

Peter's Pastoral Ministry – Part II

Evidenced by Evangelism

(Acts 10:1-48)

Introduction:

1. Perhaps it was no accident that Peter stayed in the house of Simon the tanner.
 - The message of the Gospel transcends _____, _____ and even _____ barriers.
 - The marching orders that Jesus gave to the disciples were to take the gospel to _____, _____, _____ and the _____ parts of the earth. (Acts 1:8)
 - 1) Peter and John had already witnessed the transformation in the lives of the Samaritans who heard the gospel from Phillip.
 - 2) Although we are not told about Simon the tanner's spiritual condition; we do know that his mere occupation was repulsive to a Jew who followed the Mosaic Law & the Talmud. He may have been a Samaritan or a Gentile, no one really knows for sure. Peter's presence in Simon's house was evidence that Peter cared for him and was willing to cross those barriers to accomplish the Lord's command to go and preach the Gospel to all peoples.

2. The next challenge that will be presented to Peter is to reach out to a Gentile named Cornelius. This might be difficult because a strict Jew (one who followed the Mosaic Law – written Law, and the Talmud - Oral Law) would not associate with a Gentile:
 - A strict Jew would not be a guest in the home of a Gentile nor would they invite a Gentile to their home.
 - Dirt from a Gentile country was considered defiled and not worthy to remain on the sandals of a Jew – thus they would shake it off before returning to Jewish soil in a symbolic way of saying Gentiles were not worthy.
 - Jews would not eat food that was prepared by Gentiles, and even cooking utensils purchased from Gentiles had to be purified before they were used by a Jew.
 - Even a Gentile who converted (proselytized) to Judaism was limited in their acceptance within Judaism.
3. Although Peter was Jewish – his heart was softened by the Holy Spirit and what is recorded here in Acts 10 reveals the breaking down of the barrier between the Jew and the Gentile by the transforming power of the Gospel! (Ephesians 2:11-22)
4. Questions/Comments:

Witnessed Through the Eyes of a Sinner (Acts 1:1-8)

1. A little background on Cornelius:

- He was a _____ which means he was in charge of _____ soldiers in a total regiment/cohort of 600 men.
 - 1) Just in case you are interested – a Roman legion at full strength consisted of 6000 men made up of 10 regiments.
 - 2) In a Roman legion there were a total of 60 centurions and they made up the backbone of the Romans army. Very trustworthy and get the job done type men. They would rather die at their post than surrender to the enemy.
 - 3) The New Testament presents a centurion in a favorable light in most cases. (Matthew 8:5-10, Mark 15:44-45)
- Luke tells us that he was “a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually” (Acts 1:2)
 - 1) He must have abandoned the pagan practice of his ancestors (the Romans) and by description (“**one who feared God**”) chose to worship Jehovah. He probably worshipped in the synagogue but was not a full fledged proselyte for he wasn’t circumcised. (Acts 11:3)
 - 2) His spiritual life was evidenced by a willingness to give alms/offerings to the Jewish people.
 - 3) He was also a man of _____

2. If Cornelius was a “devout man” why did he need to meet with Peter? (See Acts 11:14)

3. How did Cornelius respond to the words of the angel and what conclusions can we draw from this? (Acts 10:7-8)
4. What does this say about God's compassion for the lost no matter what their ethnicity, social, or religious background?

Witnessed Through the Eyes of a Saint (Acts 10:9-23)

1. Peter was still in Joppa at Simon the tanners house and Luke tells us; "On the next day as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray". (Acts 10:9)
 - This means that both men (Cornelius and Peter) were under divine supervision (God's direction) and will receive (in essence) the same instructions and guidance to achieve divine results (God's will) which would be the salvation of Cornelius and his household. Their salvation will also have an even greater impact but we'll discuss that in more detail later on.
 - Take note that Peter was committed to prayer
 - 1) A Jew normally prayed in the morning and evening and most conclude that the Apostles followed this pattern at a minimum.
 - 2) Were told here that Peter went to the housetop to pray about the 6th hour (noon time) and this would have also been consistent with others in the Old Testament who prayed at least three times a day. (Ps. 55:17, Dan. 6:10)
 - Why did Peter go to the roof top to pray?

2. It is a little ironic that Peter becomes hungry, falls into a trance and receives a vision that has to do with food. This becomes a wonderful object lesson as the Lord will show a simple comparison of unclean food to unclean people. Peter is instructed that both are acceptable to touch in God's eyes.
- Why did Peter object to eating the unclean animals? (Leviticus 11)
 - What was God's response to Peter's objections? (Acts 10:15)
 - 1) What was the real point that the Lord was trying to get across to Peter? (See Mark 7:14-23, I Timothy 4:4)
 - 2) Is there any significance to Peter refusing three times to eat the unclean food? (Acts 10:16)
 - What was Peter's initial response to the vision? (Acts 10:17)
 - Describe how the Holy Spirit assists Peter in coming to an understanding of the meaning of the vision? (Acts 10:18-22)
3. What does Peter do that shows obedience to the Lord? (Acts 10:23)

Witnessed Through Answered Prayer (Acts 10:23-33)

1. Peter leaves the town of Joppa along with six other people and heads to Caesarea (see map page 180) to meet with Cornelius.
2. Cornelius seemed to anticipate Peter's arrival:
 - He was _____ for them
 - He gathered his family and close friends to meet with Peter
3. Why did Cornelius bow down before Peter and worship him?
4. How did Peter respond to this worship and why did he respond that way?
5. What lesson did Peter learn from his vision? (Acts 10:28-29)
6. Cornelius may have expressed through his prayer the desire to hear the Gospel or perhaps to know the Lord in an even more meaningful way. (Acts 10:30-31)
 - We already know he was a devout man
 - We also know that he was a giving man

- Perhaps these actions led him to a place where he wanted to know the Lord in a real way and “Judaism” was insufficient in filling that need.
 - 1) Do man made religions often leave us wanting?
 - 2) What is usually lacking in religions that do not believe in Jesus as Lord?
7. It may be that Cornelius did not even fully realize or understand how his prayer was answered – but God’s plan (as is so often the case) of blessing went beyond what Cornelius may have asked for.
- The Lord honored the dedication of Cornelius for the angel said; “Cornelius your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God” (Acts 10:31)
 - That answer will come in the form of hearing the Good News by Peter himself. Cornelius and his family are ready to hear that message.
8. Questions/Comments:

Witnessed Through the Proclamation of the Good News (Acts 10:34-46)

1. First let's understand what Peter is teaching here in Acts 10:34-35.
 - Peter claims that he understands (*now*) that God does not show partiality.
 - 1) This of course is contrary or revolutionary to years or generations of teachings within Judaism that Gentiles are unworthy.
 - 2) This is nothing new as God has not excluded Himself from Gentiles nor has He excluded Gentiles from Himself. (Read the Book of Jonah, also note His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3)
 - 3) It is true that the Old Testament teaches that the Jews were God's chosen people and the special recipients of His promises and revelations.
 - 4) What Peter will declare is that Jesus gave them (the Apostles) the special task of preaching the "Good News" that Jesus Christ is "Lord of All" and the One responsible for removing any barriers that exist between Jews and Gentiles (Romans 2:11, 3:29-30). In other words – all are welcome to hear the Gospel. In the same way as the Jews; some will accept the message and others will reject it.
 - Some use this passage to teach a sort of "universalism" in which God somehow accepts those who are sincere on the basis of their works. Remember though it is faith that saves us (Heb. 11:1, 6 Romans 1:17)
 - 1) It is true that the world is responsible to God; "He has told you O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8)

- 2) Any person (Jew or Gentile) needs to realize their first responsibility to God is to fear Him. (Ecclesiastes 12:13)
 - 3) A healthy fear of God results in _____ (doing what is right) and this leads to _____ God (the evidence of faith).
 - 4) Peter is not teaching that Cornelius was already “saved by his works” (see Acts 11:14); but that he and anyone else who pursues God are suitable candidates for salvation because they are willing to hear and obey the message of the Gospel. The Scripture teaches that this pursuit of God is initiated and driven by the Holy Spirit. (John 6:44, John 16:8-11, also check out Acts 11:18, II Tim. 2:25)
2. Peter describes exactly what the Good News is by telling them about Jesus (Acts 10:36-46)
- This text (a summary of the life of Christ) parallels the Gospel of Mark almost perfectly which makes sense as many people conclude that Peter dictated his account of the life of Christ to Mark who was one of his close companions while in Rome. Mark will go on to pen these words in what we know as the **Gospel of Mark**.
 - Peter’s statement; “*You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power*” is the equivalent of saying “**God declared Him the Messiah**”. (Isaiah 61:1-3, Luke 4:16-21, Acts 4:27)
 - 1) In making this declaration; Peter made the connection to the words spoken by Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-3) to the actions and life of Jesus.
 - 2) This was accomplished by; “*Jesus going around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil*”

- Peter further corroborates his message by declaring some very powerful truths: (Acts 10:39-41)
 - 1) First he states; “We are witnesses of all these things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem”. **What is the significance of this declaration?**
 - 2) Second he states; “They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross”. **What is the significance of this declaration?**
 - 3) Third he states; “God raised Him on the third day and granted that He become visible”. **What is the significance of this declaration?**
 - 4) Fourth he states that *God made Jesus visible*; “not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead”. **What is the significance of this declaration?**

- Peter brings the hearers to a point of decision by making it clear that Christ's ministry resulted in one of two things:
 1. _____ for those who reject Him (Acts 10:42)
 - 2) _____ for those who accept Him (Acts 10:43)
- It is apparent (from the following verses) that Cornelius and the other Gentiles chose to believe and embrace the words declared by Peter - that **Jesus is Lord**. How do we know this to be true? (Acts 10:44-46)

Witnessed Through Obedience (Acts 10:47-48)

1. They were _____ in obedience to the Lord's command
2. They were _____ in the things of the Lord

Concluding Remarks:

1. Although the thought of Gentiles coming to faith may have been an unusual idea to a Jew – Peter will later claim; “Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way” (Acts 11:17)
2. By Cornelius and his household coming to faith in Christ it opens the door to the uncircumcised – something the Apostles will need to deal with later.
3. The conversion of Cornelius is affirmed by Peter remaining with him; probably for the purposes of further instruction.
4. Questions/comments: