroom, a fold out sofa bed with a lumpy mattress and noisy box springs.

The honeymoon suite was nothing like what Mr. Right had hoped for; and neither was the night.

The next morning the groom with a sore neck made his way to the manager's office to give the manager on duty a piece of his mind he could not do without. He vented. He vehemently told the manager; this is not what I paid for. Anger filled the air. The red-faced groom was stopped in his tracks when the manager asked one simple question:

"Did you open the door in your room?"

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Hanging his head and now quiet and embarrassed he acknowledged, **"that he had not."** Slowly he turned away and returned to the suite and found the door he had completely missed the night

before. His new bride was putting on make-up in the tiny, cramped bathroom, so he opened the door that he thought was a clothes closet.

Then he spotted the roses; fruit basket and chocolates nicely placed on the pillows. There was the spacious and romantic room he was promised with a downtown view. He pauses. Suddenly, she comes out of the bathroom and sees the door open and enters. They stand in silence for what seemed to be an eternity.

Both thought a room fit for a newly married couple.

Beautiful king bed, instead of a lumpy sofa bed.

A picturesque window of the downtown instead of a white wall.

A fresh breeze instead of stuffy air.

An elaborate bathroom, instead of a tight space with a toilet.

And they missed it all. How sad. How cramped. They lived their most important night of their life, far below what was rightfully theirs. (Lucado, page 185-186)

My question is a simple one, “why didn’t the groom get more curious? Why didn’t he get more courageous? Open a few doors. Check the place out.”

Why didn’t Mr., Right, go downstairs to the front desk and make it right? And get some answers?

Good question not just for a groom, but for each of us. You see so often followers of Jesus live in tight, cramped quarters of spiritual living. Saved yes, fully empowered to live and do the supernatural, no!

Instead of a romantic room, they settle for the anteroom of small spiritual living. No Holy Spirit power. No Holy Spirit gifts. And no Holy Spirit protection and provision as spelled out in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is waiting to unleash on every believer that asks, a honeymoon experience with Jesus Christ and beyond, in the power of the Holy Spirit that never ends.

Oh, life without full activation of the Holy Spirit, still has some good moments, but why settle for just some good moments with Jesus.

...when you can have an outrageous, courageous, and even audacious life like the one that Jesus said, “when I send the Holy Spirit to you, that is going to be a game changer.”

³⁰ *“Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4-NIV)

Stop settling for small, cramped quarters of life with Jesus when God has promised you a life in the full power of the Holy Spirit that has no limits. That allows you to operate in the full provision of the gifts of the Spirit.

Does something inside you long for more? If so, the Holy Spirit can satisfy that longing for a full life in Jesus Christ, in the daily power of the Holy Spirit. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, (Eph 5:18)

We are now moving into Acts 11. Peter returns to Jerusalem after his time in Caesarea at the home of Cornelius where he had stayed for several days. Peter had just experienced what God mentioned in the book of Acts would happen...I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.... even Gentile flesh.

⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ^{48a} So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. ^{48b} Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. (Acts 10-NIV)

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Peter is about to run into some Jews that are old school, they are not interested at first in Gentiles having the gospel and they certainly are not interested in changing centuries of dietary practice.

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...to travel over the back fence, make its way into the market, and be passed around in the gossip circles of Jerusalem's religious elite.

What is at stake?

Acknowledge God's gift of salvation that is free of back-breaking add-ons.

The way you know that a religion is not from God: it comes with all kinds of rules and regulations.

Some, news about Cornelius and his household being saved, baptized, and filled with the Spirit spread quickly back to the Jerusalem Torah studies. That is all that was talked about at Shabat. Those who were the most disturbed by what had happened are identified as circumcised believers, the hardshell and we are never going to budge Jews.

¹ *The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.* ² *So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him* ³ *and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Some of Peter’s friends where not so quick to celebrate this new plan, new strategy of God who now offers salvation to Gentiles. A salvation that included all the same blessings that Peter, James, John, Mary and the other 120 received at Pentecost. What was offered at Pentecost and at Cornelius home is available to all today.

Activate daily the Holy Spirit’s gifts that are waiting to be poured out.

¹⁵ *“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Instead of a big celebration, what Peter met was the buzz saw of criticism. The word for criticism in the text is *dia-krino*, it is the idea of “to separate.” And that is what was going on, the religious world was separated into two groups of people-Jews favored by God and Gentiles hated by God.

And the charge against Peter is spelled out clearly... ³ *“You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

This statement was not an inquiry; it was designed to torpedo Peter with an accusation.

“You went into the home of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

They should have asked, (*different tone*) “how did it go Peter, did they open their hearts to Jesus Christ. That must have been cool, to be there for the Spirit’s outpouring. What was their baptism like?”

What does pork taste like? It tastes like chicken, says Peter.

What does shellfish taste like? It tastes like chicken, Peter announces.

All they were concerned about was, you hung out with them. Peter you are defiled. You need to go offer a sacrifice to God. Peter, you got like Gentile cooties all over you Peter.

Having fellowship with the Gentiles was a new experience for Jewish Christians, who had all their lives seen them as pagans, outsiders and unclean.

The only way a Gentile could have a right status with God and his preferred people the Jews, was to become Jewish by practice.

These Jewish hold outs, keepers of Jewish religious life and old guard required a strict adherence to the Law of Moses, the requirement of circumcision and adherence to a Mediterranean menu of dos and don’ts, are the same prejudices Peter was guilty of just days before.

The legalists were making a distinction between Jews and Gentiles after Peter had demonstrated that **“there is no difference in the eyes of God.”**

Peter’s whole experience with the activity of the Holy Spirit in the home of Cornelius was the declaration that all people regardless of race and religion are welcome into God’s family through repentance, surrender and trust in Jesus Christ as he atones for their sins.

So then, even to the Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life. (Acts 11:18b-NIV)

This issue of salvation by grace alone, would be under constant threat as many Jews would later attempt to proselytize and woo gentiles back into circumcision and obedience to the law. This is the harsh criticism that Paul declares against the Galatians when he says, “

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel —

⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1-NIV)

You would have thought, that when Peter returned to the mother church in Jerusalem the Jewish believers would have been ascetic about Christ’s grace and forgiveness coming to everyone.

Everywhere. At any time.

The early church has some adjustments to make. God’s original plan was that Israel becomes a light to the world, instead they became closed. The door was locked to the unclean. To Gentiles.

Many in the early church failed to experience God’s heart about who can be saved. God from the beginning chose the Jewish nation and his people to carry the message to the lost world and its availability of salvation for all.

Introduce Chad Gould, he came home to Christ and was welcome back to Christ not as a Gentile, failure, you have cooties, you sinned gravely and grossly, **we are glad you are home brother. Friend. Family.**

Now, those who were staunch hold outs for Jewish faith done Moses way, had seen no vision like Peter, had not heard the Lord’s voice sweeping away old prohibitions. They did not see the Holy Spirit arrive like at Pentecost. Speaking in tongues. Forgiveness of sins.

The idea of Peter going into unclean homes and eating nonkosher food with ceremonially unclean people made the hairs on the back of their sanctimonious necks stand up.

Having had little time to reflect and right in his journal about what had taken place in Caesarea, Peter said, The Spirit of God made me do it!

Peter describes what happened beginning in verse 4, *⁴ Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: ^{5a} “I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance I saw a vision ... Acts 11-NIV (vs 4)*

I went to Cornelious' house and "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning." Acts 11-NIV (vs 15)

My conclusion: ¹⁷*"So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11-NIV)*

After Peter presented his case for new creation by grace alone, guess what happened? The legalists, the holders of the chalice of Moses law, those who keep their flint knives always sharp, in case a circumcision needs to take place, they agreed with Peter.

This is as great a miracle as any up to this point. No grumbling. No griping. No second-guessing God. No muttering under their breath. No more opposition, in fact at the end of the talk a worship service broke out.

¹⁸*When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11-NIV)*

When you experience new life in Christ, new truth from God's word, new healings in your body, more answered prayer, and God's provision for your needs, all you can do is worship. They had no objections, and they began to praise God.

As Christ followers we are called on to radically accept others. The world judges based on background, skin color, economics, appearance, and age.

But we are to see everyone the way Jesus would see them. Just a little side note, Peter was now in the same hot water that Jesus often found himself. And in the end, God is willing to go to any length, even sacrifice for them by inviting Jesus to die and atone for their sins.

My guess, just my guess, I think what really frustrated the religious fandom of the day was the seemingly free access to heavens stadium of grace.

What was the theme of the worship, God has granted forgiveness because of repentance that leads to life. Peters' brothers begin to celebrate with him. Salvation has come to all people. And that salvation is offered in the form of forgiveness of sins.

I love this verse; *you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depth of the sea. (Micah 7:19b-NIV)*

God hurls our sins into the deepest ocean and puts out a no-fishing sign. Your sins are going glub, glub, glub while you go good-bye sins as you fly away to freedom. Who wants some sins to be stomped out of existence today? Jesus would offer sinners frequent invitations to dinner with him and his disciples. *"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:2b-NIV)*

Church at Antioch

While Peter is trying to convince Jews in Jerusalem, Jesus' message of grace is open to Gentiles, he tells them don't be surprised if Romans, Greeks, Sicilians, and other people groups start sitting in your synagogues. Make sure you adjust your membership teaching requirements.

Membership in the body of Christ is now based on salvation, and water baptism is the next step, and the work of the Holy Spirit is available to all in the form of speaking in tongues and access to all the gifts of the Spirit.

Now, 300 miles north, the Apostle Paul has joined forces with Barnabas, and they plan to spend a year teaching new Gentiles God's word, disciplining them in their new faith, water baptizing and mobilizing them to reach their family and friends.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Let's meet some of these followers of Jesus in the church of Antioch. These are Christians who were persecution-escapees who fled and stopped running in Antioch. Antioch was one of the most beautiful cities in the Roman empire and one of the largest with a population of over 500,000.

Antioch enjoyed a Mediterranean climate of balmy air and rose fragrances that filled the streets. This is possibly the home of Luke the author of Luke-Acts. Antioch was wealthy and people moved from all over the Roman world to share in its wealth. It was cosmopolitan in the arts, religion, and enjoyed global banking. Antioch was strictly pagan and filled with many temples. These temples featured ritual prostitution, the moral practices of those in Antioch were in the tank.

This is the first church where Gentile believers filled the pew and made up the leadership. The church grew so fast, that it was completely absent of traditional Jewish practices. Manners, clothing style and hair length, which was so important to Jews, was tossed out the window, for the sake of fellowship with Gentiles.

Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians ate together, worshipped together, studied God's word together and fellowshiped together. For the first time, Jews and Gentiles worshipped around a simple mutual faith in Jesus Christ as they blazed a trail that would become the model for Paul's many missionary journeys ahead.

Churches like Antioch would pop up all over the Roman world like Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatian, Philippi and eventually in Rome itself.

I see 3 blessings that were evident in the lives of those in the church at Antioch.

They lived in God's grace.

They studied God's word.

They were generous with God's money.

Allow others to see the grace of God in you.

²³ *When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, (Acts 11-NIV)*
You are saved by grace, but you serve in grace.

Grace is getting unlimited favor although you have done nothing to deserve it. Did you know? Grace is not enjoyed or even wanted by everyone. It disturbs so many. It seems too good to be true, or they would rather work for everything they get.

God's grace, when it is fully welcomed and deeply embraced, it transforms people and rearranges the human heart profoundly and permanently. Grace removes self-sufficiency, one rung of the ladder at a time. Plank by plank. Confidence in self and pride cannot co-exist and co-labor in a grace-filled heart.

God's grace when it finds a home in your heart, turns you into a gracious person. God's grace when you own it and it arrests you, turns you into a forgiving person. A quick to forgive type of person.

No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Every religion is a bartering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Christianity has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate. All religions say, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!"

On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world. And it all happens by grace. A grace created by God and freely given to man. Grace is a gift not an achievement.

Nobody-not Buddha or Mohamed or anyone else can offer grace. It can only be offered by God the Father whose son Jesus Christ died an atoning death and offers grace freely. Freely to all who believe and receive.

Grace means that there is nothing you can do to make God love you any **less**-not racism, not murder, not pornography, not stealing, not gluttony and not even betrayal. Grace means that God already loves you as much as an All-Forgiving and Inclusive God can possibly love.

And the opposite is true-there is nothing you can do to make God **love us more**.

Appreciate that God has given you Bible teachers to grow your faith.

^{26b} So, for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Solomon reminds us that God's word get us moving. We see this in *Eccl 12:11, it is like a goad and a firmly embedded nail*. God's word gets us moving and God's word is firmly embedded into our lives.

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails — given by one shepherd. (Ecclesiastes 12:11)

The Bible is more than a book of history, poetry, and stories of Jesus. The Bible can unleash God's power:

The word of God-gives life, builds faith, produces change, scares the devil, disables discouragement, dismembers pride, heals hurts, builds character, transforms pain, overcomes anxiety, it demolishes depression, activates miracles, infuses joy, invites hope, releases power, cleanses the mind,

Gives Eternal Life Hurray for God's word.

Accept your part in God's plan for giving to others.

²⁹ The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. (Acts 11-NIV)

¹³ Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. (1 Kings 17-NIV)

Remember this thought- Feed me first. Elijah is telling the widow to feed him first. **But**, first make a small loaf of bread for me...

Now tuck that away, feed me first. We need to learn that money does not have little legs, and it just gets up and runs away. Money does not have a soul.

Your money behaves because God is your source, and your job is your resource. God is your source; your earning potential is your resource.

Your bank is your resource. The government is your resource. Your dividends, stocks and retirement are your resources.

God is your source; Textron and teaching is your resource.

God is your source; truck driving and telemarketing is your resource.

God is your source; therapist and tailor is your resource.

God is your source; lawyering and laboring is your resource.

God is your source; army and amazon is your resource.

God is your source; baby sitting and baby delivering is your resource. Say it with me. I will say it first, then you!

God is your source, everything else is your resource.

Now, that is a head popper. This teaching is the core to managing your money. This teaching is essential to making your money behave. This teaching is essential to paying your bills.

In the Old Testament part of the bible, God as your source is the ground level to making your money behave.

So, here is my question (s) for Bethel Life Center, as we conclude,

...for Danice and me,

...for the leadership of BLC,

...for the body of believers who call this home, whether you gather weekly in person or for those who are on-line. I don't think I have ever suggested this kind of conclusion.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be racially inclusive – God's salvation.

Bethel's response: Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be racially inclusive in offering salvation to all.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be radically inviting – God's grace.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be radically inviting as I live out God's grace.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be responsible to invest daily in God's Word?

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be responsible for investing daily in God's Word.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be redemptively invested – giving.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be redemptively invested in giving my time, treasure, and talents for God's purposes in the earth.

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This issue of salvation by grace alone, would be under constant threat as many Jews would later attempt to proselytize and woo gentiles back into circumcision and obedience to the law. This is the harsh criticism that Paul declares against the Galatians when he says, “

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel —

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You would have thought, that when Peter returned to the mother church in Jerusalem the Jewish believers would have been ascetic about Christ’s grace and forgiveness coming to everyone.

Everywhere. At any time.

The early church has some adjustments to make. God’s original plan was that Israel becomes a light to the world, instead they became closed. The door was locked to the unclean. To Gentiles.

Many in the early church failed to experience God’s heart about who can be saved. God from the beginning chose the Jewish nation and his people to carry the message to the lost world and its availability of salvation for all.

Introduce Chad Gould, he came home to Christ and was welcome back to Christ not as a Gentile, failure, you have cooties, you sinned gravely and grossly, **we are glad you are home brother. Friend. Family.**

Now, those who were staunch hold outs for Jewish faith done Moses way, had seen no vision like Peter, had not heard the Lord’s voice sweeping away old prohibitions. They did not see the Holy Spirit arrive like at Pentecost. Speaking in tongues. Forgiveness of sins.

The idea of Peter going into unclean homes and eating nonkosher food with ceremonially unclean people made the hairs on the back of their sanctimonious necks stand up.

Having had little time to reflect and right in his journal about what had taken place in Caesarea, Peter said, The Spirit of God made me do it!

Peter describes what happened beginning in verse 4, *⁴ Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: ^{5a} “I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance I saw a vision ... Acts 11-NIV (vs 4)*

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My conclusion: ¹⁷*"So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11-NIV)*

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This is as great a miracle as any up to this point. No grumbling. No griping. No second-guessing God. No muttering under their breath. No more opposition, in fact at the end of the talk a worship service broke out.

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When you experience new life in Christ, new truth from God's word, new healings in your body, more answered prayer, and God's provision for your needs, all you can do is worship. They had no objections, and they began to praise God.

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My guess, just my guess, I think what really frustrated the religious fandom of the day was the seemingly free access to heavens stadium of grace.

What was the theme of the worship, God has granted forgiveness because of repentance that leads to life. Peters' brothers begin to celebrate with him. Salvation has come to all people. And that salvation is offered in the form of forgiveness of sins.

I love this verse; *you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depth of the sea. (Micah 7:19b-NIV)*

God hurls our sins into the deepest ocean and puts out a no-fishing sign. Your sins are going glub, glub, glub while you go good-bye sins as you fly away to freedom. Who wants some sins to be stomped out of existence today? Jesus would offer sinners frequent invitations to dinner with him and his disciples. *"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:2b-NIV)*

Church at Antioch

While Peter is trying to convince Jews in Jerusalem, Jesus' message of grace is open to Gentiles, he tells them don't be surprised if Romans, Greeks, Sicilians, and other people groups start sitting in your synagogues. Make sure you adjust your membership teaching requirements.

Membership in the body of Christ is now based on salvation, and water baptism is the next step, and the work of the Holy Spirit is available to all in the form of speaking in tongues and access to all the gifts of the Spirit.

Now, 300 miles north, the Apostle Paul has joined forces with Barnabas, and they plan to spend a year teaching new Gentiles God's word, disciplining them in their new faith, water baptizing and mobilizing them to reach their family and friends.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Let's meet some of these followers of Jesus in the church of Antioch. These are Christians who were persecution-escapees who fled and stopped running in Antioch. Antioch was one of the most beautiful cities in the Roman empire and one of the largest with a population of over 500,000.

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Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians ate together, worshipped together, studied God's word together and fellowshiped together. For the first time, Jews and Gentiles worshipped around a simple mutual faith in Jesus Christ as they blazed a trail that would become the model for Paul's many missionary journeys ahead.

Churches like Antioch would pop up all over the Roman world like Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatian, Philippi and eventually in Rome itself.

I see 3 blessings that were evident in the lives of those in the church at Antioch.

They lived in God's grace.

They studied God's word.

They were generous with God's money.

Allow others to see the grace of God in you.

²³ *When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, (Acts 11-NIV)*
You are saved by grace, but you serve in grace.

Grace is getting unlimited favor although you have done nothing to deserve it. Did you know? Grace is not enjoyed or even wanted by everyone. It disturbs so many. It seems too good to be true, or they would rather work for everything they get.

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No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Every religion is a bartering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Christianity has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate. All religions say, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!"

On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world. And it all happens by grace. A grace created by God and freely given to man. Grace is a gift not an achievement.

Nobody-not Buddha or Mohamed or anyone else can offer grace. It can only be offered by God the Father whose son Jesus Christ died an atoning death and offers grace freely. Freely to all who believe and receive.

Grace means that there is nothing you can do to make God love you any **less**-not racism, not murder, not pornography, not stealing, not gluttony and not even betrayal. Grace means that God already loves you as much as an All-Forgiving and Inclusive God can possibly love.

And the opposite is true-there is nothing you can do to make God **love us more**.

Appreciate that God has given you Bible teachers to grow your faith.

^{26b} So, for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Solomon reminds us that God's word get us moving. We see this in *Eccl 12:11, it is like a goad and a firmly embedded nail*. God's word gets us moving and God's word is firmly embedded into our lives.

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails — given by one shepherd. (Ecclesiastes 12:11)

The Bible is more than a book of history, poetry, and stories of Jesus. The Bible can unleash God's power:

The word of God-gives life, builds faith, produces change, scares the devil, disables discouragement, dismembers pride, heals hurts, builds character, transforms pain, overcomes anxiety, it demolishes depression, activates miracles, infuses joy, invites hope, releases power, cleanses the mind,

Gives Eternal Life Hurray for God's word.

Accept your part in God's plan for giving to others.

²⁹ The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. (Acts 11-NIV)

¹³ Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. (1 Kings 17-NIV)

Remember this thought- Feed me first. Elijah is telling the widow to feed him first. **But**, first make a small loaf of bread for me...

Now tuck that away, feed me first. We need to learn that money does not have little legs, and it just gets up and runs away. Money does not have a soul.

Your money behaves because God is your source, and your job is your resource. God is your source; your earning potential is your resource.

Your bank is your resource. The government is your resource. Your dividends, stocks and retirement are your resources.

God is your source; Textron and teaching is your resource.

God is your source; truck driving and telemarketing is your resource.

God is your source; therapist and tailor is your resource.

God is your source; lawyering and laboring is your resource.

God is your source; army and amazon is your resource.

God is your source; baby sitting and baby delivering is your resource. Say it with me. I will say it first, then you!

God is your source, everything else is your resource.

Now, that is a head popper. This teaching is the core to managing your money. This teaching is essential to making your money behave. This teaching is essential to paying your bills.

In the Old Testament part of the bible, God as your source is the ground level to making your money behave.

So, here is my question (s) for Bethel Life Center, as we conclude,

...for Danice and me,

...for the leadership of BLC,

...for the body of believers who call this home, whether you gather weekly in person or for those who are on-line. I don't think I have ever suggested this kind of conclusion.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be racially inclusive – God's salvation.

Bethel's response: Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be racially inclusive in offering salvation to all.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be radically inviting – God's grace.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be radically inviting as I live out God's grace.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be responsible to invest daily in God's Word?

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be responsible for investing daily in God's Word.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be redemptively invested – giving.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be redemptively invested in giving my time, treasure, and talents for God's purposes in the earth.

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

Acts 11

August 24, 2025

¹ The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³ and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." (Acts 11-NIV)

¹⁵ "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11-NIV)

She found Mr. Right and he found Cinderella. They fell in love. Got married and arrived at the hotel after a night of cake, celebration and conversations with family and friends that went on past midnight.

They arrived at the hotel and received the key from the attendant at the front desk. All was coming together just as the groom had planned. Beautiful hotel. Honeymoon suite. While they might have been tired, he purchased a romantic room with all the perfect elements.

When they entered the suite, the room was not quite like what the groom had expected.

The room was small. No freshly cut flowers. No Ghirardelli chocolate.

No romance lighting. And no romance smells. And no romance.

It did have a cramped bathroom, a fold out sofa bed with a lumpy mattress and noisy box springs.

The honeymoon suite was nothing like what Mr. Right had hoped for; and neither was the night.

The next morning the groom with a sore neck made his way to the manager's office to give the manager on duty a piece of his mind he could not do without. He vented. He vehemently told the manager; this is not what I paid for. Anger filled the air. The red-faced groom was stopped in his tracks when the manager asked one simple question:

"Did you open the door in your room?"

"Did you open the door in your room?"

Hanging his head and now quiet and embarrassed he acknowledged, **"that he had not."** Slowly he turned away and returned to the suite and found the door he had completely missed the night

before. His new bride was putting on make-up in the tiny, cramped bathroom, so he opened the door that he thought was a clothes closet.

Then he spotted the roses; fruit basket and chocolates nicely placed on the pillows. There was the spacious and romantic room he was promised with a downtown view. He pauses. Suddenly, she comes out of the bathroom and sees the door open and enters. They stand in silence for what seemed to be an eternity.

Both thought a room fit for a newly married couple.

Beautiful king bed, instead of a lumpy sofa bed.

A picturesque window of the downtown instead of a white wall.

A fresh breeze instead of stuffy air.

An elaborate bathroom, instead of a tight space with a toilet.

And they missed it all. How sad. How cramped. They lived their most important night of their life, far below what was rightfully theirs. (Lucado, page 185-186)

My question is a simple one, “why didn’t the groom get more curious? Why didn’t he get more courageous? Open a few doors. Check the place out.”

Why didn’t Mr., Right, go downstairs to the front desk and make it right? And get some answers?

Good question not just for a groom, but for each of us. You see so often followers of Jesus live in tight, cramped quarters of spiritual living. Saved yes, fully empowered to live and do the supernatural, no!

Instead of a romantic room, they settle for the anteroom of small spiritual living. No Holy Spirit power. No Holy Spirit gifts. And no Holy Spirit protection and provision as spelled out in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is waiting to unleash on every believer that asks, a honeymoon experience with Jesus Christ and beyond, in the power of the Holy Spirit that never ends.

Oh, life without full activation of the Holy Spirit, still has some good moments, but why settle for just some good moments with Jesus.

...when you can have an outrageous, courageous, and even audacious life like the one that Jesus said, “when I send the Holy Spirit to you, that is going to be a game changer.”

³⁰ *“Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4-NIV)

Stop settling for small, cramped quarters of life with Jesus when God has promised you a life in the full power of the Holy Spirit that has no limits. That allows you to operate in the full provision of the gifts of the Spirit.

Does something inside you long for more? If so, the Holy Spirit can satisfy that longing for a full life in Jesus Christ, in the daily power of the Holy Spirit. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, (Eph 5:18)

We are now moving into Acts 11. Peter returns to Jerusalem after his time in Caesarea at the home of Cornelius where he had stayed for several days. Peter had just experienced what God mentioned in the book of Acts would happen...I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.... even Gentile flesh.

⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ^{48a} So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. ^{48b} Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. (Acts 10-NIV)

Peter still has the after taste of barbecue pork and fresh shellfish in his mouth as Peter walks up to Jerusalem.

Peter is about to run into some Jews that are old school, they are not interested at first in Gentiles having the gospel and they certainly are not interested in changing centuries of dietary practice.

Peter's extended stay at Cornelius air-b-n-b, offered time for the news of what Peter had been up to...

...to travel over the back fence, make its way into the market, and be passed around in the gossip circles of Jerusalem's religious elite.

What is at stake?

Acknowledge God's gift of salvation that is free of back-breaking add-ons.

The way you know that a religion is not from God: it comes with all kinds of rules and regulations.

Some, news about Cornelius and his household being saved, baptized, and filled with the Spirit spread quickly back to the Jerusalem Torah studies. That is all that was talked about at Shabat. Those who were the most disturbed by what had happened are identified as circumcised believers, the hardshell and we are never going to budge Jews.

¹ *The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.* ² *So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him* ³ *and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Some of Peter’s friends where not so quick to celebrate this new plan, new strategy of God who now offers salvation to Gentiles. A salvation that included all the same blessings that Peter, James, John, Mary and the other 120 received at Pentecost. What was offered at Pentecost and at Cornelius home is available to all today.

Activate daily the Holy Spirit’s gifts that are waiting to be poured out.

¹⁵ *“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Instead of a big celebration, what Peter met was the buzz saw of criticism. The word for criticism in the text is *dia-krino*, it is the idea of “to separate.” And that is what was going on, the religious world was separated into two groups of people-Jews favored by God and Gentiles hated by God.

And the charge against Peter is spelled out clearly... ³ *“You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

This statement was not an inquiry; it was designed to torpedo Peter with an accusation.

“You went into the home of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

They should have asked, (*different tone*) “how did it go Peter, did they open their hearts to Jesus Christ. That must have been cool, to be there for the Spirit’s outpouring. What was their baptism like?”

What does pork taste like? It tastes like chicken, says Peter.

What does shellfish taste like? It tastes like chicken, Peter announces.

All they were concerned about was, you hung out with them. Peter you are defiled. You need to go offer a sacrifice to God. Peter, you got like Gentile cooties all over you Peter.

Having fellowship with the Gentiles was a new experience for Jewish Christians, who had all their lives seen them as pagans, outsiders and unclean.

The only way a Gentile could have a right status with God and his preferred people the Jews, was to become Jewish by practice.

These Jewish hold outs, keepers of Jewish religious life and old guard required a strict adherence to the Law of Moses, the requirement of circumcision and adherence to a Mediterranean menu of dos and don’ts, are the same prejudices Peter was guilty of just days before.

The legalists were making a distinction between Jews and Gentiles after Peter had demonstrated that **“there is no difference in the eyes of God.”**

Peter’s whole experience with the activity of the Holy Spirit in the home of Cornelius was the declaration that all people regardless of race and religion are welcome into God’s family through repentance, surrender and trust in Jesus Christ as he atones for their sins.

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^{26b} So, for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Solomon reminds us that God's word get us moving. We see this in *Eccl 12:11, it is like a goad and a firmly embedded nail*. God's word gets us moving and God's word is firmly embedded into our lives.

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails — given by one shepherd. (Ecclesiastes 12:11)

The Bible is more than a book of history, poetry, and stories of Jesus. The Bible can unleash God's power:

The word of God-gives life, builds faith, produces change, scares the devil, disables discouragement, dismembers pride, heals hurts, builds character, transforms pain, overcomes anxiety, it demolishes depression, activates miracles, infuses joy, invites hope, releases power, cleanses the mind,

Gives Eternal Life Hurray for God's word.

Accept your part in God's plan for giving to others.

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Remember this thought- Feed me first. Elijah is telling the widow to feed him first. **But**, first make a small loaf of bread for me...

Now tuck that away, feed me first. We need to learn that money does not have little legs, and it just gets up and runs away. Money does not have a soul.

Your money behaves because God is your source, and your job is your resource. God is your source; your earning potential is your resource.

Your bank is your resource. The government is your resource. Your dividends, stocks and retirement are your resources.

God is your source; Textron and teaching is your resource.

God is your source; truck driving and telemarketing is your resource.

God is your source; therapist and tailor is your resource.

God is your source; lawyering and laboring is your resource.

God is your source; army and amazon is your resource.

God is your source; baby sitting and baby delivering is your resource. Say it with me. I will say it first, then you!

God is your source, everything else is your resource.

Now, that is a head popper. This teaching is the core to managing your money. This teaching is essential to making your money behave. This teaching is essential to paying your bills.

In the Old Testament part of the bible, God as your source is the ground level to making your money behave.

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Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be racially inclusive – God's salvation.

Bethel's response: Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be racially inclusive in offering salvation to all.

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The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

Acts 11

August 24, 2025

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¹⁵ "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11-NIV)

She found Mr. Right and he found Cinderella. They fell in love. Got married and arrived at the hotel after a night of cake, celebration and conversations with family and friends that went on past midnight.

They arrived at the hotel and received the key from the attendant at the front desk. All was coming together just as the groom had planned. Beautiful hotel. Honeymoon suite. While they might have been tired, he purchased a romantic room with all the perfect elements.

When they entered the suite, the room was not quite like what the groom had expected.

The room was small. No freshly cut flowers. No Ghirardelli chocolate.

No romance lighting. And no romance smells. And no romance.

It did have a cramped bathroom, a fold out sofa bed with a lumpy mattress and noisy box springs.

The honeymoon suite was nothing like what Mr. Right had hoped for; and neither was the night.

The next morning the groom with a sore neck made his way to the manager's office to give the manager on duty a piece of his mind he could not do without. He vented. He vehemently told the manager; this is not what I paid for. Anger filled the air. The red-faced groom was stopped in his tracks when the manager asked one simple question:

"Did you open the door in your room?"

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Hanging his head and now quiet and embarrassed he acknowledged, **"that he had not."** Slowly he turned away and returned to the suite and found the door he had completely missed the night

before. His new bride was putting on make-up in the tiny, cramped bathroom, so he opened the door that he thought was a clothes closet.

Then he spotted the roses; fruit basket and chocolates nicely placed on the pillows. There was the spacious and romantic room he was promised with a downtown view. He pauses. Suddenly, she comes out of the bathroom and sees the door open and enters. They stand in silence for what seemed to be an eternity.

Both thought a room fit for a newly married couple.

Beautiful king bed, instead of a lumpy sofa bed.

A picturesque window of the downtown instead of a white wall.

A fresh breeze instead of stuffy air.

An elaborate bathroom, instead of a tight space with a toilet.

And they missed it all. How sad. How cramped. They lived their most important night of their life, far below what was rightfully theirs. (Lucado, page 185-186)

My question is a simple one, “why didn’t the groom get more curious? Why didn’t he get more courageous? Open a few doors. Check the place out.”

Why didn’t Mr., Right, go downstairs to the front desk and make it right? And get some answers?

Good question not just for a groom, but for each of us. You see so often followers of Jesus live in tight, cramped quarters of spiritual living. Saved yes, fully empowered to live and do the supernatural, no!

Instead of a romantic room, they settle for the anteroom of small spiritual living. No Holy Spirit power. No Holy Spirit gifts. And no Holy Spirit protection and provision as spelled out in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is waiting to unleash on every believer that asks, a honeymoon experience with Jesus Christ and beyond, in the power of the Holy Spirit that never ends.

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...when you can have an outrageous, courageous, and even audacious life like the one that Jesus said, “when I send the Holy Spirit to you, that is going to be a game changer.”

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³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4-NIV)

Stop settling for small, cramped quarters of life with Jesus when God has promised you a life in the full power of the Holy Spirit that has no limits. That allows you to operate in the full provision of the gifts of the Spirit.

Does something inside you long for more? If so, the Holy Spirit can satisfy that longing for a full life in Jesus Christ, in the daily power of the Holy Spirit. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, (Eph 5:18)

We are now moving into Acts 11. Peter returns to Jerusalem after his time in Caesarea at the home of Cornelius where he had stayed for several days. Peter had just experienced what God mentioned in the book of Acts would happen...I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.... even Gentile flesh.

⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ^{48a} So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. ^{48b} Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. (Acts 10-NIV)

Peter still has the after taste of barbecue pork and fresh shellfish in his mouth as Peter walks up to Jerusalem.

Peter is about to run into some Jews that are old school, they are not interested at first in Gentiles having the gospel and they certainly are not interested in changing centuries of dietary practice.

Peter's extended stay at Cornelius air-b-n-b, offered time for the news of what Peter had been up to...

...to travel over the back fence, make its way into the market, and be passed around in the gossip circles of Jerusalem's religious elite.

What is at stake?

Acknowledge God's gift of salvation that is free of back-breaking add-ons.

The way you know that a religion is not from God: it comes with all kinds of rules and regulations.

Some, news about Cornelius and his household being saved, baptized, and filled with the Spirit spread quickly back to the Jerusalem Torah studies. That is all that was talked about at Shabat. Those who were the most disturbed by what had happened are identified as circumcised believers, the hardshell and we are never going to budge Jews.

¹ *The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.* ² *So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him* ³ *and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Some of Peter’s friends where not so quick to celebrate this new plan, new strategy of God who now offers salvation to Gentiles. A salvation that included all the same blessings that Peter, James, John, Mary and the other 120 received at Pentecost. What was offered at Pentecost and at Cornelius home is available to all today.

Activate daily the Holy Spirit’s gifts that are waiting to be poured out.

¹⁵ *“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Instead of a big celebration, what Peter met was the buzz saw of criticism. The word for criticism in the text is *dia-krino*, it is the idea of “to separate.” And that is what was going on, the religious world was separated into two groups of people-Jews favored by God and Gentiles hated by God.

And the charge against Peter is spelled out clearly... ³ *“You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

This statement was not an inquiry; it was designed to torpedo Peter with an accusation.

“You went into the home of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

They should have asked, (*different tone*) “how did it go Peter, did they open their hearts to Jesus Christ. That must have been cool, to be there for the Spirit’s outpouring. What was their baptism like?”

What does pork taste like? It tastes like chicken, says Peter.

What does shellfish taste like? It tastes like chicken, Peter announces.

All they were concerned about was, you hung out with them. Peter you are defiled. You need to go offer a sacrifice to God. Peter, you got like Gentile cooties all over you Peter.

Having fellowship with the Gentiles was a new experience for Jewish Christians, who had all their lives seen them as pagans, outsiders and unclean.

The only way a Gentile could have a right status with God and his preferred people the Jews, was to become Jewish by practice.

These Jewish hold outs, keepers of Jewish religious life and old guard required a strict adherence to the Law of Moses, the requirement of circumcision and adherence to a Mediterranean menu of dos and don’ts, are the same prejudices Peter was guilty of just days before.

The legalists were making a distinction between Jews and Gentiles after Peter had demonstrated that **“there is no difference in the eyes of God.”**

Peter’s whole experience with the activity of the Holy Spirit in the home of Cornelius was the declaration that all people regardless of race and religion are welcome into God’s family through repentance, surrender and trust in Jesus Christ as he atones for their sins.

So then, even to the Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life. (Acts 11:18b-NIV)

This issue of salvation by grace alone, would be under constant threat as many Jews would later attempt to proselytize and woo gentiles back into circumcision and obedience to the law. This is the harsh criticism that Paul declares against the Galatians when he says, “

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel —

⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1-NIV)

You would have thought, that when Peter returned to the mother church in Jerusalem the Jewish believers would have been ascetic about Christ’s grace and forgiveness coming to everyone.

Everywhere. At any time.

The early church has some adjustments to make. God’s original plan was that Israel becomes a light to the world, instead they became closed. The door was locked to the unclean. To Gentiles.

Many in the early church failed to experience God’s heart about who can be saved. God from the beginning chose the Jewish nation and his people to carry the message to the lost world and its availability of salvation for all.

Introduce Chad Gould, he came home to Christ and was welcome back to Christ not as a Gentile, failure, you have cooties, you sinned gravely and grossly, **we are glad you are home brother. Friend. Family.**

Now, those who were staunch hold outs for Jewish faith done Moses way, had seen no vision like Peter, had not heard the Lord’s voice sweeping away old prohibitions. They did not see the Holy Spirit arrive like at Pentecost. Speaking in tongues. Forgiveness of sins.

The idea of Peter going into unclean homes and eating nonkosher food with ceremonially unclean people made the hairs on the back of their sanctimonious necks stand up.

Having had little time to reflect and right in his journal about what had taken place in Caesarea, Peter said, The Spirit of God made me do it!

Peter describes what happened beginning in verse 4, *⁴ Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: ^{5a} “I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance I saw a vision ... Acts 11-NIV (vs 4)*

I went to Cornelious' house and "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning." Acts 11-NIV (vs 15)

My conclusion: ¹⁷*"So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11-NIV)*

After Peter presented his case for new creation by grace alone, guess what happened? The legalists, the holders of the chalice of Moses law, those who keep their flint knives always sharp, in case a circumcision needs to take place, they agreed with Peter.

This is as great a miracle as any up to this point. No grumbling. No griping. No second-guessing God. No muttering under their breath. No more opposition, in fact at the end of the talk a worship service broke out.

¹⁸*When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11-NIV)*

When you experience new life in Christ, new truth from God's word, new healings in your body, more answered prayer, and God's provision for your needs, all you can do is worship. They had no objections, and they began to praise God.

As Christ followers we are called on to radically accept others. The world judges based on background, skin color, economics, appearance, and age.

But we are to see everyone the way Jesus would see them. Just a little side note, Peter was now in the same hot water that Jesus often found himself. And in the end, God is willing to go to any length, even sacrifice for them by inviting Jesus to die and atone for their sins.

My guess, just my guess, I think what really frustrated the religious fandom of the day was the seemingly free access to heavens stadium of grace.

What was the theme of the worship, God has granted forgiveness because of repentance that leads to life. Peters' brothers begin to celebrate with him. Salvation has come to all people. And that salvation is offered in the form of forgiveness of sins.

I love this verse; *you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depth of the sea. (Micah 7:19b-NIV)*

God hurls our sins into the deepest ocean and puts out a no-fishing sign. Your sins are going glub, glub, glub while you go good-bye sins as you fly away to freedom. Who wants some sins to be stomped out of existence today? Jesus would offer sinners frequent invitations to dinner with him and his disciples. *"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:2b-NIV)*

Church at Antioch

While Peter is trying to convince Jews in Jerusalem, Jesus' message of grace is open to Gentiles, he tells them don't be surprised if Romans, Greeks, Sicilians, and other people groups start sitting in your synagogues. Make sure you adjust your membership teaching requirements.

Membership in the body of Christ is now based on salvation, and water baptism is the next step, and the work of the Holy Spirit is available to all in the form of speaking in tongues and access to all the gifts of the Spirit.

Now, 300 miles north, the Apostle Paul has joined forces with Barnabas, and they plan to spend a year teaching new Gentiles God's word, disciplining them in their new faith, water baptizing and mobilizing them to reach their family and friends.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Let's meet some of these followers of Jesus in the church of Antioch. These are Christians who were persecution-escapees who fled and stopped running in Antioch. Antioch was one of the most beautiful cities in the Roman empire and one of the largest with a population of over 500,000.

Antioch enjoyed a Mediterranean climate of balmy air and rose fragrances that filled the streets. This is possibly the home of Luke the author of Luke-Acts. Antioch was wealthy and people moved from all over the Roman world to share in its wealth. It was cosmopolitan in the arts, religion, and enjoyed global banking. Antioch was strictly pagan and filled with many temples. These temples featured ritual prostitution, the moral practices of those in Antioch were in the tank.

This is the first church where Gentile believers filled the pew and made up the leadership. The church grew so fast, that it was completely absent of traditional Jewish practices. Manners, clothing style and hair length, which was so important to Jews, was tossed out the window, for the sake of fellowship with Gentiles.

Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians ate together, worshipped together, studied God's word together and fellowshiped together. For the first time, Jews and Gentiles worshipped around a simple mutual faith in Jesus Christ as they blazed a trail that would become the model for Paul's many missionary journeys ahead.

Churches like Antioch would pop up all over the Roman world like Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatian, Philippi and eventually in Rome itself.

I see 3 blessings that were evident in the lives of those in the church at Antioch.

They lived in God's grace.

They studied God's word.

They were generous with God's money.

Allow others to see the grace of God in you.

²³ *When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, (Acts 11-NIV)*
You are saved by grace, but you serve in grace.

Grace is getting unlimited favor although you have done nothing to deserve it. Did you know? Grace is not enjoyed or even wanted by everyone. It disturbs so many. It seems too good to be true, or they would rather work for everything they get.

God's grace, when it is fully welcomed and deeply embraced, it transforms people and rearranges the human heart profoundly and permanently. Grace removes self-sufficiency, one rung of the ladder at a time. Plank by plank. Confidence in self and pride cannot co-exist and co-labor in a grace-filled heart.

God's grace when it finds a home in your heart, turns you into a gracious person. God's grace when you own it and it arrests you, turns you into a forgiving person. A quick to forgive type of person.

No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Every religion is a bartering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Christianity has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate. All religions say, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!"

On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world. And it all happens by grace. A grace created by God and freely given to man. Grace is a gift not an achievement.

Nobody-not Buddha or Mohamed or anyone else can offer grace. It can only be offered by God the Father whose son Jesus Christ died an atoning death and offers grace freely. Freely to all who believe and receive.

Grace means that there is nothing you can do to make God love you any **less**-not racism, not murder, not pornography, not stealing, not gluttony and not even betrayal. Grace means that God already loves you as much as an All-Forgiving and Inclusive God can possibly love.

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Peter is about to run into some Jews that are old school, they are not interested at first in Gentiles having the gospel and they certainly are not interested in changing centuries of dietary practice.

Peter's extended stay at Cornelius air-b-n-b, offered time for the news of what Peter had been up to...

...to travel over the back fence, make its way into the market, and be passed around in the gossip circles of Jerusalem's religious elite.

What is at stake?

Acknowledge God's gift of salvation that is free of back-breaking add-ons.

The way you know that a religion is not from God: it comes with all kinds of rules and regulations.

Some, news about Cornelius and his household being saved, baptized, and filled with the Spirit spread quickly back to the Jerusalem Torah studies. That is all that was talked about at Shabat. Those who were the most disturbed by what had happened are identified as circumcised believers, the hardshell and we are never going to budge Jews.

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Activate daily the Holy Spirit’s gifts that are waiting to be poured out.

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Instead of a big celebration, what Peter met was the buzz saw of criticism. The word for criticism in the text is *dia-krino*, it is the idea of “to separate.” And that is what was going on, the religious world was separated into two groups of people-Jews favored by God and Gentiles hated by God.

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What does pork taste like? It tastes like chicken, says Peter.

What does shellfish taste like? It tastes like chicken, Peter announces.

All they were concerned about was, you hung out with them. Peter you are defiled. You need to go offer a sacrifice to God. Peter, you got like Gentile cooties all over you Peter.

Having fellowship with the Gentiles was a new experience for Jewish Christians, who had all their lives seen them as pagans, outsiders and unclean.

The only way a Gentile could have a right status with God and his preferred people the Jews, was to become Jewish by practice.

These Jewish hold outs, keepers of Jewish religious life and old guard required a strict adherence to the Law of Moses, the requirement of circumcision and adherence to a Mediterranean menu of dos and don’ts, are the same prejudices Peter was guilty of just days before.

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Peter’s whole experience with the activity of the Holy Spirit in the home of Cornelius was the declaration that all people regardless of race and religion are welcome into God’s family through repentance, surrender and trust in Jesus Christ as he atones for their sins.

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You would have thought, that when Peter returned to the mother church in Jerusalem the Jewish believers would have been ascetic about Christ’s grace and forgiveness coming to everyone.

Everywhere. At any time.

The early church has some adjustments to make. God’s original plan was that Israel becomes a light to the world, instead they became closed. The door was locked to the unclean. To Gentiles.

Many in the early church failed to experience God’s heart about who can be saved. God from the beginning chose the Jewish nation and his people to carry the message to the lost world and its availability of salvation for all.

Introduce Chad Gould, he came home to Christ and was welcome back to Christ not as a Gentile, failure, you have cooties, you sinned gravely and grossly, **we are glad you are home brother. Friend. Family.**

Now, those who were staunch hold outs for Jewish faith done Moses way, had seen no vision like Peter, had not heard the Lord’s voice sweeping away old prohibitions. They did not see the Holy Spirit arrive like at Pentecost. Speaking in tongues. Forgiveness of sins.

The idea of Peter going into unclean homes and eating nonkosher food with ceremonially unclean people made the hairs on the back of their sanctimonious necks stand up.

Having had little time to reflect and right in his journal about what had taken place in Caesarea, Peter said, The Spirit of God made me do it!

Peter describes what happened beginning in verse 4, *⁴ Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: ^{5a} “I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance I saw a vision ... Acts 11-NIV (vs 4)*

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My conclusion: ¹⁷*"So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11-NIV)*

After Peter presented his case for new creation by grace alone, guess what happened? The legalists, the holders of the chalice of Moses law, those who keep their flint knives always sharp, in case a circumcision needs to take place, they agreed with Peter.

This is as great a miracle as any up to this point. No grumbling. No griping. No second-guessing God. No muttering under their breath. No more opposition, in fact at the end of the talk a worship service broke out.

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When you experience new life in Christ, new truth from God's word, new healings in your body, more answered prayer, and God's provision for your needs, all you can do is worship. They had no objections, and they began to praise God.

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My guess, just my guess, I think what really frustrated the religious fandom of the day was the seemingly free access to heavens stadium of grace.

What was the theme of the worship, God has granted forgiveness because of repentance that leads to life. Peters' brothers begin to celebrate with him. Salvation has come to all people. And that salvation is offered in the form of forgiveness of sins.

I love this verse; *you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depth of the sea. (Micah 7:19b-NIV)*

God hurls our sins into the deepest ocean and puts out a no-fishing sign. Your sins are going glub, glub, glub while you go good-bye sins as you fly away to freedom. Who wants some sins to be stomped out of existence today? Jesus would offer sinners frequent invitations to dinner with him and his disciples. *"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:2b-NIV)*

Church at Antioch

While Peter is trying to convince Jews in Jerusalem, Jesus' message of grace is open to Gentiles, he tells them don't be surprised if Romans, Greeks, Sicilians, and other people groups start sitting in your synagogues. Make sure you adjust your membership teaching requirements.

Membership in the body of Christ is now based on salvation, and water baptism is the next step, and the work of the Holy Spirit is available to all in the form of speaking in tongues and access to all the gifts of the Spirit.

Now, 300 miles north, the Apostle Paul has joined forces with Barnabas, and they plan to spend a year teaching new Gentiles God's word, disciplining them in their new faith, water baptizing and mobilizing them to reach their family and friends.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Let's meet some of these followers of Jesus in the church of Antioch. These are Christians who were persecution-escapees who fled and stopped running in Antioch. Antioch was one of the most beautiful cities in the Roman empire and one of the largest with a population of over 500,000.

Antioch enjoyed a Mediterranean climate of balmy air and rose fragrances that filled the streets. This is possibly the home of Luke the author of Luke-Acts. Antioch was wealthy and people moved from all over the Roman world to share in its wealth. It was cosmopolitan in the arts, religion, and enjoyed global banking. Antioch was strictly pagan and filled with many temples. These temples featured ritual prostitution, the moral practices of those in Antioch were in the tank.

This is the first church where Gentile believers filled the pew and made up the leadership. The church grew so fast, that it was completely absent of traditional Jewish practices. Manners, clothing style and hair length, which was so important to Jews, was tossed out the window, for the sake of fellowship with Gentiles.

Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians ate together, worshipped together, studied God's word together and fellowshiped together. For the first time, Jews and Gentiles worshipped around a simple mutual faith in Jesus Christ as they blazed a trail that would become the model for Paul's many missionary journeys ahead.

Churches like Antioch would pop up all over the Roman world like Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatian, Philippi and eventually in Rome itself.

I see 3 blessings that were evident in the lives of those in the church at Antioch.

They lived in God's grace.

They studied God's word.

They were generous with God's money.

Allow others to see the grace of God in you.

²³ *When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, (Acts 11-NIV)*
You are saved by grace, but you serve in grace.

Grace is getting unlimited favor although you have done nothing to deserve it. Did you know? Grace is not enjoyed or even wanted by everyone. It disturbs so many. It seems too good to be true, or they would rather work for everything they get.

God's grace, when it is fully welcomed and deeply embraced, it transforms people and rearranges the human heart profoundly and permanently. Grace removes self-sufficiency, one rung of the ladder at a time. Plank by plank. Confidence in self and pride cannot co-exist and co-labor in a grace-filled heart.

God's grace when it finds a home in your heart, turns you into a gracious person. God's grace when you own it and it arrests you, turns you into a forgiving person. A quick to forgive type of person.

No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Every religion is a bartering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Christianity has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate. All religions say, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!"

On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world. And it all happens by grace. A grace created by God and freely given to man. Grace is a gift not an achievement.

Nobody-not Buddha or Mohamed or anyone else can offer grace. It can only be offered by God the Father whose son Jesus Christ died an atoning death and offers grace freely. Freely to all who believe and receive.

Grace means that there is nothing you can do to make God love you any **less**-not racism, not murder, not pornography, not stealing, not gluttony and not even betrayal. Grace means that God already loves you as much as an All-Forgiving and Inclusive God can possibly love.

And the opposite is true-there is nothing you can do to make God **love us more**.

Appreciate that God has given you Bible teachers to grow your faith.

^{26b} So, for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Solomon reminds us that God's word get us moving. We see this in *Eccl 12:11, it is like a goad and a firmly embedded nail*. God's word gets us moving and God's word is firmly embedded into our lives.

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails — given by one shepherd. (Ecclesiastes 12:11)

The Bible is more than a book of history, poetry, and stories of Jesus. The Bible can unleash God's power:

The word of God-gives life, builds faith, produces change, scares the devil, disables discouragement, dismembers pride, heals hurts, builds character, transforms pain, overcomes anxiety, it demolishes depression, activates miracles, infuses joy, invites hope, releases power, cleanses the mind,

Gives Eternal Life Hurray for God's word.

Accept your part in God's plan for giving to others.

²⁹ The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. (Acts 11-NIV)

¹³ Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. (1 Kings 17-NIV)

Remember this thought- Feed me first. Elijah is telling the widow to feed him first. **But**, first make a small loaf of bread for me...

Now tuck that away, feed me first. We need to learn that money does not have little legs, and it just gets up and runs away. Money does not have a soul.

Your money behaves because God is your source, and your job is your resource. God is your source; your earning potential is your resource.

Your bank is your resource. The government is your resource. Your dividends, stocks and retirement are your resources.

God is your source; Textron and teaching is your resource.

God is your source; truck driving and telemarketing is your resource.

God is your source; therapist and tailor is your resource.

God is your source; lawyering and laboring is your resource.

God is your source; army and amazon is your resource.

God is your source; baby sitting and baby delivering is your resource. Say it with me. I will say it first, then you!

God is your source, everything else is your resource.

Now, that is a head popper. This teaching is the core to managing your money. This teaching is essential to making your money behave. This teaching is essential to paying your bills.

In the Old Testament part of the bible, God as your source is the ground level to making your money behave.

So, here is my question (s) for Bethel Life Center, as we conclude,

...for Danice and me,

...for the leadership of BLC,

...for the body of believers who call this home, whether you gather weekly in person or for those who are on-line. I don't think I have ever suggested this kind of conclusion.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be racially inclusive – God's salvation.

Bethel's response: Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be racially inclusive in offering salvation to all.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be radically inviting – God's grace.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be radically inviting as I live out God's grace.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be responsible to invest daily in God's Word?

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be responsible for investing daily in God's Word.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be redemptively invested – giving.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be redemptively invested in giving my time, treasure, and talents for God's purposes in the earth.

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

Acts 11

August 24, 2025

¹ The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³ and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." (Acts 11-NIV)

¹⁵ "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11-NIV)

She found Mr. Right and he found Cinderella. They fell in love. Got married and arrived at the hotel after a night of cake, celebration and conversations with family and friends that went on past midnight.

They arrived at the hotel and received the key from the attendant at the front desk. All was coming together just as the groom had planned. Beautiful hotel. Honeymoon suite. While they might have been tired, he purchased a romantic room with all the perfect elements.

When they entered the suite, the room was not quite like what the groom had expected.

The room was small. No freshly cut flowers. No Ghirardelli chocolate.

No romance lighting. And no romance smells. And no romance.

It did have a cramped bathroom, a fold out sofa bed with a lumpy mattress and noisy box springs.

The honeymoon suite was nothing like what Mr. Right had hoped for; and neither was the night.

The next morning the groom with a sore neck made his way to the manager's office to give the manager on duty a piece of his mind he could not do without. He vented. He vehemently told the manager; this is not what I paid for. Anger filled the air. The red-faced groom was stopped in his tracks when the manager asked one simple question:

"Did you open the door in your room?"

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Hanging his head and now quiet and embarrassed he acknowledged, **"that he had not."** Slowly he turned away and returned to the suite and found the door he had completely missed the night

before. His new bride was putting on make-up in the tiny, cramped bathroom, so he opened the door that he thought was a clothes closet.

Then he spotted the roses; fruit basket and chocolates nicely placed on the pillows. There was the spacious and romantic room he was promised with a downtown view. He pauses. Suddenly, she comes out of the bathroom and sees the door open and enters. They stand in silence for what seemed to be an eternity.

Both thought a room fit for a newly married couple.

Beautiful king bed, instead of a lumpy sofa bed.

A picturesque window of the downtown instead of a white wall.

A fresh breeze instead of stuffy air.

An elaborate bathroom, instead of a tight space with a toilet.

And they missed it all. How sad. How cramped. They lived their most important night of their life, far below what was rightfully theirs. (Lucado, page 185-186)

My question is a simple one, “why didn’t the groom get more curious? Why didn’t he get more courageous? Open a few doors. Check the place out.”

Why didn’t Mr., Right, go downstairs to the front desk and make it right? And get some answers?

Good question not just for a groom, but for each of us. You see so often followers of Jesus live in tight, cramped quarters of spiritual living. Saved yes, fully empowered to live and do the supernatural, no!

Instead of a romantic room, they settle for the anteroom of small spiritual living. No Holy Spirit power. No Holy Spirit gifts. And no Holy Spirit protection and provision as spelled out in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is waiting to unleash on every believer that asks, a honeymoon experience with Jesus Christ and beyond, in the power of the Holy Spirit that never ends.

Oh, life without full activation of the Holy Spirit, still has some good moments, but why settle for just some good moments with Jesus.

...when you can have an outrageous, courageous, and even audacious life like the one that Jesus said, “when I send the Holy Spirit to you, that is going to be a game changer.”

³⁰ *“Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4-NIV)

Stop settling for small, cramped quarters of life with Jesus when God has promised you a life in the full power of the Holy Spirit that has no limits. That allows you to operate in the full provision of the gifts of the Spirit.

Does something inside you long for more? If so, the Holy Spirit can satisfy that longing for a full life in Jesus Christ, in the daily power of the Holy Spirit. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, (Eph 5:18)

We are now moving into Acts 11. Peter returns to Jerusalem after his time in Caesarea at the home of Cornelius where he had stayed for several days. Peter had just experienced what God mentioned in the book of Acts would happen...I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.... even Gentile flesh.

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²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Let's meet some of these followers of Jesus in the church of Antioch. These are Christians who were persecution-escapees who fled and stopped running in Antioch. Antioch was one of the most beautiful cities in the Roman empire and one of the largest with a population of over 500,000.

Antioch enjoyed a Mediterranean climate of balmy air and rose fragrances that filled the streets. This is possibly the home of Luke the author of Luke-Acts. Antioch was wealthy and people moved from all over the Roman world to share in its wealth. It was cosmopolitan in the arts, religion, and enjoyed global banking. Antioch was strictly pagan and filled with many temples. These temples featured ritual prostitution, the moral practices of those in Antioch were in the tank.

This is the first church where Gentile believers filled the pew and made up the leadership. The church grew so fast, that it was completely absent of traditional Jewish practices. Manners, clothing style and hair length, which was so important to Jews, was tossed out the window, for the sake of fellowship with Gentiles.

Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians ate together, worshipped together, studied God's word together and fellowshiped together. For the first time, Jews and Gentiles worshipped around a simple mutual faith in Jesus Christ as they blazed a trail that would become the model for Paul's many missionary journeys ahead.

Churches like Antioch would pop up all over the Roman world like Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatian, Philippi and eventually in Rome itself.

I see 3 blessings that were evident in the lives of those in the church at Antioch.

They lived in God's grace.

They studied God's word.

They were generous with God's money.

Allow others to see the grace of God in you.

²³ *When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, (Acts 11-NIV)*
You are saved by grace, but you serve in grace.

Grace is getting unlimited favor although you have done nothing to deserve it. Did you know? Grace is not enjoyed or even wanted by everyone. It disturbs so many. It seems too good to be true, or they would rather work for everything they get.

God's grace, when it is fully welcomed and deeply embraced, it transforms people and rearranges the human heart profoundly and permanently. Grace removes self-sufficiency, one rung of the ladder at a time. Plank by plank. Confidence in self and pride cannot co-exist and co-labor in a grace-filled heart.

God's grace when it finds a home in your heart, turns you into a gracious person. God's grace when you own it and it arrests you, turns you into a forgiving person. A quick to forgive type of person.

No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Every religion is a bartering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

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On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world. And it all happens by grace. A grace created by God and freely given to man. Grace is a gift not an achievement.

Nobody-not Buddha or Mohamed or anyone else can offer grace. It can only be offered by God the Father whose son Jesus Christ died an atoning death and offers grace freely. Freely to all who believe and receive.

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^{26b} So, for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Solomon reminds us that God's word get us moving. We see this in *Eccl 12:11, it is like a goad and a firmly embedded nail*. God's word gets us moving and God's word is firmly embedded into our lives.

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails — given by one shepherd. (Ecclesiastes 12:11)

The Bible is more than a book of history, poetry, and stories of Jesus. The Bible can unleash God's power:

The word of God-gives life, builds faith, produces change, scares the devil, disables discouragement, dismembers pride, heals hurts, builds character, transforms pain, overcomes anxiety, it demolishes depression, activates miracles, infuses joy, invites hope, releases power, cleanses the mind,

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Accept your part in God's plan for giving to others.

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Remember this thought- Feed me first. Elijah is telling the widow to feed him first. **But**, first make a small loaf of bread for me...

Now tuck that away, feed me first. We need to learn that money does not have little legs, and it just gets up and runs away. Money does not have a soul.

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God is your source; Textron and teaching is your resource.

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God is your source; baby sitting and baby delivering is your resource. Say it with me. I will say it first, then you!

God is your source, everything else is your resource.

Now, that is a head popper. This teaching is the core to managing your money. This teaching is essential to making your money behave. This teaching is essential to paying your bills.

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Bethel's response: Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be racially inclusive in offering salvation to all.

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The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

Acts 11

August 24, 2025

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She found Mr. Right and he found Cinderella. They fell in love. Got married and arrived at the hotel after a night of cake, celebration and conversations with family and friends that went on past midnight.

They arrived at the hotel and received the key from the attendant at the front desk. All was coming together just as the groom had planned. Beautiful hotel. Honeymoon suite. While they might have been tired, he purchased a romantic room with all the perfect elements.

When they entered the suite, the room was not quite like what the groom had expected.

The room was small. No freshly cut flowers. No Ghirardelli chocolate.

No romance lighting. And no romance smells. And no romance.

It did have a cramped bathroom, a fold out sofa bed with a lumpy mattress and noisy box springs.

The honeymoon suite was nothing like what Mr. Right had hoped for; and neither was the night.

The next morning the groom with a sore neck made his way to the manager's office to give the manager on duty a piece of his mind he could not do without. He vented. He vehemently told the manager; this is not what I paid for. Anger filled the air. The red-faced groom was stopped in his tracks when the manager asked one simple question:

"Did you open the door in your room?"

"Did you open the door in your room?"

Hanging his head and now quiet and embarrassed he acknowledged, **"that he had not."** Slowly he turned away and returned to the suite and found the door he had completely missed the night

before. His new bride was putting on make-up in the tiny, cramped bathroom, so he opened the door that he thought was a clothes closet.

Then he spotted the roses; fruit basket and chocolates nicely placed on the pillows. There was the spacious and romantic room he was promised with a downtown view. He pauses. Suddenly, she comes out of the bathroom and sees the door open and enters. They stand in silence for what seemed to be an eternity.

Both thought a room fit for a newly married couple.

Beautiful king bed, instead of a lumpy sofa bed.

A picturesque window of the downtown instead of a white wall.

A fresh breeze instead of stuffy air.

An elaborate bathroom, instead of a tight space with a toilet.

And they missed it all. How sad. How cramped. They lived their most important night of their life, far below what was rightfully theirs. (Lucado, page 185-186)

My question is a simple one, “why didn’t the groom get more curious? Why didn’t he get more courageous? Open a few doors. Check the place out.”

Why didn’t Mr., Right, go downstairs to the front desk and make it right? And get some answers?

Good question not just for a groom, but for each of us. You see so often followers of Jesus live in tight, cramped quarters of spiritual living. Saved yes, fully empowered to live and do the supernatural, no!

Instead of a romantic room, they settle for the anteroom of small spiritual living. No Holy Spirit power. No Holy Spirit gifts. And no Holy Spirit protection and provision as spelled out in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is waiting to unleash on every believer that asks, a honeymoon experience with Jesus Christ and beyond, in the power of the Holy Spirit that never ends.

Oh, life without full activation of the Holy Spirit, still has some good moments, but why settle for just some good moments with Jesus.

...when you can have an outrageous, courageous, and even audacious life like the one that Jesus said, “when I send the Holy Spirit to you, that is going to be a game changer.”

³⁰ *“Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4-NIV)

Stop settling for small, cramped quarters of life with Jesus when God has promised you a life in the full power of the Holy Spirit that has no limits. That allows you to operate in the full provision of the gifts of the Spirit.

Does something inside you long for more? If so, the Holy Spirit can satisfy that longing for a full life in Jesus Christ, in the daily power of the Holy Spirit. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, (Eph 5:18)

We are now moving into Acts 11. Peter returns to Jerusalem after his time in Caesarea at the home of Cornelius where he had stayed for several days. Peter had just experienced what God mentioned in the book of Acts would happen...I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.... even Gentile flesh.

⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ^{48a} So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. ^{48b} Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. (Acts 10-NIV)

Peter still has the after taste of barbecue pork and fresh shellfish in his mouth as Peter walks up to Jerusalem.

Peter is about to run into some Jews that are old school, they are not interested at first in Gentiles having the gospel and they certainly are not interested in changing centuries of dietary practice.

Peter's extended stay at Cornelius air-b-n-b, offered time for the news of what Peter had been up to...

...to travel over the back fence, make its way into the market, and be passed around in the gossip circles of Jerusalem's religious elite.

What is at stake?

Acknowledge God's gift of salvation that is free of back-breaking add-ons.

The way you know that a religion is not from God: it comes with all kinds of rules and regulations.

Some, news about Cornelius and his household being saved, baptized, and filled with the Spirit spread quickly back to the Jerusalem Torah studies. That is all that was talked about at Shabat. Those who were the most disturbed by what had happened are identified as circumcised believers, the hardshell and we are never going to budge Jews.

¹ *The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.* ² *So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him* ³ *and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Some of Peter’s friends where not so quick to celebrate this new plan, new strategy of God who now offers salvation to Gentiles. A salvation that included all the same blessings that Peter, James, John, Mary and the other 120 received at Pentecost. What was offered at Pentecost and at Cornelius home is available to all today.

Activate daily the Holy Spirit’s gifts that are waiting to be poured out.

¹⁵ *“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Instead of a big celebration, what Peter met was the buzz saw of criticism. The word for criticism in the text is *dia-krino*, it is the idea of “to separate.” And that is what was going on, the religious world was separated into two groups of people-Jews favored by God and Gentiles hated by God.

And the charge against Peter is spelled out clearly... ³ *“You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

This statement was not an inquiry; it was designed to torpedo Peter with an accusation.

“You went into the home of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

They should have asked, (*different tone*) “how did it go Peter, did they open their hearts to Jesus Christ. That must have been cool, to be there for the Spirit’s outpouring. What was their baptism like?”

What does pork taste like? It tastes like chicken, says Peter.

What does shellfish taste like? It tastes like chicken, Peter announces.

All they were concerned about was, you hung out with them. Peter you are defiled. You need to go offer a sacrifice to God. Peter, you got like Gentile cooties all over you Peter.

Having fellowship with the Gentiles was a new experience for Jewish Christians, who had all their lives seen them as pagans, outsiders and unclean.

The only way a Gentile could have a right status with God and his preferred people the Jews, was to become Jewish by practice.

These Jewish hold outs, keepers of Jewish religious life and old guard required a strict adherence to the Law of Moses, the requirement of circumcision and adherence to a Mediterranean menu of dos and don’ts, are the same prejudices Peter was guilty of just days before.

The legalists were making a distinction between Jews and Gentiles after Peter had demonstrated that **“there is no difference in the eyes of God.”**

Peter’s whole experience with the activity of the Holy Spirit in the home of Cornelius was the declaration that all people regardless of race and religion are welcome into God’s family through repentance, surrender and trust in Jesus Christ as he atones for their sins.

So then, even to the Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life. (Acts 11:18b-NIV)

This issue of salvation by grace alone, would be under constant threat as many Jews would later attempt to proselytize and woo gentiles back into circumcision and obedience to the law. This is the harsh criticism that Paul declares against the Galatians when he says, “

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel —

⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1-NIV)

You would have thought, that when Peter returned to the mother church in Jerusalem the Jewish believers would have been ascetic about Christ’s grace and forgiveness coming to everyone.

Everywhere. At any time.

The early church has some adjustments to make. God’s original plan was that Israel becomes a light to the world, instead they became closed. The door was locked to the unclean. To Gentiles.

Many in the early church failed to experience God’s heart about who can be saved. God from the beginning chose the Jewish nation and his people to carry the message to the lost world and its availability of salvation for all.

Introduce Chad Gould, he came home to Christ and was welcome back to Christ not as a Gentile, failure, you have cooties, you sinned gravely and grossly, **we are glad you are home brother. Friend. Family.**

Now, those who were staunch hold outs for Jewish faith done Moses way, had seen no vision like Peter, had not heard the Lord’s voice sweeping away old prohibitions. They did not see the Holy Spirit arrive like at Pentecost. Speaking in tongues. Forgiveness of sins.

The idea of Peter going into unclean homes and eating nonkosher food with ceremonially unclean people made the hairs on the back of their sanctimonious necks stand up.

Having had little time to reflect and right in his journal about what had taken place in Caesarea, Peter said, The Spirit of God made me do it!

Peter describes what happened beginning in verse 4, *⁴ Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: ^{5a} “I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance I saw a vision ... Acts 11-NIV (vs 4)*

I went to Cornelious' house and "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning." Acts 11-NIV (vs 15)

My conclusion: ¹⁷*"So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11-NIV)*

After Peter presented his case for new creation by grace alone, guess what happened? The legalists, the holders of the chalice of Moses law, those who keep their flint knives always sharp, in case a circumcision needs to take place, they agreed with Peter.

This is as great a miracle as any up to this point. No grumbling. No griping. No second-guessing God. No muttering under their breath. No more opposition, in fact at the end of the talk a worship service broke out.

¹⁸*When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11-NIV)*

When you experience new life in Christ, new truth from God's word, new healings in your body, more answered prayer, and God's provision for your needs, all you can do is worship. They had no objections, and they began to praise God.

As Christ followers we are called on to radically accept others. The world judges based on background, skin color, economics, appearance, and age.

But we are to see everyone the way Jesus would see them. Just a little side note, Peter was now in the same hot water that Jesus often found himself. And in the end, God is willing to go to any length, even sacrifice for them by inviting Jesus to die and atone for their sins.

My guess, just my guess, I think what really frustrated the religious fandom of the day was the seemingly free access to heavens stadium of grace.

What was the theme of the worship, God has granted forgiveness because of repentance that leads to life. Peters' brothers begin to celebrate with him. Salvation has come to all people. And that salvation is offered in the form of forgiveness of sins.

I love this verse; *you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depth of the sea. (Micah 7:19b-NIV)*

God hurls our sins into the deepest ocean and puts out a no-fishing sign. Your sins are going glub, glub, glub while you go good-bye sins as you fly away to freedom. Who wants some sins to be stomped out of existence today? Jesus would offer sinners frequent invitations to dinner with him and his disciples. *"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:2b-NIV)*

Church at Antioch

While Peter is trying to convince Jews in Jerusalem, Jesus' message of grace is open to Gentiles, he tells them don't be surprised if Romans, Greeks, Sicilians, and other people groups start sitting in your synagogues. Make sure you adjust your membership teaching requirements.

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It did have a cramped bathroom, a fold out sofa bed with a lumpy mattress and noisy box springs.

The honeymoon suite was nothing like what Mr. Right had hoped for; and neither was the night.

The next morning the groom with a sore neck made his way to the manager's office to give the manager on duty a piece of his mind he could not do without. He vented. He vehemently told the manager; this is not what I paid for. Anger filled the air. The red-faced groom was stopped in his tracks when the manager asked one simple question:

"Did you open the door in your room?"

"Did you open the door in your room?"

Hanging his head and now quiet and embarrassed he acknowledged, **"that he had not."** Slowly he turned away and returned to the suite and found the door he had completely missed the night

before. His new bride was putting on make-up in the tiny, cramped bathroom, so he opened the door that he thought was a clothes closet.

Then he spotted the roses; fruit basket and chocolates nicely placed on the pillows. There was the spacious and romantic room he was promised with a downtown view. He pauses. Suddenly, she comes out of the bathroom and sees the door open and enters. They stand in silence for what seemed to be an eternity.

Both thought a room fit for a newly married couple.

Beautiful king bed, instead of a lumpy sofa bed.

A picturesque window of the downtown instead of a white wall.

A fresh breeze instead of stuffy air.

An elaborate bathroom, instead of a tight space with a toilet.

And they missed it all. How sad. How cramped. They lived their most important night of their life, far below what was rightfully theirs. (Lucado, page 185-186)

My question is a simple one, “why didn’t the groom get more curious? Why didn’t he get more courageous? Open a few doors. Check the place out.”

Why didn’t Mr., Right, go downstairs to the front desk and make it right? And get some answers?

Good question not just for a groom, but for each of us. You see so often followers of Jesus live in tight, cramped quarters of spiritual living. Saved yes, fully empowered to live and do the supernatural, no!

Instead of a romantic room, they settle for the anteroom of small spiritual living. No Holy Spirit power. No Holy Spirit gifts. And no Holy Spirit protection and provision as spelled out in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is waiting to unleash on every believer that asks, a honeymoon experience with Jesus Christ and beyond, in the power of the Holy Spirit that never ends.

Oh, life without full activation of the Holy Spirit, still has some good moments, but why settle for just some good moments with Jesus.

...when you can have an outrageous, courageous, and even audacious life like the one that Jesus said, “when I send the Holy Spirit to you, that is going to be a game changer.”

³⁰ *“Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4-NIV)

Stop settling for small, cramped quarters of life with Jesus when God has promised you a life in the full power of the Holy Spirit that has no limits. That allows you to operate in the full provision of the gifts of the Spirit.

Does something inside you long for more? If so, the Holy Spirit can satisfy that longing for a full life in Jesus Christ, in the daily power of the Holy Spirit. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, (Eph 5:18)

We are now moving into Acts 11. Peter returns to Jerusalem after his time in Caesarea at the home of Cornelius where he had stayed for several days. Peter had just experienced what God mentioned in the book of Acts would happen...I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.... even Gentile flesh.

⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ^{48a} So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. ^{48b} Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. (Acts 10-NIV)

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Peter is about to run into some Jews that are old school, they are not interested at first in Gentiles having the gospel and they certainly are not interested in changing centuries of dietary practice.

Peter's extended stay at Cornelius air-b-n-b, offered time for the news of what Peter had been up to...

...to travel over the back fence, make its way into the market, and be passed around in the gossip circles of Jerusalem's religious elite.

What is at stake?

Acknowledge God's gift of salvation that is free of back-breaking add-ons.

The way you know that a religion is not from God: it comes with all kinds of rules and regulations.

Some, news about Cornelius and his household being saved, baptized, and filled with the Spirit spread quickly back to the Jerusalem Torah studies. That is all that was talked about at Shabat. Those who were the most disturbed by what had happened are identified as circumcised believers, the hardshell and we are never going to budge Jews.

¹ *The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.* ² *So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him* ³ *and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Some of Peter’s friends where not so quick to celebrate this new plan, new strategy of God who now offers salvation to Gentiles. A salvation that included all the same blessings that Peter, James, John, Mary and the other 120 received at Pentecost. What was offered at Pentecost and at Cornelius home is available to all today.

Activate daily the Holy Spirit’s gifts that are waiting to be poured out.

¹⁵ *“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Instead of a big celebration, what Peter met was the buzz saw of criticism. The word for criticism in the text is *dia-krino*, it is the idea of “to separate.” And that is what was going on, the religious world was separated into two groups of people-Jews favored by God and Gentiles hated by God.

And the charge against Peter is spelled out clearly... ³ *“You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

This statement was not an inquiry; it was designed to torpedo Peter with an accusation.

“You went into the home of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

They should have asked, (*different tone*) “how did it go Peter, did they open their hearts to Jesus Christ. That must have been cool, to be there for the Spirit’s outpouring. What was their baptism like?”

What does pork taste like? It tastes like chicken, says Peter.

What does shellfish taste like? It tastes like chicken, Peter announces.

All they were concerned about was, you hung out with them. Peter you are defiled. You need to go offer a sacrifice to God. Peter, you got like Gentile cooties all over you Peter.

Having fellowship with the Gentiles was a new experience for Jewish Christians, who had all their lives seen them as pagans, outsiders and unclean.

The only way a Gentile could have a right status with God and his preferred people the Jews, was to become Jewish by practice.

These Jewish hold outs, keepers of Jewish religious life and old guard required a strict adherence to the Law of Moses, the requirement of circumcision and adherence to a Mediterranean menu of dos and don’ts, are the same prejudices Peter was guilty of just days before.

The legalists were making a distinction between Jews and Gentiles after Peter had demonstrated that **“there is no difference in the eyes of God.”**

Peter’s whole experience with the activity of the Holy Spirit in the home of Cornelius was the declaration that all people regardless of race and religion are welcome into God’s family through repentance, surrender and trust in Jesus Christ as he atones for their sins.

So then, even to the Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life. (Acts 11:18b-NIV)

This issue of salvation by grace alone, would be under constant threat as many Jews would later attempt to proselytize and woo gentiles back into circumcision and obedience to the law. This is the harsh criticism that Paul declares against the Galatians when he says, “

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel —

⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1-NIV)

You would have thought, that when Peter returned to the mother church in Jerusalem the Jewish believers would have been ascetic about Christ’s grace and forgiveness coming to everyone.

Everywhere. At any time.

The early church has some adjustments to make. God’s original plan was that Israel becomes a light to the world, instead they became closed. The door was locked to the unclean. To Gentiles.

Many in the early church failed to experience God’s heart about who can be saved. God from the beginning chose the Jewish nation and his people to carry the message to the lost world and its availability of salvation for all.

Introduce Chad Gould, he came home to Christ and was welcome back to Christ not as a Gentile, failure, you have cooties, you sinned gravely and grossly, **we are glad you are home brother. Friend. Family.**

Now, those who were staunch hold outs for Jewish faith done Moses way, had seen no vision like Peter, had not heard the Lord’s voice sweeping away old prohibitions. They did not see the Holy Spirit arrive like at Pentecost. Speaking in tongues. Forgiveness of sins.

The idea of Peter going into unclean homes and eating nonkosher food with ceremonially unclean people made the hairs on the back of their sanctimonious necks stand up.

Having had little time to reflect and right in his journal about what had taken place in Caesarea, Peter said, The Spirit of God made me do it!

Peter describes what happened beginning in verse 4, *⁴ Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: ^{5a} “I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance I saw a vision ... Acts 11-NIV (vs 4)*

I went to Cornelious' house and "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning." Acts 11-NIV (vs 15)

My conclusion: ¹⁷*"So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11-NIV)*

After Peter presented his case for new creation by grace alone, guess what happened? The legalists, the holders of the chalice of Moses law, those who keep their flint knives always sharp, in case a circumcision needs to take place, they agreed with Peter.

This is as great a miracle as any up to this point. No grumbling. No griping. No second-guessing God. No muttering under their breath. No more opposition, in fact at the end of the talk a worship service broke out.

¹⁸*When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11-NIV)*

When you experience new life in Christ, new truth from God's word, new healings in your body, more answered prayer, and God's provision for your needs, all you can do is worship. They had no objections, and they began to praise God.

As Christ followers we are called on to radically accept others. The world judges based on background, skin color, economics, appearance, and age.

But we are to see everyone the way Jesus would see them. Just a little side note, Peter was now in the same hot water that Jesus often found himself. And in the end, God is willing to go to any length, even sacrifice for them by inviting Jesus to die and atone for their sins.

My guess, just my guess, I think what really frustrated the religious fandom of the day was the seemingly free access to heavens stadium of grace.

What was the theme of the worship, God has granted forgiveness because of repentance that leads to life. Peters' brothers begin to celebrate with him. Salvation has come to all people. And that salvation is offered in the form of forgiveness of sins.

I love this verse; *you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depth of the sea. (Micah 7:19b-NIV)*

God hurls our sins into the deepest ocean and puts out a no-fishing sign. Your sins are going glub, glub, glub while you go good-bye sins as you fly away to freedom. Who wants some sins to be stomped out of existence today? Jesus would offer sinners frequent invitations to dinner with him and his disciples. *"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:2b-NIV)*

Church at Antioch

While Peter is trying to convince Jews in Jerusalem, Jesus' message of grace is open to Gentiles, he tells them don't be surprised if Romans, Greeks, Sicilians, and other people groups start sitting in your synagogues. Make sure you adjust your membership teaching requirements.

Membership in the body of Christ is now based on salvation, and water baptism is the next step, and the work of the Holy Spirit is available to all in the form of speaking in tongues and access to all the gifts of the Spirit.

Now, 300 miles north, the Apostle Paul has joined forces with Barnabas, and they plan to spend a year teaching new Gentiles God's word, disciplining them in their new faith, water baptizing and mobilizing them to reach their family and friends.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Let's meet some of these followers of Jesus in the church of Antioch. These are Christians who were persecution-escapees who fled and stopped running in Antioch. Antioch was one of the most beautiful cities in the Roman empire and one of the largest with a population of over 500,000.

Antioch enjoyed a Mediterranean climate of balmy air and rose fragrances that filled the streets. This is possibly the home of Luke the author of Luke-Acts. Antioch was wealthy and people moved from all over the Roman world to share in its wealth. It was cosmopolitan in the arts, religion, and enjoyed global banking. Antioch was strictly pagan and filled with many temples. These temples featured ritual prostitution, the moral practices of those in Antioch were in the tank.

This is the first church where Gentile believers filled the pew and made up the leadership. The church grew so fast, that it was completely absent of traditional Jewish practices. Manners, clothing style and hair length, which was so important to Jews, was tossed out the window, for the sake of fellowship with Gentiles.

Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians ate together, worshipped together, studied God's word together and fellowshiped together. For the first time, Jews and Gentiles worshipped around a simple mutual faith in Jesus Christ as they blazed a trail that would become the model for Paul's many missionary journeys ahead.

Churches like Antioch would pop up all over the Roman world like Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatian, Philippi and eventually in Rome itself.

I see 3 blessings that were evident in the lives of those in the church at Antioch.

They lived in God's grace.

They studied God's word.

They were generous with God's money.

Allow others to see the grace of God in you.

²³ *When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, (Acts 11-NIV)*
You are saved by grace, but you serve in grace.

Grace is getting unlimited favor although you have done nothing to deserve it. Did you know? Grace is not enjoyed or even wanted by everyone. It disturbs so many. It seems too good to be true, or they would rather work for everything they get.

God's grace, when it is fully welcomed and deeply embraced, it transforms people and rearranges the human heart profoundly and permanently. Grace removes self-sufficiency, one rung of the ladder at a time. Plank by plank. Confidence in self and pride cannot co-exist and co-labor in a grace-filled heart.

God's grace when it finds a home in your heart, turns you into a gracious person. God's grace when you own it and it arrests you, turns you into a forgiving person. A quick to forgive type of person.

No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Every religion is a bartering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Christianity has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate. All religions say, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!"

On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world. And it all happens by grace. A grace created by God and freely given to man. Grace is a gift not an achievement.

Nobody-not Buddha or Mohamed or anyone else can offer grace. It can only be offered by God the Father whose son Jesus Christ died an atoning death and offers grace freely. Freely to all who believe and receive.

Grace means that there is nothing you can do to make God love you any **less**-not racism, not murder, not pornography, not stealing, not gluttony and not even betrayal. Grace means that God already loves you as much as an All-Forgiving and Inclusive God can possibly love.

And the opposite is true-there is nothing you can do to make God **love us more**.

Appreciate that God has given you Bible teachers to grow your faith.

^{26b} So, for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11-NIV)

Solomon reminds us that God's word get us moving. We see this in *Eccl 12:11, it is like a goad and a firmly embedded nail*. God's word gets us moving and God's word is firmly embedded into our lives.

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails — given by one shepherd. (Ecclesiastes 12:11)

The Bible is more than a book of history, poetry, and stories of Jesus. The Bible can unleash God's power:

The word of God-gives life, builds faith, produces change, scares the devil, disables discouragement, dismembers pride, heals hurts, builds character, transforms pain, overcomes anxiety, it demolishes depression, activates miracles, infuses joy, invites hope, releases power, cleanses the mind,

Gives Eternal Life Hurray for God's word.

Accept your part in God's plan for giving to others.

²⁹ The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. (Acts 11-NIV)

¹³ Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. (1 Kings 17-NIV)

Remember this thought- Feed me first. Elijah is telling the widow to feed him first. **But**, first make a small loaf of bread for me...

Now tuck that away, feed me first. We need to learn that money does not have little legs, and it just gets up and runs away. Money does not have a soul.

Your money behaves because God is your source, and your job is your resource. God is your source; your earning potential is your resource.

Your bank is your resource. The government is your resource. Your dividends, stocks and retirement are your resources.

God is your source; Textron and teaching is your resource.

God is your source; truck driving and telemarketing is your resource.

God is your source; therapist and tailor is your resource.

God is your source; lawyering and laboring is your resource.

God is your source; army and amazon is your resource.

God is your source; baby sitting and baby delivering is your resource. Say it with me. I will say it first, then you!

God is your source, everything else is your resource.

Now, that is a head popper. This teaching is the core to managing your money. This teaching is essential to making your money behave. This teaching is essential to paying your bills.

In the Old Testament part of the bible, God as your source is the ground level to making your money behave.

So, here is my question (s) for Bethel Life Center, as we conclude,

...for Danice and me,

...for the leadership of BLC,

...for the body of believers who call this home, whether you gather weekly in person or for those who are on-line. I don't think I have ever suggested this kind of conclusion.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be racially inclusive – God's salvation.

Bethel's response: Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be racially inclusive in offering salvation to all.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be radically inviting – God's grace.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be radically inviting as I live out God's grace.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be responsible to invest daily in God's Word?

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be responsible for investing daily in God's Word.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be redemptively invested – giving.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be redemptively invested in giving my time, treasure, and talents for God's purposes in the earth.

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

Acts 11

August 24, 2025

¹ The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³ and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." (Acts 11-NIV)

¹⁵ "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11-NIV)

She found Mr. Right and he found Cinderella. They fell in love. Got married and arrived at the hotel after a night of cake, celebration and conversations with family and friends that went on past midnight.

They arrived at the hotel and received the key from the attendant at the front desk. All was coming together just as the groom had planned. Beautiful hotel. Honeymoon suite. While they might have been tired, he purchased a romantic room with all the perfect elements.

When they entered the suite, the room was not quite like what the groom had expected.

The room was small. No freshly cut flowers. No Ghirardelli chocolate.

No romance lighting. And no romance smells. And no romance.

It did have a cramped bathroom, a fold out sofa bed with a lumpy mattress and noisy box springs.

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The idea of Peter going into unclean homes and eating nonkosher food with ceremonially unclean people made the hairs on the back of their sanctimonious necks stand up.

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My conclusion: ¹⁷*"So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11-NIV)*

After Peter presented his case for new creation by grace alone, guess what happened? The legalists, the holders of the chalice of Moses law, those who keep their flint knives always sharp, in case a circumcision needs to take place, they agreed with Peter.

This is as great a miracle as any up to this point. No grumbling. No griping. No second-guessing God. No muttering under their breath. No more opposition, in fact at the end of the talk a worship service broke out.

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When you experience new life in Christ, new truth from God's word, new healings in your body, more answered prayer, and God's provision for your needs, all you can do is worship. They had no objections, and they began to praise God.

As Christ followers we are called on to radically accept others. The world judges based on background, skin color, economics, appearance, and age.

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My guess, just my guess, I think what really frustrated the religious fandom of the day was the seemingly free access to heavens stadium of grace.

What was the theme of the worship, God has granted forgiveness because of repentance that leads to life. Peters' brothers begin to celebrate with him. Salvation has come to all people. And that salvation is offered in the form of forgiveness of sins.

I love this verse; *you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depth of the sea. (Micah 7:19b-NIV)*

God hurls our sins into the deepest ocean and puts out a no-fishing sign. Your sins are going glub, glub, glub while you go good-bye sins as you fly away to freedom. Who wants some sins to be stomped out of existence today? Jesus would offer sinners frequent invitations to dinner with him and his disciples. *"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:2b-NIV)*

Church at Antioch

While Peter is trying to convince Jews in Jerusalem, Jesus' message of grace is open to Gentiles, he tells them don't be surprised if Romans, Greeks, Sicilians, and other people groups start sitting in your synagogues. Make sure you adjust your membership teaching requirements.

Membership in the body of Christ is now based on salvation, and water baptism is the next step, and the work of the Holy Spirit is available to all in the form of speaking in tongues and access to all the gifts of the Spirit.

Now, 300 miles north, the Apostle Paul has joined forces with Barnabas, and they plan to spend a year teaching new Gentiles God's word, disciplining them in their new faith, water baptizing and mobilizing them to reach their family and friends.

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Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians ate together, worshipped together, studied God's word together and fellowshiped together. For the first time, Jews and Gentiles worshipped around a simple mutual faith in Jesus Christ as they blazed a trail that would become the model for Paul's many missionary journeys ahead.

Churches like Antioch would pop up all over the Roman world like Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatian, Philippi and eventually in Rome itself.

I see 3 blessings that were evident in the lives of those in the church at Antioch.

They lived in God's grace.

They studied God's word.

They were generous with God's money.

Allow others to see the grace of God in you.

²³ *When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, (Acts 11-NIV)*
You are saved by grace, but you serve in grace.

Grace is getting unlimited favor although you have done nothing to deserve it. Did you know? Grace is not enjoyed or even wanted by everyone. It disturbs so many. It seems too good to be true, or they would rather work for everything they get.

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No other religion offers **free forgiveness** and a **new life** for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Every religion is a bartering system; if I do this, God will do that. I am either saved by works (what I do), emotions (what I experience) or knowledge (what I know).

Christianity has no hint of negotiation. Because of sin, man has no grounds on which to negotiate. All religions say, "you, can save you." Jesus announces, "you can't save yourself, bad plan. My death on the cross can save you. Best and only plan!"

On the basis of this truth, Christianity towers over every other religion in the world. And it all happens by grace. A grace created by God and freely given to man. Grace is a gift not an achievement.

Nobody-not Buddha or Mohamed or anyone else can offer grace. It can only be offered by God the Father whose son Jesus Christ died an atoning death and offers grace freely. Freely to all who believe and receive.

Grace means that there is nothing you can do to make God love you any **less**-not racism, not murder, not pornography, not stealing, not gluttony and not even betrayal. Grace means that God already loves you as much as an All-Forgiving and Inclusive God can possibly love.

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Solomon reminds us that God's word get us moving. We see this in *Eccl 12:11, it is like a goad and a firmly embedded nail*. God's word gets us moving and God's word is firmly embedded into our lives.

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails — given by one shepherd. (Ecclesiastes 12:11)

The Bible is more than a book of history, poetry, and stories of Jesus. The Bible can unleash God's power:

The word of God-gives life, builds faith, produces change, scares the devil, disables discouragement, dismembers pride, heals hurts, builds character, transforms pain, overcomes anxiety, it demolishes depression, activates miracles, infuses joy, invites hope, releases power, cleanses the mind,

Gives Eternal Life Hurray for God's word.

Accept your part in God's plan for giving to others.

²⁹ The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. (Acts 11-NIV)

¹³ Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. (1 Kings 17-NIV)

Remember this thought- Feed me first. Elijah is telling the widow to feed him first. **But**, first make a small loaf of bread for me...

Now tuck that away, feed me first. We need to learn that money does not have little legs, and it just gets up and runs away. Money does not have a soul.

Your money behaves because God is your source, and your job is your resource. God is your source; your earning potential is your resource.

Your bank is your resource. The government is your resource. Your dividends, stocks and retirement are your resources.

God is your source; Textron and teaching is your resource.

God is your source; truck driving and telemarketing is your resource.

God is your source; therapist and tailor is your resource.

God is your source; lawyering and laboring is your resource.

God is your source; army and amazon is your resource.

God is your source; baby sitting and baby delivering is your resource. Say it with me. I will say it first, then you!

God is your source, everything else is your resource.

Now, that is a head popper. This teaching is the core to managing your money. This teaching is essential to making your money behave. This teaching is essential to paying your bills.

In the Old Testament part of the bible, God as your source is the ground level to making your money behave.

So, here is my question (s) for Bethel Life Center, as we conclude,

...for Danice and me,

...for the leadership of BLC,

...for the body of believers who call this home, whether you gather weekly in person or for those who are on-line. I don't think I have ever suggested this kind of conclusion.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be racially inclusive – God's salvation.

Bethel's response: Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be racially inclusive in offering salvation to all.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be radically inviting – God's grace.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be radically inviting as I live out God's grace.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be responsible to invest daily in God's Word?

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be responsible for investing daily in God's Word.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be redemptively invested – giving.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be redemptively invested in giving my time, treasure, and talents for God's purposes in the earth.

The Holy Spirit

Pastor Ken

Acts 11

August 24, 2025

¹ The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³ and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." (Acts 11-NIV)

¹⁵ "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11-NIV)

She found Mr. Right and he found Cinderella. They fell in love. Got married and arrived at the hotel after a night of cake, celebration and conversations with family and friends that went on past midnight.

They arrived at the hotel and received the key from the attendant at the front desk. All was coming together just as the groom had planned. Beautiful hotel. Honeymoon suite. While they might have been tired, he purchased a romantic room with all the perfect elements.

When they entered the suite, the room was not quite like what the groom had expected.

The room was small. No freshly cut flowers. No Ghirardelli chocolate.

No romance lighting. And no romance smells. And no romance.

It did have a cramped bathroom, a fold out sofa bed with a lumpy mattress and noisy box springs.

The honeymoon suite was nothing like what Mr. Right had hoped for; and neither was the night.

The next morning the groom with a sore neck made his way to the manager's office to give the manager on duty a piece of his mind he could not do without. He vented. He vehemently told the manager; this is not what I paid for. Anger filled the air. The red-faced groom was stopped in his tracks when the manager asked one simple question:

"Did you open the door in your room?"

"Did you open the door in your room?"

Hanging his head and now quiet and embarrassed he acknowledged, **"that he had not."** Slowly he turned away and returned to the suite and found the door he had completely missed the night

before. His new bride was putting on make-up in the tiny, cramped bathroom, so he opened the door that he thought was a clothes closet.

Then he spotted the roses; fruit basket and chocolates nicely placed on the pillows. There was the spacious and romantic room he was promised with a downtown view. He pauses. Suddenly, she comes out of the bathroom and sees the door open and enters. They stand in silence for what seemed to be an eternity.

Both thought a room fit for a newly married couple.

Beautiful king bed, instead of a lumpy sofa bed.

A picturesque window of the downtown instead of a white wall.

A fresh breeze instead of stuffy air.

An elaborate bathroom, instead of a tight space with a toilet.

And they missed it all. How sad. How cramped. They lived their most important night of their life, far below what was rightfully theirs. (Lucado, page 185-186)

My question is a simple one, “why didn’t the groom get more curious? Why didn’t he get more courageous? Open a few doors. Check the place out.”

Why didn’t Mr., Right, go downstairs to the front desk and make it right? And get some answers?

Good question not just for a groom, but for each of us. You see so often followers of Jesus live in tight, cramped quarters of spiritual living. Saved yes, fully empowered to live and do the supernatural, no!

Instead of a romantic room, they settle for the anteroom of small spiritual living. No Holy Spirit power. No Holy Spirit gifts. And no Holy Spirit protection and provision as spelled out in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is waiting to unleash on every believer that asks, a honeymoon experience with Jesus Christ and beyond, in the power of the Holy Spirit that never ends.

Oh, life without full activation of the Holy Spirit, still has some good moments, but why settle for just some good moments with Jesus.

...when you can have an outrageous, courageous, and even audacious life like the one that Jesus said, “when I send the Holy Spirit to you, that is going to be a game changer.”

³⁰ *“Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4-NIV)

Stop settling for small, cramped quarters of life with Jesus when God has promised you a life in the full power of the Holy Spirit that has no limits. That allows you to operate in the full provision of the gifts of the Spirit.

Does something inside you long for more? If so, the Holy Spirit can satisfy that longing for a full life in Jesus Christ, in the daily power of the Holy Spirit. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, (Eph 5:18)

We are now moving into Acts 11. Peter returns to Jerusalem after his time in Caesarea at the home of Cornelius where he had stayed for several days. Peter had just experienced what God mentioned in the book of Acts would happen...I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.... even Gentile flesh.

⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ^{48a} So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. ^{48b} Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. (Acts 10-NIV)

Peter still has the after taste of barbecue pork and fresh shellfish in his mouth as Peter walks up to Jerusalem.

Peter is about to run into some Jews that are old school, they are not interested at first in Gentiles having the gospel and they certainly are not interested in changing centuries of dietary practice.

Peter's extended stay at Cornelius air-b-n-b, offered time for the news of what Peter had been up to...

...to travel over the back fence, make its way into the market, and be passed around in the gossip circles of Jerusalem's religious elite.

What is at stake?

Acknowledge God's gift of salvation that is free of back-breaking add-ons.

The way you know that a religion is not from God: it comes with all kinds of rules and regulations.

Some, news about Cornelius and his household being saved, baptized, and filled with the Spirit spread quickly back to the Jerusalem Torah studies. That is all that was talked about at Shabat. Those who were the most disturbed by what had happened are identified as circumcised believers, the hardshell and we are never going to budge Jews.

¹ *The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.* ² *So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him* ³ *and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Some of Peter’s friends where not so quick to celebrate this new plan, new strategy of God who now offers salvation to Gentiles. A salvation that included all the same blessings that Peter, James, John, Mary and the other 120 received at Pentecost. What was offered at Pentecost and at Cornelius home is available to all today.

Activate daily the Holy Spirit’s gifts that are waiting to be poured out.

¹⁵ *“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

Instead of a big celebration, what Peter met was the buzz saw of criticism. The word for criticism in the text is *dia-krino*, it is the idea of “to separate.” And that is what was going on, the religious world was separated into two groups of people-Jews favored by God and Gentiles hated by God.

And the charge against Peter is spelled out clearly... ³ *“You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* (Acts 11-NIV)

This statement was not an inquiry; it was designed to torpedo Peter with an accusation.

“You went into the home of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

They should have asked, (*different tone*) “how did it go Peter, did they open their hearts to Jesus Christ. That must have been cool, to be there for the Spirit’s outpouring. What was their baptism like?”

What does pork taste like? It tastes like chicken, says Peter.

What does shellfish taste like? It tastes like chicken, Peter announces.

All they were concerned about was, you hung out with them. Peter you are defiled. You need to go offer a sacrifice to God. Peter, you got like Gentile cooties all over you Peter.

Having fellowship with the Gentiles was a new experience for Jewish Christians, who had all their lives seen them as pagans, outsiders and unclean.

The only way a Gentile could have a right status with God and his preferred people the Jews, was to become Jewish by practice.

These Jewish hold outs, keepers of Jewish religious life and old guard required a strict adherence to the Law of Moses, the requirement of circumcision and adherence to a Mediterranean menu of dos and don’ts, are the same prejudices Peter was guilty of just days before.

The legalists were making a distinction between Jews and Gentiles after Peter had demonstrated that **“there is no difference in the eyes of God.”**

Peter’s whole experience with the activity of the Holy Spirit in the home of Cornelius was the declaration that all people regardless of race and religion are welcome into God’s family through repentance, surrender and trust in Jesus Christ as he atones for their sins.

So then, even to the Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life. (Acts 11:18b-NIV)

This issue of salvation by grace alone, would be under constant threat as many Jews would later attempt to proselytize and woo gentiles back into circumcision and obedience to the law. This is the harsh criticism that Paul declares against the Galatians when he says, “

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel —

⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1-NIV)

You would have thought, that when Peter returned to the mother church in Jerusalem the Jewish believers would have been ascetic about Christ’s grace and forgiveness coming to everyone.

Everywhere. At any time.

The early church has some adjustments to make. God’s original plan was that Israel becomes a light to the world, instead they became closed. The door was locked to the unclean. To Gentiles.

Many in the early church failed to experience God’s heart about who can be saved. God from the beginning chose the Jewish nation and his people to carry the message to the lost world and its availability of salvation for all.

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²⁹ The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. (Acts 11-NIV)

¹³ Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. (1 Kings 17-NIV)

Remember this thought- Feed me first. Elijah is telling the widow to feed him first. **But**, first make a small loaf of bread for me...

Now tuck that away, feed me first. We need to learn that money does not have little legs, and it just gets up and runs away. Money does not have a soul.

Your money behaves because God is your source, and your job is your resource. God is your source; your earning potential is your resource.

Your bank is your resource. The government is your resource. Your dividends, stocks and retirement are your resources.

God is your source; Textron and teaching is your resource.

God is your source; truck driving and telemarketing is your resource.

God is your source; therapist and tailor is your resource.

God is your source; lawyering and laboring is your resource.

God is your source; army and amazon is your resource.

God is your source; baby sitting and baby delivering is your resource. Say it with me. I will say it first, then you!

God is your source, everything else is your resource.

Now, that is a head popper. This teaching is the core to managing your money. This teaching is essential to making your money behave. This teaching is essential to paying your bills.

In the Old Testament part of the bible, God as your source is the ground level to making your money behave.

So, here is my question (s) for Bethel Life Center, as we conclude,

...for Danice and me,

...for the leadership of BLC,

...for the body of believers who call this home, whether you gather weekly in person or for those who are on-line. I don't think I have ever suggested this kind of conclusion.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be racially inclusive – God's salvation.

Bethel's response: Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be racially inclusive in offering salvation to all.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be radically inviting – God's grace.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be radically inviting as I live out God's grace.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be responsible to invest daily in God's Word?

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be responsible for investing daily in God's Word.

Pastor Ken: Will Bethel Life Center be redemptively invested – giving.

Yes, at Bethel Life Center I will be redemptively invested in giving my time, treasure, and talents for God's purposes in the earth.