

Fifth Sunday of Easter

GOD CLEANS UP OUR PROFANITY

Acts 11: 1-18

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Analysis by Mark A Marius

¹Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. ²So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, ³saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" ⁴Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, ⁵"I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. ⁶As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. ⁷I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' ⁸But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' ¹⁰This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. ¹¹At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. ¹²The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is

called Peter; ¹⁴he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' ¹⁵And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷If then God gave them the same gift that God gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" ¹⁸When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."



Illustration from *Treasures of the Bible* by Henry Davenport Northrop, 1894. Found on [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treasures_of_the_Bible)

It is Christ's love by which we are judged righteous. It is this love that draws us all together into the clean sheet of heaven. By the cross of Christ God has redeemed the world thereby making the profane praiseworthy.

DIAGNOSIS: Hindered by the Law

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Criticizing

Outsiders accepting the word of God? How wonderful. Let's throw a party. Unfortunately, we are quicker to berate than celebrate. Our honor is reserved for those whom we deem measure up to the law. So outsiders accepting the word of God alone doesn't put them on par with us. There are laws that still must be followed, as we misconstrue God's word, by hearing, "'Law' one another as I have 'lawed' you."

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Distinctive

Distinctions are so important to our identity. Without them we are not special, we are not chosen, and deep in our heart we don't trust we have value. The distinction of a faithful law abider is our claim to discipleship, regardless of what God says. So we hold onto the distinction the law gives us, because we don't want to blend in for fear of getting lost, losing out, or getting left be-hind.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Profane

Using the law to exclude those whom God has chosen to include has us standing outside of God's kingdom. Our criticism of others and our self-proclaimed righteousness has led us to profanity. Curse all we want, the distinction we made for ourselves of the law clearly keeps us from receiving the life God is giving us.



Photo by [Alem Sánchez](#) found on [Pexels](#)

PROGNOSIS: Loved into Heaven

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Clean Sheet

The good news of the cross is that the profanity of our human condition doesn't end in calamity. All thanks to Christ's love unleashed in our world. It is this love by which we are judged righteous. It is this love that draws us all together into the clean sheet of heaven. By the cross of Christ God has redeemed the world thereby making the profane praiseworthy. It is this love we cherish above all else.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Baptized with the Same Holy Spirit

Our distinction is no longer between one and another but given to us all by God. He distinctively calls us all children and gives us all the same Holy Spirit to guide us. When we trust that our value is God given, we are free to glimpse God's value in others. Through sacramental living we experience Christ presence in what we eat and drink, as well as in the lives of others.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): A Life of Repentance

Celebrating replaces our berating, especially as we live a life of repentance. The barriers of the law have been replaced by the benefits of love. In love we are forgiven and by love we forgive. There is no better life to share.