

- I. **Peter and the Critics at Jerusalem** (vv. 1-3)
 - a. Peter’s ministry among the Gentiles is criticized by the “circumcision crowd.”
 - b. The *old guard* had to overcome 2,000 years of deep-rooted prejudice. (*It’s All About Us Syndrome*)
 - c. According to God’s plan for salvation and righteous judgment, there are only two groups of people the lost and saved. **God Receives All Christians Equally**
 - d. When man judges with unrighteous methods placing people in groups, although with good intentions, will often times experience unrighteous outcomes.
- II. **Peter Defends His Ministry at the House of Cornelius** (vv. 5-18)
 - a. He tells the naysayers about his vision from God and his visit to Caesarea.
 - b. “Three times” (I couldn’t see it. I wouldn’t see it. Now I see it clearly) (v.10)
 1. Three were connected with vision, three were connected with the visitors.
 2. The corroborating testimony of six witnesses now called “brothers”. (v. 12)
 3. The gift of the Holy Spirit is consistent. (Acts 1:8;2:1-4; 10:44-46)
 - c. *Who was I to stand in God’s way?* God does not show partiality. (v. 17)
 - d. The Jerusalem council “held their peace” (v.18). The door had been opened to reach the Gentiles.
- III. **From Jew first thinking to Kingdom first thinking**
 - a. A church flourished in Antioch. (v.19-21) It was an interesting mixed bag of people.
 1. It was the 3rd largest city in the Roman Empire; 200,000 people with diverse pagan cultures.
 2. Some believers fled to this region to escape hostility in Jerusalem and preached Jesus to the Jews.
 - b. *Breaking the “Jew only” mindset.* A great number of Gentiles also believed in the Lord.
 1. Hellenists - Greek Jews whose lifestyles were intermingled with Gentile culture. (vv. 19, 22)
 - c. Barnabas, the son of encouragement, was sent by the Jerusalem church to help & investigate the *new church*. (vv.22-24) Barnabas seeks Paul, the right man, at the right time, and in the right place.
 1. He discovered that the believers (Jews, Hellenists, and Gentiles) in Antioch were authentic.
 - d. Barnabas and Paul taught the believers and they were first called Christians at Antioch. (v.26)
 - e. The purpose of true prophecy is not to satisfy our curiosity about the future, but to stir up our hearts to do the will of God. (vv.27-30)
 - f. It was only right for the Gentiles in Antioch to reciprocate and send material help to their Jewish brothers and sisters in Judea.
 - g. When the message of Christ moved from the Jews to the Samaritans and the Gentiles, the “all things in common” program gradually faded away.
 - h. What happened between Acts 4:34 and this passage? Why was there now lack in the church?
- IV. **Thoughts and Considerations for Action**
 - a. Whenever we limit the spread of the Gospel we can hinder the Lord’s work among His people. The early church leaders were to defend the Gospel and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, guides us and opens new borders for us to venture into. The Lord does not give us new directives but echoes and specifies His will to us.
 - c. As Peter presented evidence of Gentile salvation, Barnabas also gave witness.
 - d. We must present the identifying marks of a Christian and continue to present ourselves as authentic believers. Authenticity is best demonstrated in how we love inside and outside the church. (Luke 6:32-38)