

(Through the Bible) Acts 10-11

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles, highlighting the importance of honoring God, not men, and the breaking down of barriers between Jews and Gentiles.

Duration: 1:19:44

Scripture: Acts 1:8, Acts 2:38, Acts 9:26-27, Acts 10:9-16, Acts 10:28, Acts 11:4-10, Acts 11:29-30

Topics: "Gospel Message", "Cultural Diversity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the significance of the story of Peter's vision being recorded twice in the book of Acts. The preacher emphasizes that God wanted to bear witness to all Jews and all people that the gospel of Jesus Christ is available to everyone, regardless of their ethnicity. The preacher describes the vision of Peter seeing a sheet with four corners, containing various animals, and hearing a voice telling him to kill and eat. The preacher also mentions Cornelius, a devout man who feared God and prayed continually, and how he received a vision from an angel instructing him to send for Peter.

Transcript

So we turn now in our Bibles to Acts chapter 10. In the first chapter of Acts, Jesus said to his disciples, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in Samaria, or both in Jerusalem and Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Jesus had commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

So the gospel of Jesus Christ is for all men, regardless of nationality, ethnic background. And we watch the movement in the book of Acts as they began first in Jerusalem, bearing witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and multitudes being added to the church daily. Then upon persecution, we saw where Stephen went up into Samaria.

Other disciples were spread throughout Judea, and little pockets of believers began to spring up in the second part of that prophecy of Jesus in Judea and in Samaria. With the continued persecution of the church and with the increased number of converts who traveled freely in the Roman Empire, we saw how that the gospel began to spread into all the world. It is interesting that Paul the Apostle, 30 years after the birth of the church, was able to write to the church in Colossae saying, and the gospel as it has come to you as it is in all the world.

So, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus as they had carried the gospel by 30 years into all the world. But we see that the movement was gradual. They began in Jerusalem, they spread to Judea, then into Samaria.

Now, beginning in chapter 10, we get the next movement of the spread of the gospel as it is now being proclaimed to the Gentiles. And the gospel came to the Gentiles in a very interesting way. There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band that is called the Italian band.

That doesn't mean that they had a mandolin and a guitar and a soloist. The Roman legions had approximately 6,000 men. And then they had their companies, which would be equivalent to our battalions, which were about 600 men because there were 10 companies in a legion.

And then the companies were divided down and over a hundred men, there was an officer equivalent to our master sergeant who was called a centurion in as much as he was over 100 men. And there are some very interesting requirements that have been found in the Roman records for a centurion. And one of them was a man of great courage and bravery.

If he was outnumbered, he must stand with his men and fight until he falls. And he had to be a man of that kind of courage. He wasn't to go looking for trouble, but he was always to meet trouble with resolute courage.

It is interesting that in the Bible, we are introduced to other centurions. And in every case, in being introduced to a centurion, they were all commendable men. You remember that the centurion came to Jesus and requested that Jesus would heal his servant who was dying.

And Jesus said, I will come to your house. And he said, Oh, no, Lord, I'm not worthy that you should come under my roof. But I understand authority because I am a man under authority and I have under me men.

And I can say to this one guy, go and he goes and I can say to this one, come over here. And he will come. I understand what authority is about.

And I know that all you have to do is say the word and my servant will be healed. And Jesus marveled at his faith. And he said, I have not found this much faith in all of Israel.

And he marveled at the faith of this centurion. Now we're introduced to another centurion, Cornelius. He was over the Italian garrison there in Caesarea, which was the Roman capital city of that area.

And he was, according to the record here, verse two, a very devout man and one that feared or revered God. Many of the Romans were tired of the multiplicity of gods that were worshipped by the Romans or by the Greeks. You remember Paul the Apostle when he came to Athens said, I can see that you people are very religious.

For as I've been walking through your streets, I have found altars inscribed to so many different gods. And it is true that the Greeks had just such a multiplicity of gods. In fact, they had a God for each emotion, a God of love, a God of hate, a God of jealousy, a God of wrath and a God of peace, a God of war and a God for everything.

And some Greek came up with the idea that we may have missed one. We surely don't want to slight him and get him angry with us. And so he built an altar and he inscribed it to the unknown God.

Whoever you are, wherever you are, don't feel slighted. We want to recognize you too. And so Paul said, I saw this one altar to the unknown God.

And this is the God I would like to declare unto you because he is the one who created the heaven and the earth and everything that is in them. And so he declared unto them the true and the living God. Now, many of the Romans and Greeks did not believe in the multiplicity of gods.

And many of them, after their experience in Israel, became convinced of the one true and living God. Cornelius was such a man. He feared God with all of his house.

And he gave much alms to the people. And he was a man of prayer. Now, here was a man who was walking in the light that he had.

And it is so important that we walk in the light that we possess. Unto whom much is given, much is required. Unto whom little is given, little is required.

Luke's gospel tells us in chapter 12 that a man will be judged according to the knowledge and the light that he has received. For that servant that knew the will of the father and did not accordingly will be beaten with many stripes. Yet he who did things worthy of many stripes because he did not know the will of the father will be beaten with few stripes.

For unto whom much is given, much is required. Unto whom little is given, little is required. But we are always required to walk in the light that we have.

And if we will walk in the light that we have, it always follows that God will then give us more light and understanding. And so it's important that we walk in the light that we have. Just how much light Cornelius had, we do not know.

He did know of God. He revered God. He feared God and he prayed unto God continually.

He gave alms to the needy, much alms to the people. Now he saw in a vision, evidently about the ninth hour of the day, so he was probably observing the three o'clock afternoon prayer hour of the Jews. He saw an angel of God coming into him and saying unto him, Cornelius.

And when he looked at him, he was afraid. And he said, what is it, Lord? And the angel said unto him, your prayers and your alms are come up for a memorial before God. God is aware of your prayers.

God is aware of your giving. They have come up before God. Now send men to Joppa, which was one of the ancient seaports along the Mediterranean.

The area of Caesarea was also a seaport, but it was built by Herod the Great. It was not a natural seaport, but Herod the Great built a breakwater there. And it is still a beautiful little harbor today.

And it's a great place for skin diving because you can find Roman coins on the sandy floor of the beach within the harbor there at Caesarea. But Joppa was south from Caesarea about 20 miles, which means a two-day journey in those times because an average day's journey was 10 miles. And so, he is told that there in Joppa, he is to inquire for a man by the name of Simon, whose surname is Peter, and he will tell you what you ought to do.

So, he is lodging with Simon, who is a tanner, whose house is by the seaside, and he will come and tell you what to do. Walls are tumbling. The Jew had many walls built up, nationalistic walls, inasmuch as a Jew would really have no dealings with a Gentile in close contact.

They would not eat with Gentiles. They would not invite a Gentile into their home, nor would they go into the house of a Gentile. For the Gentiles were considered unclean.

And to touch a Gentile would make you unclean. And you'd have to go through quite a ritual of cleansing before you could go back into the temple if you touched a Gentile. Now, the Pharisees were so particular about this that when they walked down the street, they would wrap their coats very tightly around them, they'd wrap them very tight so that their robes wouldn't swish, because they didn't want their robes swishing and accidentally touching a Gentile.

For if they did, they would be unclean and have to go through this cleansing rite before they could worship God again. And so you'd see the Pharisee, his robe wrapped tight around him, small steps going down the street, careful that his robe doesn't swish out and careful that he doesn't come into physical contact with a Gentile. Now, another person who was an outcast was a tanner.

For under the Mosaic law, anybody who touched a dead body of an animal or of a person was also unclean. And so a tanner would be considered a man who was constantly unclean and therefore, you would also be careful not to touch a tanner for that would constitute your becoming unclean. So the very fact that Peter is in the house of Simon the tanner indicates that walls are already beginning to come down in Peter's hearts.

As Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 4, that Jesus Christ has broken down that middle wall of partition that used to exist between the Jew and the Gentile. So that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond-free, but Christ is all and in all. He has broken down these racial barriers between men.

So Peter was there at the house of Simon the tanner. Now, when the angel which spake to Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually. And when he had declared all of these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

So he called his servants. And you remember the one centurion said to Jesus, I also am a man under authority. I can say to one, go.

And he goes. And so he is exercising his authority that was given to him. And he is commanding these fellows to go to Joppa to bring back this man, Peter.

Now, God always works on both ends. Know that. My son, Chuck Jr., who used to be on staff here years ago, and whom I will readily admit is a very handsome young man, had great difficulty while he was single in the ministry.

For many, a beautiful young lady felt that God had revealed to them by an angel or dream or some other means that they have been chosen by God to be his helpmate. And it actually got to the place where it began to bug him after a while. He became shy and asked the girls, please don't let, you know, send any young girls over for counseling.

But God works on both ends. And they come in and tell how God had revealed, you know, he was to marry them and all. And he'd always say, well, God hasn't revealed that to me yet.

But God does work on both ends. If God is guiding you to a particular project, to go and to get someone to come to help you do something, you can be sure that God has already worked on the other end and is also speaking to them about going. God always works on both ends.

And I would not venture out into any venture for God until God had first spoken to me. If someone should come up and say, well, God has revealed to me that you're to resign Calvary and you're to move to Cucamonga and start a fellowship out there or, you know, buy a great vineyard. I would say to them, well, I'll wait upon the Lord to see if God speaks to my heart upon this issue.

I would not go upon what God has spoken to someone else. I would wait for God to speak to me. And I encourage you to follow the same example.

If someone comes up and they've had a tremendous revelation, they saw colored lights in the sky, they went into a trance and an angel of the Lord appeared unto them and told them that they were to come to you and tell you that you're to sell everything you have and move to Hawaii. As much as that appeals to your flesh, you have better wait upon God to speak to your own heart about that or your move to Hawaii could be disaster. And you'd find yourself as Jonah probably intercepted somewhere in between.

God works on both ends. So, as God was speaking to Cornelius, he also was speaking to Peter there in Joppa. So, we see now the other side of the coin and God working in Peter's heart.

Now, it was on the next day and there's a day's difference here. On the next day, as they were on their journey and they were getting near to the city of Joppa, Peter went up on the housetop to pray about the six hours. So, he was still following the Jewish pattern of prayer, which they prayed at the third hour, nine o'clock in the morning, the sixth hour, noon, and the ninth hour, three o'clock in the afternoon.

Were they Jewish hours of prayer? And so, it was lunchtime, it was noon, and Peter had gone up on the rooftop to pray. And that sounds strange to us. But if you've ever been to Israel, that kind of a mystery would soon disappear because the rooftops there in Israel are part of the living quarters of the family.

And usually, they have flat roofs and you'll see little patios with gardens and potted plants and you'll see them hanging their clothes out there on the rooftops. And it is just a standard part of the house because of the limited space, they don't have yards. And so, their yards and play area are oftentimes the roof of the house.

And so, you call your kids, come down off the roof and eat your lunch, you know. And the kids jump off the roof or come on down to eat their lunch. But it's a part of the living quarters there.

And so, it is not at all unusual that Peter would go up on the rooftop to pray. And because it was noon, he became very hungry and he would have eaten. But while they were preparing his lunch, he fell into a trance.

Now, I really don't know much about trances. I've never had one. That is not to say that I am opposed.

In fact, I would find going into a trance probably a very interesting experience. And if God wants to put me in a trance to reveal something to me, that's all right, I'll buy that. You know, I'm open and I want to be

open to any way God wants to communicate to me.

I would imagine that it would be sort of in a dream state. Now, I just about go into trances sometimes as I'm sitting listening to people talk. And I've been, you know, up half the night.

And my eyes get glassy and I sort of drift off, you know. And then you sort of come to. And I think that that sort of in-between sleep and awake state is probably the trance state.

And however it may be and whatever it may be, in this trance, he saw the heavens opened and a certain vessel descending unto him. It was like a great sheet. And that word in the Greek is used for sails.

Now, he's right there in the seashore. So, he sees this great sheet or sail that is knit at the four corners and it is let down to the earth. And on it were all manner of four-footed beasts.

Now, according to the law, they could only eat the animal that chewed the cud or had a cloven hoof. But on this sheet, there were all kinds of animals. Four-footed beasts.

And there were creeping things. And there were fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him and it said, Rise, Peter, kill and eat.

But Peter said, Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. I would like to draw your attention to Peter's response as being a perfectly inconsistent statement, but one that is very familiar to all of us. Not so, Lord, impossible.

That is total inconsistency. How can you say, Not so, Lord? If the Lord has asked you to do something, the only possible response is, Yes, my Lord. If He is indeed your Lord, how can you say, Not so? So, Peter could have said, Not so, buddy.

Not so, friend. But you can't say, Not so, Lord. Completely inconsistent.

God, free us from that inconsistency. God, free us from that inconsistency in our own speech. For so often, we find ourselves arguing with God.

And God is challenging us to do something. We say, Oh, Lord, I can't do that. Oh, Lord, not me.

I don't want to do that, Lord. And it puts me then in the driver's seat. You see, I'm putting myself in the position of Lord.

So, Peter's inconsistency of speech, Not so, Lord. I've never eaten anything that is not kosher. I've never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

Now, in the mind of the Jew, the Gentile was both common and unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God has cleansed, do not call common. Now, this was done three times.

And the vessel was received up again into heaven. So, this experience three times over. And I suppose Peter was inconsistent three times over.

And then the vessel was taken back up into heaven. But the Lord was preparing Peter's heart. Now, while Peter was wondering in his mind what this vision should mean.

What in the world is that all about? Those pigs on there, kill them and eat them. What can that mean? Behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house. And they were standing before the gate.

Now, that's all the further they could come. According to the Jewish customs, they would not dare to come in beyond the gate. Because that would make the house of Simon the Tanner more unclean than it was already.

Being a Tanner, it was unclean. But he'd be doubly unclean at that point. So, they stood at the gate.

And they called and asked. They were calling in. They wouldn't come in.

They just called in the gate and said, Is there a Simon Peter around here? And while Peter was wondering about this vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, there are three men who are seeking you. Arise and get down and go with them, doubting nothing. For I have sent them.

And then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius. And he said, Behold, I'm the man you're looking for. What is the cause for which you have come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion is a just man.

And he's one who fears or reverences God. He's of good report among all of the nation of the Jews. And he was worn from God by a holy angel to send for you into his house and to hear words from you.

Then Peter invited them in. Walls are tumbling. Peter's inviting these Gentiles to come on into the house.

And on the next day, Peter went away with them. And certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. Now, on the next day after they had entered into Caesarea, the two day journey, and Cornelius was waiting for them, he had called together his family and his close friends.

And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. But Peter took him up saying, Stand up, for I myself also am a man. Peter refused to receive the worship.

He didn't let him kiss his toe, but ordered the man to stand up because I also am a man. It is interesting how that people seek to elevate the servant of God many times to a position of almost worship. This was something the apostles had to guard against.

Paul the Apostle with Barnabas when they were in Lystra found the people coming down the street with the priest of Jupiter who was dragging an ox behind him. And he was going to sacrifice unto Paul because they were amazed of the healing of the lame man. Paul had to strip off his clothes and say, Hey, I'm not a God, I'm a man.

Don't do this. Worship God. And so Peter is refusing to receive worship from this man.

Honor, glory. All of the honor, all of the glory belongs to Jesus Christ. We make a mistake when we hold persons up in high esteem.

And the Bible actually warns us about being a respecter of men's persons. If someone comes into the assembly, he's wearing a Rolex watch and diamond rings and all. You say, Oh, come on down here to this nice seat, you know, soft cushion, comfortable where you get a good view.

Where someone comes in and Levi's that are dirty, bare feet. You say, sit back there in the corner and don't get the carpet dirty. You know, after all, and James says, Look, you are showing respect unto persons just because of the way the fellow is dressed.

He said, that is not right. You should not do that. We are not to be respecters of men's persons.

We are to give honor and glory unto God and respect him. And so Peter refused to receive the worship of Cornelius, but he took him up and he said, Stand up for I myself am only a man. And when he talked with him, he went into the house.

Oh, walls are still crumbling. Peter now goes into the house of a Gentile. He's had the Gentiles in the house there and in Joppa.

Now he enters into the house of the Gentile. And he found many people that were come together, hungry hearts there in Caesarea. Now, here's an interesting thing.

And I don't have the answer for it. I only have the puzzle. How God works.

There was living in Caesarea at this time, Philip the Evangelist. Why didn't God send over to Philip's house, who Caesarea isn't that big. He couldn't have lived that far from Cornelius.

Why would God have him send all the way down to Joppa to get Simon Peter? Probably because Philip was not a leader in the early church, but only a deacon. And had Philip gone to the house of Cornelius and God worked by his Holy Spirit in the lives of the people, they would have booted him out of the church immediately. And he wouldn't have even had a hearing.

At least they were ready to give Peter a hearing. Because of his position in the church, they were upset that Peter went to the when they heard that Peter went into the house of a Gentile. They really got shook back in Jerusalem.

And when Peter got back, they called him on the carpet, contended with him. What are you doing? You know, taking the gospel to the Gentiles. Terrible.

So the Lord, no doubt, chose Peter because of his position of authority, leadership in the early church. And at least he was able to have a hearing before the brethren, before they kicked him out. And he said unto them, you know that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or to come unto one of another nation.

Now, you know that what I'm doing is illegal. According to the law of the Jews, you know what I'm doing is illegal. But God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

Therefore, I came to you without game saying, without arguing as soon as I was sent for. Now I ask for what purpose did you call me? And Cornelius said four days ago, I was fasting until this hour. And at the ninth hour, I prayed in my house and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing.

And he said, Cornelius, your prayer is heard and your alms are being brought in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter, for he is lodged in the house of one Simon, a tanner by the seaside, who when he comes shall speak unto thee. And immediately, therefore, I was sent to thee and you have done well in that you have come.

Now, therefore, we are all here present before God to hear all of the things that have been commanded to you by God. So Peter opened his mouth and said of a truth. I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.

Man is, God isn't. But in every nation, he that reverences God and works righteousness is accepted with him. That God does not limit his work to any nationality.

What an eye opener this was for Peter. What a difficult truth this was for the rest of the church to receive. That a man could be saved without becoming a Jew.

They felt that a man had to become a Jew before he could be saved. And when there were many Gentiles who came to the Lord in Antioch and word came back to the church in Jerusalem concerning the Gentiles being saved, there were certain of those who came up from Jerusalem and they said to them, look, you guys can't be saved until you are circumcised and you keep the law of Moses. And they created quite a big stir there in Antioch with this premise.

So Peter said, I realize that God is no respecter of persons, but he will accept any man, any nationality, who will fear him or reverence him and do the works of righteousness. And the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, for he is the Lord of all. Now, up until this point, the centurion probably only knew of God through Judaism.

And now he's been being introduced to the fuller revelation that God has fulfilled his promise and sent the Messiah and he is preaching peace unto all men through Jesus Christ, for he is the Lord of all. That word, I say, you know, which was published throughout all of Judea and began from Galilee after the baptism, which John preached. Now you've heard of Jesus.

You've all heard of him. You remember when Paul was later facing the Herod in Caesarea, Herod Agrippa, he said, Hey, Agrippa, you know all about this. This thing wasn't done in a corner.

You know, you know about Jesus. You've heard about him. He didn't just go stand in a corner someplace.

Everybody knows about him. So Peter recognizes that you've heard of Jesus Christ. The works that he did beginning in Galilee, who went about how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil for God was with him.

So he is testifying now to the works of Jesus Christ. And we are witnesses of all these things, which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Now him God raised up the third day and showed him openly.

So again, the testimony of the resurrection by Peter, but he showed him not to all the people, but unto witnesses who were chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. So we remember that Jesus had the fish prepared by the seaside and he said, come and dine. And he ate fish with them and he drank with them.

And so after his resurrection, he was both eating and drinking with them. 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. Both of those who are alive and are dead.

Christ has been given by God that authority of standing in judgment of men. Now it is interesting that Jesus was judged by men. He was brought before pilot and he was judged by pilot.

But there's a paradox here for pilot said, what shall I do with this man? Jesus, who was called Christ, the crowd said, crucify him. He said, why, what evil has he done? But they cried all the louder, crucify him. Shall I crucify the king of the Jews? We have no king, but Caesar.

So pilot delivered him over into their hands to do what they please. But he said to Jesus, don't you realize I have power to release you, set you free or to order you to the cross? Jesus said, you don't have any power except that which has been given to you by my father, but don't worry about it. Those that turn me over to you or have a greater guilt than you have.

And pilot sought to release him. Pilot was frightened at that statement. But in reality, pilot was judging himself.

Now every man must face the same question pilot face. What am I going to do with Jesus who is called Christ? You must make a judgment of what you're going to do with him. But in reality, the one being judged is you by the judgment that you make.

You see, if you reject him, then you are declaring your own judgment. You will be rejected of God. If you deny him, then you're declaring your own judgment because you will be denied by God.

So every person really has to stand in judgment of Jesus. But the person who is affected by the decision that they make is really themselves. Everyone is determining their own destiny by how they judge Jesus Christ.

God has made him to be the judge, both of those who are alive and those who are dead. And we read of this judgment in. Second Corinthians, chapter five, and in Revelation, chapter 20.

Now to him, give all the prophets witness that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins. He declares that this is something that the prophets all spoke about. That God would grant the remission of sins through their believing in Jesus Christ.

And of course, we can go back in the Old Testament and we can find. These hundreds of prophecies that related to Jesus Christ. And the central message of the prophets is that God would send.

His son for unto us, a child is born unto us, a son is given. But that his son would be despised and rejected of men. But all of our sins would be laid upon him and those who believe in him shall be saved.

So Peter refers to the prophecies. Now, while Peter was saying these things, while he was preaching his sermon, the Holy Spirit interrupted him and he fell on all of those who heard the word. Now, Peter didn't coach them and say to them, now say, Baba, Baba, Baba.

He didn't coach them how to speak in tongues. It just happened simultaneously to all of them through the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. I am a little leery about these sessions where a person is coached and taught how to speak in an unknown tongue.

But I believe in that sovereign work of God's Holy Spirit. Some instruction is needed and necessary, but yet the work that is to be wrought should be wrought by the Spirit of God. Now, you remember, some came down with Peter from Joppa.

In fact, there were six who came with Peter from Joppa. Peter made the seventh. And they that were of the circumcision.

Who believe that is the Jews that come with Peter who were believers. They were astonished. All of those that had come with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.

How can this be? That God would put his Holy Spirit upon an unclean Gentile. And they were astonished at this sovereign work of God. That the Gentiles had received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

How did they know? Because they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Now, that's exactly what was happening back in the second chapter of Acts when the Holy Spirit fell upon the church. In the beginning, they were speaking in these other dialects, magnifying God, declaring the glorious works of God.

Same thing is happening here. The people are speaking in unknown tongues, magnifying God. Then answered Peter.

Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? Now, up until this time, they would not baptize any Gentile into the church. But Peter says, hey, you know, what can we do? God's given the Holy Spirit. We might as well go ahead and baptize him.

And so he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. And then he prayed. Then they prayed that he would tarry with them for a few days.

Now, the apostles and the brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come back to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision had a fight with him. And they said, you went to men who were uncircumcised and you ate with them.

But Peter just rehearsed the matter from the beginning and he expounded it to them according to how it happened in order. And he said, I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance, I saw a vision and a certain vessel descend as it had been a great sheet. And he repeats this vision.

Now, it is interesting that Luke really is limited by space at this time. Of course, they did not publish books, but they wrote everything on a scroll. And there was a limit to what you could write on a scroll.

And the longest scrolls were about 35 feet long. And they would write these epistles on these scrolls. And of course, they would roll it and write as they were going, rolling and unrolling and all the scroll.

And they became very bulky if they got over 35 feet long. Now, the Book of Acts, because of its length, would have to be recorded in a scroll of maximum limits, about 35 feet long. The original copy that Luke wrote of the Book of Acts was probably in a 35 foot scroll.

So that you would want to conserve the space so you could tell as much of the story as you could. But for a definite reason, the Holy Spirit had this account of Peter's being called the Gentile recorded twice in the limited space of the Book of Acts. No doubt that God might bear witness to all of the Jews and to all men everywhere that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the free gift of God to every man regardless his color or his ethnic background.

So the gospel is open to all. And so the Lord sees fit to record this vision of Peter twice in the limited area of the 35 feet of the scroll of the Book of Acts. And so he tells again of this vision of the sheet with the four corners upon which when I have fastened my eyes, I saw the four-footed beast of the earth, the wild beast, the creeping things, the fowls of the air.

I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter, kill and eat. And I said, Not so, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has at any time entered into my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God has cleansed, don't call common.

And this was done three times and all were drawn up again into heaven. And behold, immediately there were three men already come to the house where it was who were sent from Caesarea unto me, and the Spirit bade me go with them. So Peter is not taking the responsibility for what happened.

And he's not taking the blame. The Spirit bade me to go. I was being directed by the Spirit of God, doubting nothing.

Moreover, I took these six brothers with me and we entered into the man's house. So Peter took the witnesses, probably because he didn't know what was going to happen. And he wanted witnesses when he got back on the carpet in Jerusalem to verify that the story he told was true, that it wasn't really me.

It was God who did it. I wasn't responsible so that he wouldn't get kicked out of the early church. And so he showed us how that he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, send men to Joppa, call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who will tell thee words whereby you and all of your house shall be saved.

So the Spirit bade me to go and bring them the gospel, the word of salvation. God has ordained to save the Gentiles. And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning.

I didn't touch him. I didn't do anything. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said, John, indeed baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit for as much then as God gave them.

I didn't do it. Don't blame me. As God gave to them the like gift, as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God? Good question, isn't it? Who am I that I can withstand the work of God? Better that I not try to withstand the work of God.

Unfortunately, there have been a lot of people who've been in that position of trying to withstand the work of God. God begins to work and they try to withstand that work. They criticize or they find fault or, well, it didn't happen according to our traditional standards.

I was given a letter recently which was sent by a pastor of a church of Christ to one of the ladies here at Calvary who had moved to California and had started attending church here and he wrote to her rebuking her for attending the church here because we could not be legitimate. We are all of us going to hell because we don't have the right name above our door. If we are not called the church of Christ, then we are worshiping under false banners and cannot be truly worshiping Jesus Christ.

And we're all wrong because we don't have the right name. Poor fellow, his heaven is going to be a very lonely place. It's like the fellow being ushered around heaven by Peter and he saw all these different groups of people worshiping the Lord and having a great time.

And there were the Baptists over here and the Presbyterians over here and the Methodists over here and the Pentecostals over here. They were just having a glorious time together and as they went down the road a bit, there was this high wall and the fellow heard the noise of people singing behind it and he said, who are they? How come they're not out with the group? He said, they're the church of Christ and they

think they're the only ones here. Now, let me say, let me say that this pastor is not representative of all of the church of Christ pastors.

He is an individual. He has his own individual convictions, which I don't agree with. They are, I believe, very narrow and I really, well, I'm sure that the Lord will give me grace to accept the brethren when we get to heaven, but I have a hard time with people that are that narrow in their views.

I have excellent fellowship with many church of Christ pastors and I respect the work that they are doing for the Lord and this man is not at all representative of the church of Christ ministry. He only represents a small segment of that marvelous fellowship of churches and I'm thankful that that he is not representative of all of them, but there are church of Christ ministers here in the area that I love and highly respect and I thank God for the ministry that they have and for the influence that their churches have in their communities. And so I don't want you to go out and say, oh man, he really put down the churches of Christ.

Not at all. I don't intend to do that. It was just a joke and it just represents a small man with small concepts of God's grace and God's work.

Unfortunately, there are people who are that small and that narrow, but we pray that God will broaden their horizons because it must be terrible to live with all of that, you know, pent up venom and all just eating you up inside because how can you explain the work of God? You know, well, what they do is say, well, it's really Satan working and it is a tragic thing that people are that narrow. But well, for instance, Thomas Overton in Huntington Beach, what a beautiful brother and how I love this man of God and I have great fellowship. I have had in the past great fellowship with him.

I had seen Tom for quite a while, but I would like to get together with him again because we have had such great fellowship in the past. We've just, they're just good brothers and I love them. So, if any of you run down to Tom Overton with the tape of this sermon, Tom knows that I love him.

So, Peter is explaining, who was I that I could withstand God? And when they heard these things, they held their peace and they glorified God saying, then God also to the Gentiles has granted repentance unto life. And they accepted the work of God among the Gentiles. Now they weren't really ready to enter into full fellowship with the Gentiles.

As we move along into the book of Acts, we will find that Peter went down to Antioch and he was eating with the Gentiles until certain brethren from Jerusalem came down. And then Peter separated himself because of the feelings that they had still of eating with Gentiles and it caused a division in the church of Antioch for which Paul rebuked Paul refers to that in the book of Galatians. So, the walls are tumbling though.

They're not completely down, not by a long shot. And we'll come in the 13th chapter to some issues that arose over this, actually in the 15th chapter, issues that arose over this very thing. Now, they that were scattered abroad after the persecution that arose about Stephen, they traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch.

Now, Antioch was the third largest Roman city after Rome and Alexandria was Antioch. A very large metropolis where the Orentes River comes into the Mediterranean Sea. The basic or the chief god of Antioch was Daphne.

And there was a huge temple to Daphne in a laurel grove five miles from Antioch. And according to the story, Apollo fell in love with Daphne and was pursuing her. But in order to save her from being raped by Apollo, she turned into a laurel tree.

And so, they built this temple to Daphne there in the laurel tree grove. And the priestesses in the worship of Daphne were prostitutes. And there in the laurel groves, they would reenact in their worship, the seduction by Apollo of Daphne.

And so, their worship was very licentious. And the city of Antioch became a synonym for people who lived a very loose, licentious life. Gambling was rampant, as was all kinds of vices, moral and all.

They were prevalent and rampant. So, they said that the person lived like a person of Antioch. If a person was just living a very lustful life of vice, they said, oh, he lives like a person of Antioch.

It is interesting that it was in this pagan city that the gospel of Christ gained such a strong foothold. And the church in Antioch became the center for the missions to the Gentiles. And it was from this church of Antioch that the gospel really spread through the Gentile world.

And the missionaries would come back and report to the church in Antioch. It became one of the centers of the early church. Especially that Gentile element of the early church.

Now, they had gone as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch preaching the word, but only to the Jews. They weren't preaching to the Gentiles. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, they spake to the Grecians, the Hellenists, as they preached the lordship of Jesus.

And the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Then the tidings of these things came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem. Then they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch, who when he came, he had seen the grace of God.

He was glad and exhorted all of them that with purpose of heart, they should stick or cleave unto the Lord. Now, Barnabas was really the ideal man to send because his ministry was that of reconciling within the body of Christ. He was the one who, when the church in Jerusalem would have nothing to do with Paul after his conversion, brought Paul to the brothers and said, look, he is a brother.

Receive him now as a brother. And he was the one that brought Paul into fellowship there into the church in Jerusalem. The son of consolation is what the name Barnabas means.

And a man who reconciles opposing parties or their differing parties. And so he was an ideal one to send to Antioch. When this revival is broken out now among the Gentiles, he is a man who has great grace and understanding and was able to accept the work that God was doing there in Antioch.

Now he exhorted them that they should purpose in their hearts to just continue in the Lord or cleave to the Lord or abide in the Lord. Postman on can be translated any of those ways. And so he exhorted them that they should purpose in their hearts, that is, make a total commitment, not just deciding your mind.

Too many decisions are made in the mind. The heart is the seat of a man's will. When you purpose in your heart, you are setting the course for your life.

You're making the full commitment. He's calling on them. Make a full commitment of yourself to Jesus Christ, because Barnabas knew that they were going to be facing persecution.

They were going to be facing real problems in the Gentile world, which was antagonistic to Jesus, a Gentile world that especially there in Antioch was given over to every vice and sexual impurity. And if you don't make a total commitment to Jesus Christ, you're going to fall by the wayside. You'll be sucked back in to that whole world system.

So he exhorted them purpose in your heart. You're going to stick with the Lord. Make that complete commitment purpose in your heart.

This is the way it's going to be. Even as Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Michelle purposed in their hearts not to defile themselves when carried away to Babylon. For he, Barnabas, was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

And many, much people were added unto the Lord. Then he departed to Tarsus to look for Saul. Now, he recognized that here is a work of the Holy Spirit being wrought in this Roman culture, or a city that is steeped in actually the Grecian culture, but it is a major city of the ancient world.

And he realized that the ministry here would take a long time. And he realized that Saul was a very special kind of a person. One who had been liberalized by the Holy Spirit.

One who understood the Grecian culture. And yet one who was strong in the word. Now, Paul the Apostle, at this time he was still called Saul.

When he left Jerusalem, went back home to his home city of Tarsus. Later, I am certain that those eight years were spent by Paul making tents in Tarsus, but also sharing his faith there in the city of Tarsus. As God was preparing him still for the work that God wanted him to do.

We oftentimes make a great mistake in seeking to jump immediately into the ministry the moment we have received Jesus Christ as our Lord. It is important that our lives be prepared by the Spirit. And that preparation is not an overnight preparation.

During the war, we had what were known in the Air Force as the 90-day wonders. Through basic primary school and all in your first lieutenant bars in 90 days. As we were training men for the Air Force.

But God has no 90-day wonders. It's important that we be rooted and grounded in the Word of God and in the work of God. And it is interesting to me that this is some 11 years after Paul's conversion.

He spent the first three down in Arabia. They're learning. Now, eight more years of silence in Tarsus.

Before Barnabas seeing the work in Antioch, realizing that Paul would be the ideal person for this ministry, went to Tarsus to look for Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and they taught much people.

And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. The word Christians is actually Christ folks. Now, during a period a few years ago, there was a title placed upon a bunch of the hippies that were accepting Jesus as the Jesus people.

That's much like this title. It was given in sort of a derisive way to the church. Oh, they're Christ folks.

They're Jesus people. And it is much as the appellation Jesus people was put upon those young people who were committing their lives to Jesus Christ during that period of time. They're Christ folks.

It wasn't really a title of admiration, but more or less of just sort of a derision, as they called them, Christians or Christ folks. First, they're at Antioch. Now, notice that in verse 19, they were preaching the word to none but unto Jews only.

And in verse 20, they came to Antioch and they were preaching unto the Grecians, the lordship of Jesus. They were preaching. Now, when Barnabas came and said he exhorted them and when Paul came and said he stayed there for the space of a year and taught them.

And there is an important difference between preaching, exhorting and teaching. I believe that in the church today, there is far too much preaching. I think that we need more exhorting and I believe that we need most of all teaching.

You see, the most part was spent in teaching for the space of a year. They stayed and taught the people. Preaching is to the unconverted.

It is proclaiming to them God's good news that he has provided for man's salvation through the death of his son, who was raised again by the power of the spirit on the third day. And by believing in him, you can have the remission of sins and you will receive the gift of eternal life. That's what preaching is all about.

Proclaiming God's good news to man. Now, when a person believes the message, then they need exhortation and Barnabas was exhorting them. Now stick to the Lord purpose in your heart.

You're going to stick with him. But Paul came and he spent a year teaching them, teaching them how to stick, teaching them how to pray, teaching them how to walk and teaching is a vital function in the church. And the church today in many places is very weak, very anemic, very ineffective because the people have not been taught in the word of God.

So we have dedicated our ministry here at Calvary to the teaching of the word of God. And then we have Romaine as the exhorter. I'm telling you what you should do.

And he's there kicking you in the seat of the pants, getting you to do it. Exhorting us in how to, you know, into what we should be doing for the Lord. And it's a vital, important ministry.

And it balances here. We have Randy on Saturday night preaching to all of these young people that gather. So there is a place for preaching.

There is a place for exhorting. And there is the important place of teaching within the church. And if the church is going to ever become strong and effective, it's got to be taught.

So he stayed there for the space of a year teaching the people. And the disciples were called Christians, Christ folk there at Antioch. And in these days, there came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

And there stood up one of them. Now, these prophets were sort of roving men in the early church. They were sort of nomads.

They would roam from church to church. Now, as the result, there were men who took upon themselves the title of prophet and they would roam and they would come into a church and say, I'm a prophet of God.

And so it was one of the problems in the early church to tell whether or not a man was really a prophet of God or not.

So there were the writings of the apostles called the Didache, which was sort of a little rule book in the early church that first began to be circulated about 100 AD. And this Didache had rules for discerning who was a true prophet and who was a false prophet. Now, if a man came in and declared himself to be a prophet of God, you were to listen for it to him for one day.

If he stayed the second day without going to work, then he was a false prophet. He was just sponging off the churches. If a man came in and declared himself to be a prophet and he said, thus saith the Lord, fix a large dinner, fried chicken, rice, pilaf, mashed potatoes.

If he would eat of that dinner himself, he was a false prophet. So these were some of the rules by which they were to discern the false prophets in the early church written in the Didache. An interesting little booklet of a guidebook for the early church before they were all established with elders, pastors and so forth.

Now, there was one prophet by the name of Agabus, and we're going to be coming across Agabus again later on, years later, and we'll find him in Caesarea when Paul is returning towards Jerusalem. But this one prophet Agabus, he signified by the spirit that there was going to be a great drought throughout all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. So he was a true prophet.

This drought that he predicted did come to pass. Then the disciples, every man, according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea. Now, the church in Jerusalem had gone through heavy persecution and had been scattered.

They had also experimented with communal living and found it disastrous financially. And so when Agabus came and predicted this great drought that was going to come, these men decided to take up an offering to send it back to the saints there in Judea to help them out. And so Christian love, stretching across national barriers, stretching across state lines and stretching across the confines of our church, were reaching out to the body of Christ elsewhere to help others, sharing that abundance which God has bestowed upon us.

And here at Calvary Chapel, we have that glorious privilege of reaching out because God has given us an abundance. God has given us a surplus. We have the glorious privilege of reaching out and sharing this surplus with churches in other areas, with Christians in the body of Christ throughout the United States and throughout the world.

And so here is where the practice really began in the Church of Antioch, which became a center, even as God has more or less made this a center from which many have gone out to establish churches, well over 200 churches now having come out of this church being established around the United States. And so God has made a sort of a center from which the word of God has spread. And it's a blessed thing to be in this position of being able to reach out and help the brethren elsewhere.

Now, that's not what was happening here. Actually, in a sense, the church began in Jerusalem and they're sending the help back to Jerusalem, but we don't need the help of the churches and we are able to help them. And we thank God for that.

It is more blessed to give than to receive. So we're on the blessed side. So they took up the offering for the brethren in Judea, which they then sent to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

So Saul is coming back now to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas bringing an offering from those brothers in Antioch. And the walls now of difference having broken down, this beautiful generosity expressed now by the Gentile believers towards the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. So next week we move on into chapters 12 and 13.

So we pray. Father, we thank you for thy word, a light into our feet, a lamp into our path. What a blessing, Lord, to gather together, to study, to show ourselves approved, approved unto God, workmen who need not to be ashamed.

Lord, help us to rightly divide your word of truth. Lord, may each of us purpose in our hearts that we're just going to continue in the Lord. We're going to walk with you, Lord, no matter what.

Lord, bless your people, place your hand upon each of our lives, anoint us for thy service. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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