

Sermons
New Testament
Acts
11:1-18
"Repentance unto Life"

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St

Name: L. J. Stevenson

Assignment: 9

Date: Nov. 28, 1942

Homiletical unity: Acts 11:1-18

Text: Acts 11:18b

Theme: Repentance unto life for all people.

Proposition: God has granted repentance unto life to all people.

Audience: Average adult church congregation.

Scripture Lesson, Acts 11:1-18:

"And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

"But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord; for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath ~~xxxx~~ cleansed, that call not thou common. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. And behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to

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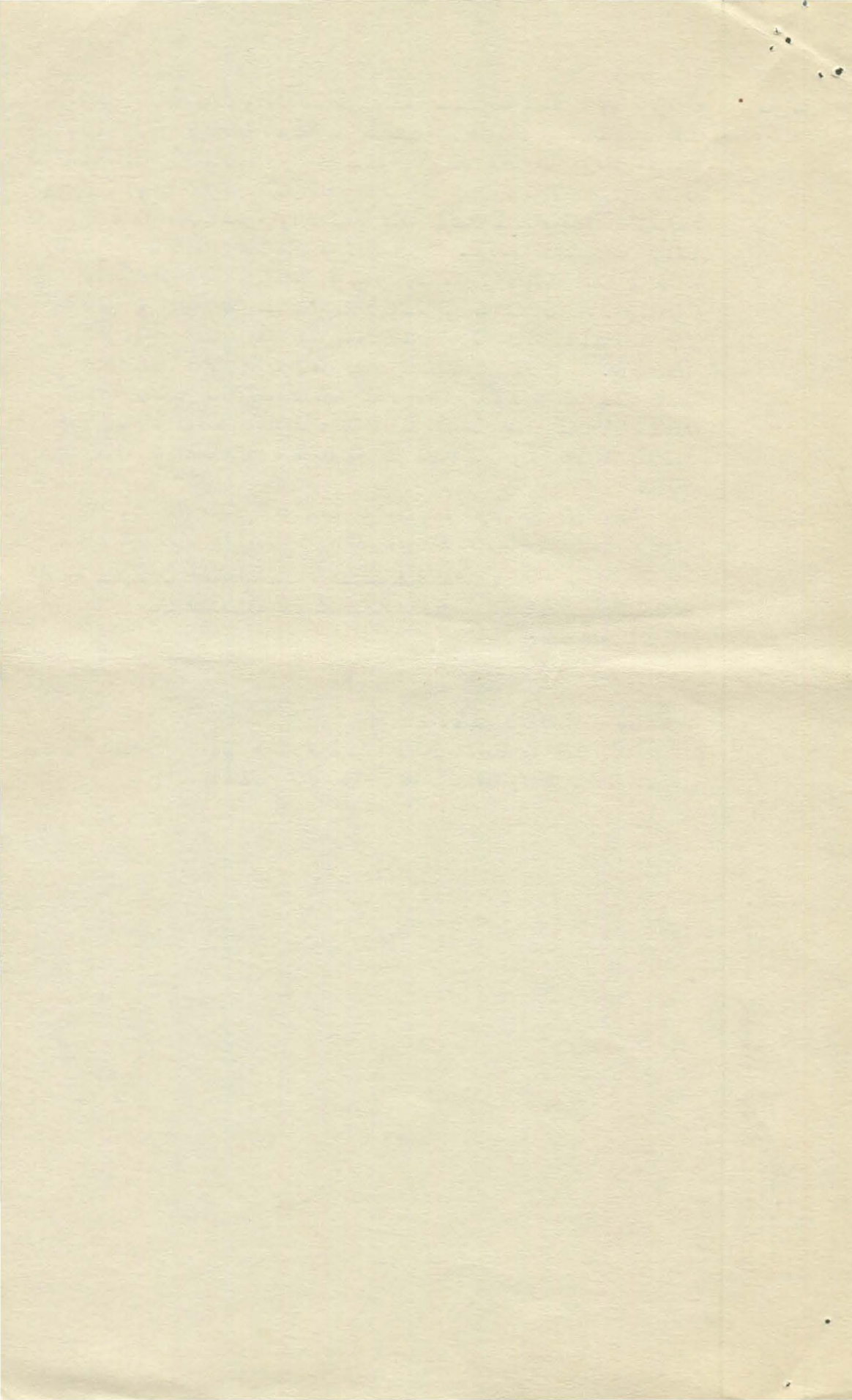
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Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God:

"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto Life."

Text: Acts 11:18b:

"Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."



Introduction:

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There are three things which we need to grasp in getting clear the true meaning of this passage of Scripture.

1. An explanation of the story presented so ~~that we will understand as well as possible what happened.~~

2. A correct connotation of the *phrase* term "repentance unto life;" and

3. The major question in this story.

1. An explanation of the story.

a. Effects of the rumor of Peter's work among the Gentiles. Rumor had produced an unfavorable attitude toward Peter because of his work among the Gentiles. He was not, however, summoned to Jerusalem, seemingly, but on his first appearance there was called to explain his action to the apostles. He took six men with him as witnesses. He did not deny the accusations made against him.

b. The question was not a race question. It was a question of religious particularism brought about because the scruples of Jewish religious custom had not been observed in dealing with the new Gentile converts.

c. The apostles could not oppose God. Peter told the story at length and appealed to his witnesses to corroborate the fact of the presence of the Holy Spirit. This fact was too powerful for them and they had to confess that "then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

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2. Connotation of the ^{phrase} term "repentance unto life."

a. Webster's definition of the term "repent:" "To amend or resolve to amend one's life as a result of contrition for one's sins." This is the definition we will assume.

b. Connotation of the words "unto life:" Clearly in the Scripture the life unto which the Gentiles could also be granted repentance was the Christian life, which included Christian conceptions of immortality. This is the meaning we will here assume.

3. The major question in this story: Is repentance unto life granted to all people? This is the question that the passage causes me to ask, and this is the question that the passage answers for me. This is the question that we are considering here.

I. Meaning of the term "Gentiles:"

1. "Gentiles" or "Goyim," was a term used by the Israelites for non-Israelitish nations in the time of Paul. Jewish exclusiveness began with Ezra. To enter the house of or to eat with a Gentile meant ceremonial uncleanness. A proselyting tendency developed by the side of this tendency. Only through the portals of Judaism could Gentiles gain salvation, however, according to the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah approached a conception of a universal religion, but this was an exception. Even the Hellenistic Jews had a contempt

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for all outside Judaism. Conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christians was intensified by the pride and exclusiveness of the Jewish Christians, which was in turn intensified by the work of Paul. Thus the word "Gentile" meant any who had not undergone Jewish religious initiatory rites.

2. "Gentiles" can, then, be interpreted to mean "all peoples."

II. Conditions of "repentance unto life."

1. True repentance. In the sense of repentance as we have already defined it.

2. Faith in the Christian way of life and a determination to live the Christian life.

3. These conditions can be met by all men.

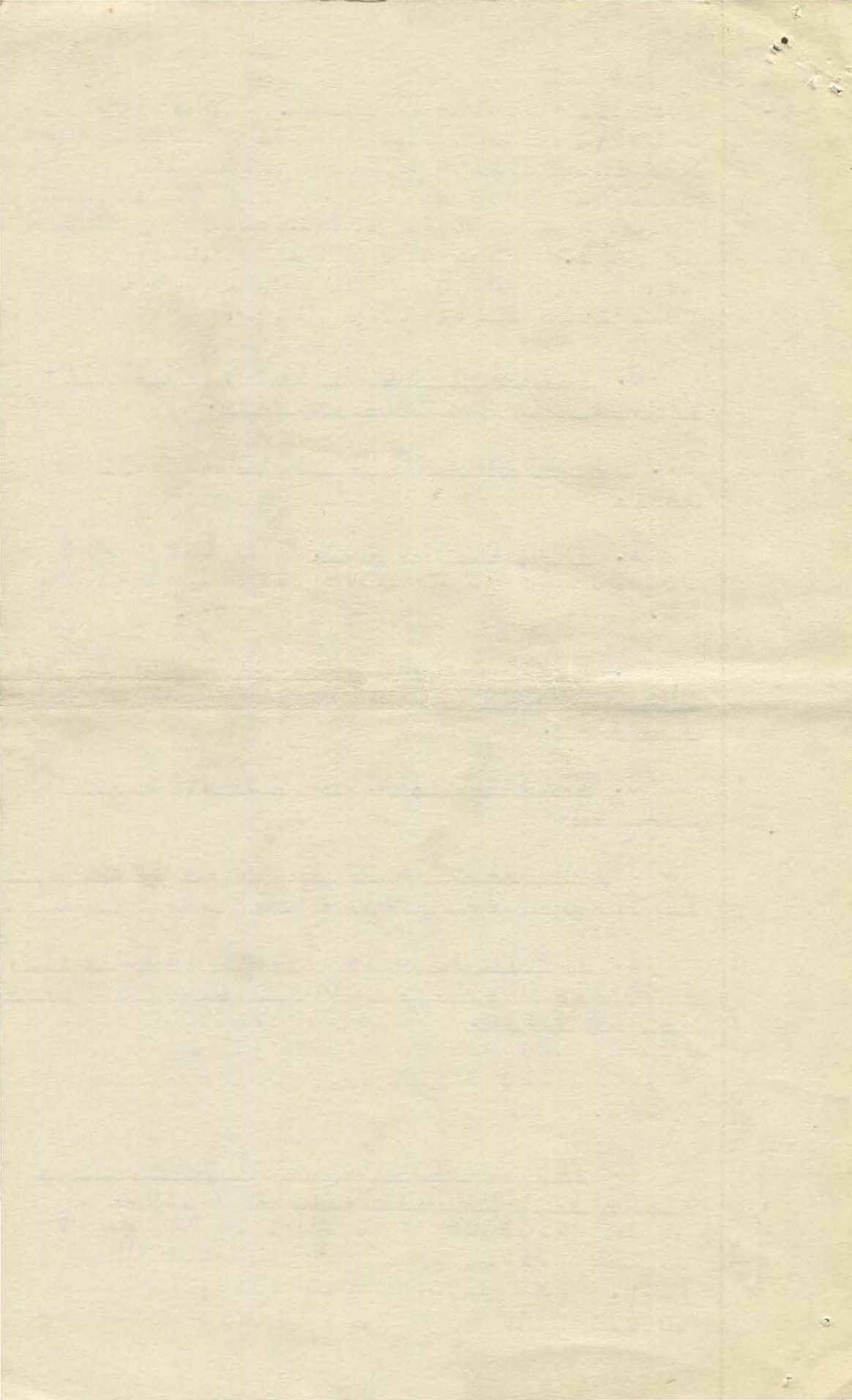
III. The evidence of the centuries that repentance is granted unto all people.

1. The rapid spread of Christianity, from its infancy, among all the peoples of the earth. This is evidence that repentance was experienced and a new way of life begun by peoples of all races.

2. The contributions of men of all races to the Christian tradition. Again evidence that race is no barrier to the privilege of repentance unto life. Examples: Eulogius, Spanish theologian; Augustine, African theole-

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gian; St. Francis, Italian saint; Kagawa, present-day Japanese Christian leader.

Conclusion: God has granted repentance unto life:

1. To all who will accept this repentance.

2. Therefore to all people, for the only condition is acceptance. A gift refused is still a gift even though it does not benefit the recipient. God grants repentance unto life to all people even though many will not accept.

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