

**whose
house
is by the
seaside**

Acts 9:39 – 10:28

~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God has spent quite a bit of writing space and a whole lot of time in this ninth chapter of Acts, because it's a critical chapter of the Bible to process properly, correctly and completely. We have examined the remarkable conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and we began to consider the account of Simon Peter as he was summonsed from Lydda to Joppa to raise a dear saint in the early church from the dead, whose name was Tabitha – also known as Dorcas. In this report, we'll closely examine the beginning of the ministry of Simon Peter; but we'll quickly part ways with him as the leading of the Holy Spirit will shift away and follow Paul the apostle. We'll catch up to Peter again, though....

IX

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

~ So, we find the widows performing some sort of fashion show now. Apparently, they were very poor women. If it hadn't been for Dorcas, they likely wouldn't have had any nice clothes – perhaps no clothes at all. I feel they were attempting to display Dorcas' gift and honor it. Sewing was

Dorcas' entire ministry and consecration from the Holy Spirit. It was an extremely important gift, too.

It's interesting to me how the Holy Spirit places that obscure Bible fact down immediately next to Simon Peter's sign gift. Acts is a historical book of the New Testament, and it is the only record of Simon Peter's ministry we have. By presenting the Gospel to his own nation, Peter will be the one who opens the door to the Gentiles for Paul the apostle. Both of these great men have recorded accounts of them raising the dead. I believe they raised others from the dead, too; but this is the record given which indicates they both had these gifts.

Both men could perform miracles, heal the sick, speak in tongues and raise the dead. All four of those things are required evidence for apostleship. If you cannot perform all four gifts in the Holy Spirit, then you're not an apostle. That means we don't have any apostles running around today. These abilities are the apostolic gifts Paul will later say were the churches accreditations. That's not to say the church was built upon them, nor that they would need continue, but they established credibility in the early church they would not have had otherwise. See, they didn't have a nice leather-bound New Testament to carry around. Today, our credibility is Holy Writ. Period.

The genuine contemporary church has reached the place where it does not require sign gifts. Sign gifts only PROVED they were apostles. The sign gifts today are simply not in existence. Even if you could perform a sign gift, it doesn't prove anything to anyone anymore. You'll never lead anyone to a saving knowledge of Christ with any of the sign gifts. What's important today is whether we have the sound doctrine of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. John wrote, "...if any man come to you not having this doctrine receive them not!" John didn't say the man needed sign gifts. No, my beloved, sign gifts are not for today. We do not need them for credibility – and you do not have them.

Further, in addition to the fact that the sign gifts were not in evidence when John wrote his last epistle, I can prove very definitely that by the end of Paul's ministry he did not exercise the gift of healing – and Paul had that

gift at that time! Paul never healed Timothy, but rather, Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach problems. Moreover, Paul asked the Lord three times to remove the “thorn in his flesh” and the Lord said, “no!” – all three times. Well, Paul sure didn’t heal himself! See, friends, claiming sign gifts today is perfectly selfish non-sense from people who need to focus on themselves and not on the Lord Jesus Christ. That happens to be the case every time with that crowd. The emphasis MUST be on the Word of God and the Person of the Christ, or you deal in sorcery – like Simon the sorcerer did....

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

~ If you’ve ever been around a tanner’s place of business, you’ll know the odor created by placing skins in acidic chemical concoctions is a particularly obnoxious, putrefying and permeating smell. If you go to Joppa today, they will show you a house with a picturesque view and they claim it was the house referred to in this passage of Scripture. If you ever visit Israel, I suggest you take that part of the tour because it very well could be the house. It sure looks like it’s been there that long. Well, when we see the dispatch sent by Cornelius in the next chapter to locate Simon Peter, believe me, the smell coming from Simon’s tanning skin vats would have made it no problem to locate the right house....

X

~ And that brings us to the tenth chapter of Acts where we meet Cornelius, who was a son of Japheth. Of course, Japheth was one of the three sons of Noah. The other sons of Noah were Ham, whom the Ethiopian Eunuch from chapter eight was a son of; and now Saul, was a son of Shem. So, with this conversion, we have the entire human family of Noah accounted for in salvation. That’s absolutely remarkable; at least, to me it is....

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

~ We're now following the apostles along the coast through Joppa, and we arrive at Caesarea, which was the Roman city where Pilate lived. This was the center of government in Israel for the rulers dispatched from Rome. This centurion Italian was a devout man. That means Cornelius had devotion to, deep conviction of, and was cognizant of his own dependence upon a divine being. To him, that meant Roman pagan gods, of course. Even so, and honestly, I wish more Christians had that type of devotion and conviction to the cause of Christ; but they don't – and I digress.

Moreover, Cornelius was sincere, fearing God. Cornelius was NOT a proselyte in the strictest sense of the term, though. In today's terms, we have a man who lives in a neighborhood and attends Easter Sunday sunrise service and Christmas Eve midnight mass at this time – but that's about it. He would have been friendly towards the church, but not a born again Christian. Further, we read he gave much alms to the people. Well, the nation Israel has ALWAYS stressed and emphasized giving and donating. God had taught them that way back in the wilderness. So, Cornelius' generosity isn't surprising; it was more for show and pride than a concern for the things of God.

Most people associate giving with offering a tenth of their income; but; it should be obvious from our study through the Mosaic System that the Israelite gave MUCH more than ten percent – likely around thirty or forty percent when all was factored in. The Year of Jubilee alone made a huge difference in one's overall annual tithing amount. Of course, Israel was a theocracy, so they also gave a tithe in order for the government to function. That was true both in the wilderness and later in Jerusalem. They contributed to the poverty program God had established in His law. In addition to that, they gave at the temple and THEN they gave a tenth of everything else they produced or received. That made them a very generous people, by the way.

Many of our modern eleemosynary organizations were established by Jews. There are no people today more giving and donating than the children of Israel gave and donated in the time in which we are studying. Remember, Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell everything he had and give it to the

poor. That was the condition for the rich young ruler if he wanted to follow Jesus. The riches the young ruler had were standing directly in the path of following Christ! Even under the law, this rich young man could say he didn't do this, didn't do that and didn't do the other thing; but he failed to DO that which he should have done - GIVE!

Well, that blocked his way to God and the rich young man would have had to get over that hurdle in order to follow Jesus. So many people today put so much ahead of the Lord and literally block their own path of following Him. They go away sorrowful; not even dimly aware of what the problem is. It's not always riches, either. Sometimes, it's a business or a sin or habit; it can even be a loved one or child who absolutely blocks one's way to a proper, correct and complete relationship with our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ! If you aren't giving your life away, it's blocking you from following God.

Another thing we learn about Cornelius is how he prayed to God always. This man didn't have much light, but he desired more light - so he prayed for it. I don't think Cornelius knew very much about prayer, either, by the way. Cornelius was a man of influence, you must understand. He was a career officer in the Roman army. Even in his own household, this man held tremendous influence, as we shall read about later. According to all outward indications, Cornelius was an outstanding man. He would definitely pass as a Christian of the highest degree today. However, he isn't a Christian at this time in this passage. What we have is an example of a man who lived up to the amount of light he had been given at this particular time, which wasn't much.

John 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world ~

Cornelius had never come into the direct will and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the small amount of light he had been given, he certainly displayed for the glory of God. When Paul writes to the Romans, he will have many things to say in this connection. One thing Paul says is, "... that which may be known of God is manifest in them and God hath shown it unto them; the invisible things." Cornelius recognized there was a God, but

he just didn't know Him and didn't understand how to reach Him in reality. Now, this is where people inevitably begin to ask about the jungle dwelling heathen, and whether or not that man is lost. The answer to that question is: God will get light to those He will get light to. God told Moses He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. That's none of your business and, friends, God will enable any man to hear the Gospel who truly desires to do so. You may not be apt to find many good heathen jungle dwelling Hottentots; but we also know NONE are good and NONE are righteous - no, not one.

What we see in THIS passage are insurmountable barriers to God getting Cornelius the Gospel message. The church, as we have seen already, was a one hundred percent Jewish entity. For the first eight years of their existence, the early church was EXCLUSIVELY Jewish. Even Paul said it was "... to the Jew first..." Chronologically speaking, that was the order. Here, many Christians are beginning to come to the temple, and they are still observing certain Jewish customs. Even under grace, they could do that because they were trusting Christ.

As the Gospel broke into the areas of Samaria, the Israelites in Jerusalem were surprised - but recognized the moving of the hand of God. The door to the Gentiles was going to be opened soon, but the church didn't have any concerted effort or organized plan at this time to go out. While God was training Paul out there in the desert of Arabia, Simon Peter was unwittingly sent to open the door for Paul. Friends, I hope this study is as remarkable to you as it is to me? God is using the most prejudiced and religious bigot extremist of that day for His plan and purpose. This is a highly detailed and complicated system being presented. It could only work out under the direct supervision and leading of the Holy Spirit.

Only a Christian walk by faith, trust and obedience, directed Personally by the Spirit of God, will ever amount to anything useful for the cause of Christ in this world, my beloved. We see Cornelius now praying; he was given a vision, but he wasn't dreaming. So, Cornelius sends a dispatch of messengers down the coast to Joppa; and that really isn't very far. God is preparing the human instrument that He is going to use in this particular case. There are certain things that count in our service to God, friends; and

things that don't. That doesn't mean we work for salvation, but God sure does take note of these things as we read on here. Maybe they won't be important to you. They are to me. When we obey and do His commands, we can then take the Gospel to others – but NOT UNTIL we learn to trust and obey; and trust and obedience are inextricably intertwined, by the way. If there is any man of that caliber who can approach a modern-day Cornelius, that person will hear the Gospel of the grace of God....

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:

6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;

8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

~ As we read on, we see God prepare Simon Peter because Peter did not have the vast breadth of spiritual discernment and deep understanding Paul has been given. Peter also lacked the formal background and training

Paul had from the Sanhedrin. Even so, God uses all men very differently. We seem to have the idea that every Christian must be from the same mold; and that ideology is a tragic and tremendous mistake. Of course, that does not mean we will have differing doctrine or a different Gospel; but for Simon Peter, this is going to mean dealing with all manner of beasts, birds and bugs he doesn't want to touch – even though he is now permitted to....

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

11 And saw heaven opened , and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12 Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

~ Peter calls God "Lord," but Peter also tells Him "no!" That's just how conflicted Simon Peter really was at this time. Peter is now on the resurrection side of the Day of Pentecost, which means Peter is living in a day in which eating meat or not eating meat makes no difference to God. But he's not prepared to eat meat here, even if he's permitted to. Frankly, Simon Peter would rather have starved to death as opposed to eating anything unclean according to the Mosaic System. But Peter was sincere. He is certainly being honest with God. Well, under grace, we don't have to eat if we don't want to; but, if we want to eat, we can. It's not that which goes into the mouth, but that which comes forth from the heart that matters, friends.

The trouble with legalists is they expect everyone else to follow their rules. So, my well-meaning Christian friends: don't bother telling me what to eat or not eat because that's my business. God is leading me under GRACE – He

isn't leading me under your expectations. I don't report to you. Eating or not eating meat won't bring us into a proper, correct and complete relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Only growing in the grace and knowledge of our Savior and Lord can do that for us; and it can only be achieved through a sincere and educated Bible study. That's what the book of Acts is all about, friends. Remember, whether we eat or drink, do ALL things unto the Lord thy God. How's that working out in your life? ~

15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and, being a pagan man, he fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

~ So, we end this report with Simon Peter having lifted up Cornelius to an equal level with him, although Cornelius was not made an apostle. He continued living his life normally and naturally – but God’s way now. Peter wasn’t about to have some man kissing his feet; but Peter also breaks the cardinal rule of homiletics in his message as he offers an apology. Of course, Simon Peter is in the home of a Gentile. Peter tells Cornelius he shouldn’t even be in his house; and that’s not nice. Actually, it was a flagrant insult to Cornelius and his family. Simon Peter is saying he didn’t want to be there. Peter certainly had never been in the home of a Gentile before and he’s calling it unclean – right to their faces. See, by attempting to humble himself in verse twenty-eight, Peter’s pride is exposed. He believes he is saying the right thing – because it was true. Well, what better place to end this leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God than right here? In our next report, we’re going to hear Peter’s message. It is absolutely exquisite. I have to wonder why Simon Peter isn’t more thought of today in Bible circles. That’s a rhetorical statement, though. We’ll discover why. I hope you can continue with us ~
