

The Salvation of the Gentiles, Part 5

Scripture: Acts 10:44–48

Code: 1738

Introduction

Some of you may have read Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* at some time in your life. If you did, you'll remember the rather troublesome character by the name of Huck Finn. In the simplest sense, he was an undesirable type. On one occasion, Huck tried to join Tom's gang. The dialogue went like this: Huck said, "Now Tom, hain't you always ben friendly to me? You wouldn't shet me out, would you, Tom?" Tom replied, "Huck, I wouldn't want to, and I don't want to but what would people say? Why they'd say, 'Mph! Tom Sawyer's Gang! pretty low characters in it!' They'd mean you, Huck. You wouldn't like that, and I wouldn't" ([Chicago: The Fountain Press, 1949], p. 215).

A. The Exclusive Fellowship

1. OF MEN

Adults play games. We want an exclusive fellowship. We want the fellowship of the pure those who think like us. We want the fellowship of the deserving those who are gratified to be in our presence. We usually manage to screen out anyone who doesn't enhance our image, strengthen our viewpoints, boost our pride, reinforce our prejudices, or feed our ego. We tend to group with the kind of people who support our lifestyle.

2. OF THE CHURCH

The same kind of thing was happening in the early years of the church. It shouldn't have been, but it was. The church was born in Jerusalem. It was comprised almost exclusively of Jews at the beginning. There were some halfbreed Samaritans who had been incorporated among the Jerusalem and Hellenistic Jews. The church identified with Judaism. In fact, there had grown up within the church a faction of people called "the circumcision party." That party had come to the conclusion that the only way to get into Christianity was through the foyer of Judaism. To fence out undesirables, they made circumcision the standard. That was their way of keeping Gentiles at arm's length. Unless someone had gone through the physical rite of circumcision, he could not enter into Judaism. In a sense, they had made Judaism the room one had to enter before Christianity. Circumcision became the fence that kept the undesirables out.

B. The Inclusive Fellowship

Jesus was in the business of smashing fences, and the fence of circumcision had to go. So Acts 10 chronicles the Lord's addition of the Gentiles into the church. The Gentiles were pagans who were despised by the Jews, and they despised the Jews in return. But Jesus incorporated them into the

church, and made them one with the Jews.

1. THE DESIGN

Our Lord had already designed to build one body. Ephesians 2:15 says that He wanted to make one new manto join Jew and Gentile together. Ephesians 3:46 says that the mystery of the church was that Jew and Gentile would be one in Christ. God's design was to have one group of people who were His ownHis channel to the world. So the Gentiles had to be reached. But the Jews believed that the uncircumcised were corrupt and alienated from God.

2. THE SUPPORT

An ultraconservative group of Jews separated themselves from the framework of the early church and tried to hold on to such distinctives as circumcision. But they shouldn't have. There was no basis for it because the Old Testament had clearly outlined that God doesn't play favorites (e.g. Isa. 33:8). In Acts 10:34 Peter said, "... I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." That wasn't anything new. Peter should have known that before, and so should have the other Jews. They knew the Old Testament.

3. THE COMMAND

Jesus had said as much Himself. His parting words to the disciples were: "... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). He also said to make disciples and baptize them in the name of Christ (Mt. 28:19). Jesus had clearly indicated that fellowship in Christ was non exclusiveit is wide open and available to all. There shouldn't have been any need for Jesus to remind them of God's plan; nevertheless, a traditional Judaistic prejudice had been established.

In Galatians 3:2628 Paul says, "For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek" You are all one in Christthat's the message of Christianity. There's no distinction of race. When Christ came, God's promise was fulfilled. God had promised that in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:13). "Salvation is of the Jews" (Jn. 4:22) in that they were to preach its freedom to the rest of the world. The Jews weren't given the gospel as an end but as a means. All men are equally in need of salvation, and all men are equally unable to provide it, so God provides it for all men. There can be no prejudice. Christ came to be the Savior of the world.

Review

Acts 10 is a major chapter in the Bible because it details how the gospel began to spread to the world. We see the salvation of Gentiles as well as the salvation of individuals. We've looked at the first three points, and now we'll consider the last three. But first of all, for salvation to come to the Gentiles, there had to be a ...

I. SOVEREIGN CALL (vv. 120; see pp. xxxx, xxxx)

II. SUBMISSIVE WILL (vv. 2133; see pp. xxxx, xxxx)

III. SIMPLE PRESENTATION (vv. 3443)

A. The Introduction (vv. 3435; see pp. xxxx, xxxx)

B. The Theme (vv. 3642; see pp. xxxx)

C. The Invitation (v. 43; see p. xx)

"To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission [forgiveness] of sins."

Peter is saying, "Cornelius, you can have salvation. Here's what it is and here's how you can get it." But the narrative doesn't tell us what happened. It only says that the Holy Spirit interrupted Peter's sermon in verse 44. You say, "What were the results?" Peter had results; he never preached without results. His audience either came running to Christ or got angry. For example, after Peter's first great sermon in Acts 2, three thousand people were saved. Why that many? The Spirit of God had prepared their hearts. On another occasion, Peter preached before the Sanhedrin (Ac. 4:512). What happened? They became furious. Why? Because there was no preparatory work of the Spirit they had already willfully rejected Christ. Peter presented the gospel to them and even offered them an invitation: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Ac. 4:12). Nothing happened in response but animosity, bitterness, and hatred.

There are two things that make the difference in salvation: a sovereign call and a submissive will. When both are present, salvation occurs; when they are not present, salvation does not occur. When God has not prepared a man's heart, the only response to the gospel will be animosity or indifference. But in Cornelius's case, God had prepared his heart. So Peter says that salvation is available in Christ by faith. Cornelius and all his guests believed the message. You say, "Where does the text say that?" It doesn't, but verse 44 gives the results: "While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the word." God doesn't give His Holy Spirit to unbelievers; He gives Him to believers. There is no verse that says, "Cornelius and everyone else believed, and they all received Christ into their lives." It doesn't need to be there. The only thing that is necessary is to see what happened to them that verifies their salvation. And that's the only way man can verify anyone's salvation. Matthew said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits...." (Mt. 7:16). The only way anyone can see what God did in the lives of those Gentiles is to see what happened in their lives.

Three things led up to the salvation of the Gentiles: Sovereign Call, Submissive Will, and Simple Proclamation. After they were saved, three things followed: Spiritual Power, Symbolic Confession, and Sweet Fellowship. Let's start with ...

IV. SPIRITUAL POWER (vv. 4446a)

A. The Pentecost of the Gentiles (v. 44)

"While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the word."

What a thrill it must have been to preach the gospel and have everyone in the crowd get saved! His message was suddenly interrupted while he was speaking. In Acts 11:15 he reported this to the leaders in Jerusalem: "... as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning." He gave his message and the Spirit came. You say, "What does that mean?" The minute Peter said, "Salvation is available in Christ by faith," they believed. That was all they needed to hear.

1. AN IMMEDIATE INDWELLING

When someone believes in Christ, God immediately grants him His Holy Spirit. You don't have to wait for Him, contrary to what you might hear. Peter didn't have to tell Cornelius and his company how to get the Holy Spirit. There are some Pentecostals who teach that you receive the Holy Spirit after salvation. David DuPlessis, a Christian author who writes from a Pentecostal viewpoint, says that Cornelius was already saved, and that Acts 10 records the occasion when he received the Holy Spirit (God Has No Grandsons [Dallas: Privately Printed, 1960], pp. 34). The problem with that is what Peter reported in Acts 11:14 about what the angel told Cornelius: "[Peter] shall tell thee words, by which thou and all thy house shall be saved." If this was the occasion when Cornelius received the Holy Spirit, why did Peter preach the gospel to him? That doesn't make any sense. This was Cornelius's salvation. The moment he believed in Christ, God interrupted Peter and said in effect, "That's sufficient, Peter. They got the message. I'm giving them the Spirit because they believe." God doesn't withhold the Spirit from the believing heart. It is wrong to tell someone that they can be saved but not have the Holy Spirit.

God gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles. This was the Pentecost of the Gentiles. God gave them the Spirit when they believed. That became the norm for every believer from that point on. When a man believes in Christ, God gives him the Holy Spirit. There are no tricks involved. The first thing that happens when you put your faith in Christ is that God instantly gives you His Spirit to dwell within you. From then on, His presence is as eternal as your salvation. God even interrupted Peter to give the Spirit to Gentiles. That is the immediate result of saving faith: The Spirit indwells the believer.

You Don't Have to Wait for the Spirit

People today are saying, "I'm searching for the Holy Spirit," or, "I'm seeking the baptism of the Spirit," or, "I'm saved but I haven't received the Spirit yet." I want to clarify this confused issue: The moment you put your faith in Christ that very instantly you receive the presence of the Spirit of God within you. You don't wait for Him, and you don't have to do something to earn Him; He is given to you the moment you believe. That is absolutely clear in Scripture:

1. EZEKIEL 36:26-27

"A new heart also will I give you ..." (v. 26). A man needs a new heart because the old one is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Ezekiel continues, "... and a new Spirit will I put within you [salvation and the Spirit come at the same moment]; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep Mine ordinances, and do them" (vv. 26-27). If you didn't have the Holy Spirit, you wouldn't obey God because you wouldn't have the capacity to do that. It would be ridiculous for God to say, "Now you're a Christian. If you obey Me, then I will give

you the Spirit." You wouldn't have the power to do what you needed to do because you need the Spirit to have the power to do anything. Zechariah 4:6 says, "... Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the +LORD of hosts." The Spirit is the only source of energy or power to do anything that pleases God.

2. JOHN 14:17

"Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." There are no qualifications for receiving the Spirit. God promises to give Him to us.

3. JOHN 7:37-39

I believe that we receive the Spirit at the moment of salvation, and this passage will help to make that clear.

a. The Promises (Jn. 7:37-38)

1) Spiritual Refreshment (Jn. 7:37)

The Feast of Tabernacles had been going on. Water was poured out during the feast to symbolize God's sustenance of Israel when the nation wandered in the wilderness. The people repeated Isaiah's words about drinking at the wells of salvation (Isa. 12:3). At the moment everyone looked at the water being poured out, Jesus stood up and said, "... If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink" (v. 37). Jesus took advantage of the situation and used it as an illustration for Himself. He was saying, "If you're thirsty, you can drink." Salvation could have come to those people that day if they had turned to Jesus Christ. The Lord said this to a Samaritan woman that He met at a well: "If you believe in Me, I'll give you water and you'll never be thirsty again" (Jn. 4:14). The people were given the promise that they could have spiritual refreshment a spring of the pure, cleansing water of life inside them.

2) Spiritual Reproduction (Jn. 7:38)

"He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water."

There is a twofold promise: One, you're going to receive living water; two, it's going to gush out of you. That means there'll be spiritual refreshment for me, and that the water of life will flow out of me to the world. That's evangelism!

b. The Power (Jn. 7:39)

John 7:39 is the key: "But this spoke He of the Spirit, whom they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Jesus is saying, "You can believe in Me and drink the water of life. Some day, the water of life will gush out of you to the world, but that won't happen until the Spirit comes." The principle is this: All who believe will receive the Spirit. Who receives the Spirit? Those who believe in Christ. That's the only qualification.

You say, "Why didn't they receive the Spirit then?" The Spirit hadn't come yet. But once the Spirit had come, the promise was, "... ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me ..." (Ac. 1:8). Jesus is saying, "All you who hear, come to Me and you can have spiritual nourishment. And when the Spirit comes, the living water will become a river that gushes out to the world." In Acts 1:4 He said to His disciples, "I've told you everything you need to know; now just wait." In Luke 24:49 He said, "... but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." The disciples wouldn't have had the power to open their mouth about Christ apart from the energy of the Holy Spirit. So they did nothing until the Spirit came. When He came in Acts 2, the water of life started to flow. And it continued to flow throughout the book of Acts. The believers drowned Jerusalem in a matter of weeks! The religious leaders said, "... ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine ..." (Ac. 5:28).

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, "... ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses" If a Christian didn't receive the Holy Spirit when he was saved, he wouldn't have any capacity to communicate his faith. That would mean that you were saved without the energy to reproduce. I don't believe that the Lord saves a man, sends him into the world, but doesn't give him the energy to communicate his salvation. That's contrary to everything we know about the commission that God has given to us (Mt. 28:19-20). So the power behind the flow of the living water is the Spirit of God.

4. JOHN 16:7

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." Jesus left and sent the Spirit. There aren't any qualifications for receiving the Spirit except believing in Christ. Where is He right now? He is where He had to be to send the Spirit with the Father (Jn. 16:10). At the very moment when someone believes wherever he may be in the world the Spirit of God is dispensed into his heart. If that is not true, then we have no power to witness or be obedient.

In Acts 2 the believers received the Holy Spirit, and the water flowed. John 7:39 says, "... this spoke of the Spirit, whom they that believe on Him should receive" That's the only qualification if you believe in Christ, then you receive the Spirit.

Why do believers need the Holy Spirit?

You need the Holy Spirit. If we didn't have Him, then we would be totally incapacitated. We need Him ...

1. FOR POWER IN WITNESSING

You couldn't communicate the gospel effectively without the Spirit. Jesus didn't say, "Go into the world and preach the gospel. If you're good, I'll give you My Spirit."

2. FOR PRAYER

Romans 8:26-28 says, "... the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good" I want the Spirit in my life because He's praying for me. He's my advocate on earth, as Christ is my advocate in heaven. You can't be without the Spirit; you would have no advocate on earth beseeching God for you and straightening out your prayer life.

3. FOR SECURITY

People who believe that the Spirit comes later also have trouble with eternal security. If you haven't got the Spirit, you won't have any security. In Ephesians 1:13 Paul is talking about Christ: "In whom ye also [are]" Some translations add the word trusted, but that is not accurate. Paul is saying that Christians are in Christ. Verse 13 continues, "... after ye heard the word of truth ... in whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise". He is the seal, and you must have Him to be sealed.

You say, "What does the seal mean?" In Daniel 6 the king's cohorts decided to feed the king's ego and eliminate Daniel at the same time. So they said that anyone who worshiped another God and didn't bow down to the king would be thrown into a den of lions (v. 7). But Daniel went about his daily routine of prayer, so he was thrown into the lions' den (v. 16). The king sealed the den (v. 17). The seal signified security. No one could let Daniel out. The only one that could break the seal was a higher authority, and there was no higher authority than the king. When Jesus was buried, the Roman soldiers sealed His tomb (Mt. 27:66). That signified that Rome secured the grave. Only a higher authority than Rome could open it and God did. So the seal signified security.

When you were saved, God said, "You're secure." And He gave you the Holy Spirit as a seal. The only one who could ever violate that security would be a higher power than God and none exists. The Spirit guarantees that we, as believers, belong to God. It is no wonder that people who don't believe you receive the Spirit at salvation also don't believe in the security of salvation. If they followed their theology consistently, as soon as they received their so-called baptism of the Spirit, they would also be secure, but they don't believe that either. I need the Spirit for power in witnessing, for prayer, and for security.

4. FOR AUTHENTICITY

In 1 Kings 21 king Ahab told his wife Jezebel that he wanted Naboth's vineyard (v. 6). So Jezebel wrote a letter and sealed it with the king's seal (v. 8). That seal meant that it was an authentic letter. Do you know how you can determine an authentic Christian? He has the King's seal: the Holy Spirit. If you didn't have the Holy Spirit, you wouldn't be saved. He is the guarantee of the seal. Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." How can you know you're saved? Verse 16 says, "... the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." If you didn't have the Spirit to give witness to your spirit, you wouldn't know you were saved. Do you think God wants to save you and then say, "I know you're saved, but I want to keep it a secret?" That wouldn't make any sense. You must have the seal of the Spirit of God.

5. FOR A PROMISE OF INHERITANCE

In Ephesians 1:14 the Holy Spirit is called "the earnest of our inheritance." You say, "But how do you know you're going to get the Spirit?" The word "earnest" is *arrab^{on}* in Greek. It means two things: The first is "down payment." God has given you the Holy Spirit as a down payment on your full inheritance in heaven. The second meaning of *arrab^{on}* is "engagement ring." Girls, when a guy says to you, "I love you; here's a diamond ring," that means something. The point is this: God says to you, "I promise that the marriage supper of the Lamb is a reality (Rev. 19:7). I've given you My engagement ring the Holy Spirit to prove it." The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee of our full inheritance. One thing that God wants us to know is what He has given us. In Ephesians 1:17-18 Paul offers up this prayer: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and ... the riches of the glory of His inheritance" God doesn't want you in the dark about those things; that's why He has given you the Spirit as a guarantee.

6. FOR INSTRUCTION

If you didn't have the Holy Spirit, you couldn't learn anything. Who can guide you into all truth? The Holy Spirit. You say, "I can find truth on my own." No, you can't. John 16:13 says, "... He will guide you into all truth" First John 2:27 says that we don't need to be taught by men because we have an anointing from God that teaches us. That anointing is the Holy Spirit.

To say that a Christian doesn't have the Holy Spirit is to contradict his identity. That violates everything about the Christian life. Romans 8:9 says, "... if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." You must have the Holy Spirit. John 14:16-18 says, "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless" The Comforter is the Holy Spirit. There's no such person as a Christian without the Spirit. That is an impossible combination. That is a great error in the mind of many people today. It is no wonder that they have problems.

2. AN IMPORTANT VARIATION

Acts 10:44 says, "While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the word." Now you know why the Spirit came they believed in Christ and were saved. You say, "But you have failed to consider Acts 8:15-17." No, I haven't. On that occasion the Samaritans didn't receive the Holy Spirit the moment they were saved. You say, "Doesn't that prove that you receive the Spirit later?" No, it simply proves that God wanted the Jews to know that Samaritans were equal in Christ. He withheld the coming of the Spirit to the Samaritans until Peter and John arrived so that they could see the Spirit come. Then they could report that the Samaritans received the same Spirit that they had received. But the delay was unnecessary in Cornelius's case because Jews were already present. Peter brought six brethren with him (Ac. 11:12). When the Spirit came, the Jews were astonished when they saw that the Gentiles received the same Spirit they had (Ac. 10:45). The only reason there was ever a delay in the case of the Samaritans was to confirm the absolute equality of Jew and Samaritan within the church of Jesus Christ. If God had given the Spirit to the Samaritans apart from the presence of the Jewish Christians, there would have been two churches. The Samaritans and Jews would have never come together on their own because they hated each other

so much. But God brought the two together in a beautiful way.

The purpose of what happened in Acts 11:5 was to show that Jew, Samaritan, and Gentile are one in Christ. But to reveal that, there had to be some accommodation of the normal pattern regarding the coming of the Spirit during the transition period of the early church. The variations don't prove that you don't receive the Spirit at salvation; they prove that you do. The Jews could have said, "The Gentiles may have believed, but they never received the Spirit like we did." So God made sure that there were plenty of Jews present to see the Gentiles receive the Spirit. The same thing needed to occur with the Samaritans. The normal pattern for anyone who believes is that they immediately receive the Spirit of God. Then He begins to lead, pray for, secure, teach, and empower us.

3. AN ILLUMINATED FAITH

The only hint about the Gentiles' salvation is indicated at the end of verse 44: "... the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the word." There are two kinds of hearing. Many people go to church and say, "What did the pastor mean?" The first kind of hearing is hearing without understanding. Hebrews 4:2 says, "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them [unbelievers]; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." You can hear without faith, or you can hear with faith. Cornelius and his group heard the Word with faith. When they believed, God immediately dispensed the Holy Spirit to them. The Spirit comes to live within you when you hear the gospel with faith. That's what happened to many people in Acts 2:41: "... they ... gladly received his word" That is hearing with glad ears. In Acts 13:48 a similar response took place: "... when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad" The two kinds of hearing result in two kinds of responses: People were either glad or mad.

B. The Proof of Salvation (vv. 45-46a)

1. SEEING (v. 45)

"And they of the circumcision [the party that tried to make Gentiles enter Christianity through Judaism] who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The Jews knew that the Spirit was a gift, not something you earned. They couldn't believe that the Gentiles received the same thing they had.

2. HEARING (v. 46a)

"For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God...."

The Jews heard the Gentiles speak in various languages. You say, "Why did they speak in languages?" How else would the Jews have known that anything happened to the Gentiles? When you were saved, the Spirit came on you. Did any supernatural phenomena occur when you were saved? Did you speak in languages? No. You say, "Why did the Gentiles speak in languages on this occasion?" For the sake of the Jewish Christians so they would know that the Gentiles received the same thing they had.

The first group of believers spoke in languages on the day of Pentecost because people in Jerusalem who spoke different languages gathered when they heard their own languages (Ac. 2:6). The gospel was then preached to them. But in Cornelius's house, no gathering of people was necessary everyone was there and they already believed. The only thing that needed to be done was to show the Jews that the Gentiles received the same gift. But that occurred only when the Gentiles were first introduced into the church.

Nowhere in the New Testament is speaking in tongues ever recorded as happening with one individual, as is the case in most modern Pentecostal experiences. On the three occasions in the book of Acts where tongues are mentioned, they are spoken by a group of people (Ac. 2:4; 10:46; 19:6). Speaking in tongues was a phenomenon that occurred corporately to help build the church. They never occurred in the book of Acts in the experience of any one individual. Therefore, they had a place as a sign to the Jews of the equality of other groups in the unity of the church.

The first thing that happens at salvation is that you receive the Spirit. Galatians 3:2 says, "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Cornelius heard with "the hearing of faith" and he received the Holy Spirit. The first result of salvation is spiritual power. The second result is ...

V. SYMBOLIC CONFESSION (vv. 46b48a)

A. The Important Baptism (vv. 46b47)

"... Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?"

The implication of Peter's statement is that the Jews may have wanted to forbid their baptism. But Peter said that they had to baptize them. Baptism is important. If you have been saved but haven't been baptized, then you're being disobedient. In the early church, baptism was never separated from salvation. Ephesians 4:5 says, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Baptism is your public, symbolic confession of salvation. It symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and your identification with Him (Rom. 6:34).

B. The Improbable Baptizers (v. 48a)

"And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord...."

Can you imagine those six Jews baptizing all those Gentiles? Can you imagine what would have happened had Peter baptized them? He would have gone back to Jerusalem and said, "The Gentiles believed, were saved, and I baptized them." Then the Jewish Christians in the Jerusalem church would have said to those who accompanied Peter, "You were with him; what happened?" They might have discredited Peter's testimony. That's why Peter commanded them to baptize the Gentiles. When people get involved with something, they will usually defend it. Peter was not stupid. He wanted some corroboration to his testimony, so he had his companions do the baptizing. I believe a sign of salvation is when someone is willing to be baptized and confess Christ.

VI. SWEET FELLOWSHIP (v. 48b)

"... Then asked they him to tarry certain days."

I can usually tell when someone is really saved because they desire Christian fellowship. Have you ever seen a baby who didn't want to eat? Those new converts didn't want Peter to leave, so they asked him to stay for a few days. They wanted feeding, loving, and teaching. I believe that a person who comes to Jesus Christ honestly desires the fellowship of other Christians. I also believe he desires to know the Word of God. The Gentiles wanted fellowship. Those were blessed days as Peter shared with them.

Acts 16:14-15 says, "... a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." She argued for Paul and his company to stay. Cornelius and his company wanted Peter to stay to teach, fellowship with, and minister to them.

God is no respecter of persons. The door of salvation is thrown wide open. I hope you don't have any prejudices. I hope you're free to share the gospel with anyone and everyone. Henry George, a nineteenth-century American author and political economist, was nominated for the office of mayor of New York in 1886. He was called to a meeting at the Cooper Institute to speak to working men. The chairman of the meeting gave him a flowery introduction with the customary political rhetoric. The chairman concluded by saying, "Henry George is the friend of the working men." As soon as Mr. George rose to his feet, slowly and emphatically he said, "I would like to announce that I am not the friend of the working man." Stunned silence ensued a strange kind of bewilderment. He went on, "Nor am I the friend of capital. I am for men simply as men, regardless of any accidental or superfluous distinctions of race, creed, color, class, function, or employment." In a sense, that is what Jesus always said. He was not, and is not the friend of the Jews, the Gentiles, the rich, the poor, the prostitute. He is the friend of sinners. That includes all of us. I hope you're the friend of sinners.

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1. What was the circumcision party? What did they teach? (see p. 1)
2. According to Mark 16:15, what did Jesus indicate about who could be saved? (see p. 2)
3. What two things are necessary for salvation to occur? (see p. 3)
4. What was the result of Peter's presentation to Cornelius and his company? (Ac. 10:44; see p. 3)
5. What were the three things that followed the salvation of Cornelius and his friends? (see p. 4)
6. What does God grant to a person immediately upon his salvation? (see p. 4)

7. Why did God promise to give man a new heart? (Jer. 17:9; see p. 5)
8. Can a Christian obey God without the Holy Spirit? Why? (see p. 5)
9. What are the two promises that Christ offers the believer in John 7:37-38? Explain them. (see pp. 56)
10. According to Acts 1:8, what did Jesus promise would happen when the Holy Spirit came? (see p. 6)
11. What would happen to a Christian's ability to witness if He didn't receive the Spirit at the moment he was saved? (see pp. 67)
12. Why do believers need the Holy Spirit? Explain each reason. (see pp. 79)
13. Christ is the advocate for the believer in heaven, but who is the advocate for the believer on earth? (see p. 7)
14. What is the believer sealed with when he is saved? What does that mean? (Eph. 1:13; see p. 8)
15. What does God guarantee the believer through the Holy Spirit? (Eph. 1:14; see p. 9)
16. In Acts 8:15-17, the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit after they had been saved. Why? (see pp. 910)
17. Why did Cornelius and the other Gentiles speak in different languages when they were saved? (see p. 11)
18. What does baptism symbolize? (see p. 12)

+ponder

1. Read Acts 1:8. What does that verse indicate about the believer's ability to witness for Christ? Where does the power for witnessing come from? How are you using that power to witness today? Examine your present attitude toward witnessing. Have you been taking advantage of the power you have been given for witnessing, or have you been trying to witness in your own power? As an exercise for seeing the effect of a powerful witness, plan a schedule for reading through the book of Acts. Apply the lessons on witnessing that you learn from your reading.
2. Why do you need the Holy Spirit? (see pp. 79) How has the Spirit manifested those reasons in your life? Be specific. Thank God for His gift of the Spirit. Ask Him to increase your dependence on the Spirit and lessen your dependence on yourself.
3. Have you been baptized since you've been saved? If not, why? What naturally followed salvation in the early years of the church? Be obedient to publicly confess your salvation and identify yourself

with Jesus Christ through baptism.

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