

A SURVEY OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

7. WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH Acts 10:46

Adult Sunday School
Gethsemane Baptist Church
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WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH

Acts 10:46

“The death of Stephen marked the end of phase one of the Christian movement. That phase has seen Jerusalem thoroughly saturated with the Gospel. The city had by no means become predominately Christian but it had been confronted with the message of Christ on every level of its society. Priests, Sanhedrin, Hellenists, and Hebrews had all heard of the resurrection of Christ, and thousands had responded with faith” (Kent. P. 75) In chapter 8 the persecution of the church begins and proves to be the thing that spreads the message of Jesus throughout the region. Philip, the evangelist, is used of God to preach in Samaria and later wins an Ethiopian eunuch to Christ who carries the Good News of Jesus into North Africa. Chapter 9 recounts the circumstances of the conversion of Saul who had been “*consenting unto his [Stephen’s] death.*” Saul had been a leading force in the persecution of the church. He was “*yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.*” (Vs. 9:1) He said that he, “*persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.*” (Vs. 22:4) Yet, on the road to Damascus he was stopped by the Lord Jesus. Jesus said of him, “*he is a chosen vessel unto me, to*

bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." (Vs. 9:15) Saul became a mighty tool in the hand of God to move many to faith in Christ. He was used to establish many churches across Asia Minor.

As severe as the persecution was God did send his people, the Church, a time of rest. *"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."* (Vs. 9:31) In this time of respite God sent the Apostle Peter on a preaching tour. During this time God shows His people that He died for all men everywhere. God shows Peter a vision of a great sheet being lowered down from Heaven. It was filled with many kinds of animals. God told him to eat of the animals. Peter was shocked because as a devout Jew he had never disobeyed the dietary laws. God was teaching him that he was to change his thinking about what was clean and unclean. *"What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."* (Vs.10:15) The lesson was that God was going to send the Gospel to the Gentiles. And that many would be saved. "The apostle understood the significance of the vision given to him on the rooftop. He realized that the distinction between clean and unclean foods had an application to human beings, and that, contrary to Jewish belief, no people were to be thought of as unclean in the sight of God. God shows no partiality to any one

people. A person who fears God and does what is right, whether he be Jew or gentile, is accepted by God. This was a great lesson for a Jew to learn, and it marks a definite step in the extension of the church from a Jewish fellowship to a universal basis.” (Wycliffe. P. 1143)

When Peter returned to Jerusalem he was upbraided by the other Apostles and the brethren of the church. *“They that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.”* (Vs 11:2b-3) He then explained that he was directed to do so by God. In the first half of chapter 11 he recounts the entire story. Upon hearing how God worked, *“they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”* (Vs. 11:18)

The extension of the Gospel to others was a major step in the life of the Church. The Jews had been commanded in the Law to have no interaction with the Gentile world. When they had interacted with the gentiles they had been tempted to go to the gentile’s gods. Now, however, God is sending His people to the world. Peter taught the house of Cornelius in chapter 10, *“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons”* (Vs. 10:34) Later on he says, *“And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give*

all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” (Vs. 10:42-43)

This is the reason today that the church of Jesus Christ is an evangelistic church. His instruction for us is to, *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”* (Matt. 28:19) We have the message of life for all. We are to preach it to as many as will hear and “WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH” will be saved.

Ideas to consider:

1) Why did it take persecution to cause the church to begin to reach out with the Gospel to other areas?

2) How should we apply Acts 10:15 in our churches today?

3) Why was Peter rebuked by the church leadership in Jerusalem?

4) Why is the church of Jesus Christ an evangelistic church today?

Notes:
