

Ever Increasing Light

by Danny Bond

God's plan of redemption is to search out and rescue all people, using various means to bring them to salvation and lead them to Jesus Christ.

Duration: 48:53

Scripture: Numbers 7, Jeremiah 6:16, Acts 10

Topics: "Light Of Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of fulfilling the Great Commission, which is to spread the gospel to all corners of the world. He uses a story about a family and their wheat fields to illustrate the urgency and unity required in this mission. The sermon focuses on four main points: the presentation of light to a seeking heart, prayer as a powerful tool, overcoming prejudice, and the fulfillment of prophecy. The preacher encourages believers to actively participate in the work of God's kingdom and to be obedient to the call to share the gospel.

Transcript

The title of this message is Ever-Increasing Light from Jesus Christ. Ever-Increasing Light from Jesus Christ, because that is what it's all about. You know the great thing about coming to know Jesus Christ is that it's an adventure.

It's an adventure. My impression of Christianity growing up before I became born again was that it was religion and that it was no fun. It was a bunch of thou shalt nots and I didn't want anything to do with it until some born-again Christians who happened to be my old drug friends came to me and said, if you think we had an adventure before, you come to Jesus Christ and know him personally and you're going to get on the greatest adventure of your life.

And I saw how much they had changed and the joy they had in their lives and I wanted that adventure. The joy of the Christian is the most winsome thing about him. The joy and the love.

And the reason there is so much joy and so much love is because we love him because he first loved us and he loves us by so many ways. But one is to take us on an adventure unlike anything we have ever known before. When Peter was out day by day by day by day by day working on the lake, fishing, I'll bet you it got mundane after a while, especially those days when he didn't catch anything.

And we know from the Bible there were those days. But I'll tell you something. When Jesus Christ called him and said, from now on you will become a fisher of men, his life became one great adventure after the next.

And there is a sense in which God has the adventure planned and it's up to you how much you want to fight him to enjoy the adventure. If you want to fight him and think you know better, like little toddlers think they know everything and they say no to everything their parents who know better ask them to do. And they have one word they use.

They have a one word vocabulary basically. Do you know what it is? No. All right.

They have a two word vocabulary. Do you know what it is? No. And mine.

We got a real rebel in the crowd here. But the more you say yes to Jesus and no to your own plan, the greater the adventure becomes. That's what happened to Peter.

Now, last time we studied that Peter got moving. And so as he was traveling through the area, there was a need. And this woman who was well-loved, Dorcas, died.

And he was asked by two men who came to get him if he could come by and pray for her. And the adventure got greater than ever as Peter knelt and prayed. And God raised the woman from the dead.

I'll tell you what, that's a lot better than sitting and saying, hey, I think I got a bite. You know, fishing in the morning. That's a big difference.

I got a bite. I got one who was just raised from the dead. That's a much bigger deal to share with friends.

So Peter was moving. The adventure was going. God was leading him.

And the great thing about the Lord is that when he does something great, it doesn't mean that's it. I've arrived. And now the Christian life is going to get boring.

It only means it's going to get more exciting if you continue to follow him. Therefore, lukewarm Christianity is the biggest unnecessary, if I could put it that way. The biggest unnecessary.

It's not necessary because God always has more. And he has a way of preparing us for the next thing by the current great thing that he's doing. Or if I could put it this way, even the current terrible thing that he is allowing in your life.

I choked on that one just in case something terrible happens to me. I know it doesn't ever happen to you. Terrible things.

But I hear it happens to people in Texas. So you're safe. Just kidding.

But even the terrible things are preparing us for the great thing. So our God has us on a great adventure. Now we're going to look at verses 1 through 23 in chapter 10 of the book of Acts.

And I want to read them as we go because we're going to need all the time we can get to comment on what is here. But I want to give you the four things that we're going to draw out of the text and we'll launch right into it. First of all, there is the presentation of light.

The presentation of light to the seeking, open, hungry heart. Presentation of light. Then there is what I like to call prayer on wings.

Prayer on wings. You'll find out what that is. Then there is prejudice overcome.

And finally, prophecy of both ends. The work of God of both ends. Presentation of light.

Prayer on wings. Prejudice overcome. And prophecy of both ends.

Now, to begin with, we have the presentation of light to a man who is named Cornelius. We find him in verse 1. There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian regiment. The thing about this man, we read in verse 2, is that he was a devout man and one who feared God.

So the first thing we encounter is that he has faith in God. The question is, what kind of faith? Because as you read the narrative, you begin to wonder that. Where is he at this point? It'll help if you understand the categories that Jews had for Gentiles.

The categories Jews had for Gentiles were basically three. There was such a thing as a Gentile who was just a Gentile, didn't care about God, served pagan gods. They basically called and referred to those Gentiles as dogs.

A bit of prejudice there. They called them dogs, Gentile dogs. And there's a lot you can say about that, but it was derogatory and it was full of prejudice.

There was another category Jews had for Gentiles, and that was the one called a God-fearer. A God-fearer was one who, like Cornelius, that's what he is here, one who feared God. Verse 2, that was a man or a woman who went along in their life.

They got sick and tired of the empty worship of idols, all the weirdness of it, the immorality attendant to it, the diseases attendant to that. And if you ever wonder why there's so many blind and deaf people running around the New Testament, it's all attached to the immorality and the diseases that you catch that make you be born blind and deaf and all those other things, or go that direction later on as the diseases advance. So as people got sick and tired of all that paganism, they would turn toward the one true and living God of Israel who was so different.

And they would become known as God-fearers. What they would do is they would pray, they would go to the synagogue and basically seek the Lord in that way. There was a third category, and that was what the Jews called proselytes.

A proselyte was one who came all the way over from being a Gentile, pagan, to being a full-blown convert to Judaism. This involved circumcision for the men. It involved sacrifices, going to the temple, etc.

Now, because many people came to be God-fearers later in life and to become a proselyte, you had to be circumcised. This is true. A lot of the men later in life simply weren't up for it.

It's true. They would stay at the point of being a God-fearer. They just weren't going for that part.

And so they would partake of praying to the true and living God, but they wouldn't go all the way into Judaism. So Cornelius is the second one I mentioned, the God-fearer. And he is one who is zealous.

His life affects his family. You read in verse 2 that he feared God with all of his household. So whatever faith he had in God, he didn't keep intensely personal and private and deep down inside of himself, as some people say they do with their belief in God.

It affected his family and those around, as we'll see later. And he was one who was generous and gave alms to the people, and he prayed to God always. He was aggressive with the faith that he had.

He was fervent, really, with the faith that he had because he gave generously. He gave generously. I remember studying through the book of Numbers not long ago.

I came to a chapter where it recorded all of the different princes that were there in Israel, and each one of them gave a large sum of gold and silver and so on. And as I read through it, it seemed so repetitive because here's the name, here's what they gave, here's the name, here's what they gave, and I'm going, all right, all right, all right, all right, Lord. Why is so much of the Old Testament full of this kind of repetition? It doesn't minister to me.

And I felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit to read the passage again. You know how God does that? OK, Mr. Know-it-all, Mr. You've-got-all-the-light-already, why don't you read it one more time? I read it again, and you know what? The Lord spoke to my heart very clearly. He said, Notice that I notice what every one of them gave.

And I went, Oh, my. So then you know what I give? Uh-huh. Every time.

Uh-huh. And you know something? It changed the way that I give to the Lord. It permanently changed the way that I give.

Here is a man who understands something of that, and so he gives alms generously. And he prayed to God always. We are told in the passage that he prays about the ninth hour.

So we have this man, Cornelius. He's a God-fearer. He's generous in giving.

He's a man of prayer. And as he's praying, we come to this visitation from the angel of God. He's visited by an angel.

He is not a Jew. This is New Testament, now not Old Testament. And he is visited by an angel.

There's a lot of instruction in here. The appearance of the angel is striking. About the ninth hour of the day, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of the Lord.

You know what's interesting about this? Is that he prayed to God always, we're told in the verse before. And he is praying at the ninth hour of the day. Do you know that the Jews in the temple would pray at the ninth hour of the day? You say, Well, what is the ninth hour? We don't use that system.

The ninth hour of the day was three o'clock in the afternoon. So he's doing his best to be like them, you see, praying at the ninth hour. At the ninth hour was also the time they would give the sacrifice.

The priest would give the sacrifice in the temple. So he's praying at the ninth hour when they would pray at the temple and give the sacrifice. Do you know what time Jesus Christ died on the cross? Three o'clock in the afternoon, the ninth hour.

So when Jesus Christ died on the cross, imagine they were giving the Passover sacrifices at exactly that time. There was an unprecedented amount of activity in the temple with the priests. It was the time when the people would gather there to pray.

So they would be there praying. They would there be giving the sacrifices. And that is the time when he died, when the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom.

So God had a multitude of priests and people there praying, sacrificing as witnesses that the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom, signifying that the way was now open for everyone to come and enjoy the intimacy with God. And so he's praying at this wonderful ninth hour. God is so precise in the Bible.

He does things in such a wonderful way. I just want to point that out to you, because then it's no surprise to me that an angel appears at the ninth hour. God does things at three in the afternoon.

I would caution you to not be goofing off at three. So the angel comes in and he knows his name. He says, Cornelius.

Whoa, an angel. You know my name. And when he observed him, he was afraid.

You bet once you be probably thinking about every sin he committed for the last month. God sent you here because I've really blown it. He was afraid.

But that's because of the glory of God and the sinfulness of man and said, what is it, Lord? And he said to him, your prayers. This is to calm his fear. Your prayers and your arms have come up for a memorial before God.

God knows every prayer you pray. God knows everything you give and God responds to it. And here he sends an angel.

This angel is evidence of how God responds to those. Can I put it this way? Who respond to him? God responds to those who respond to him. Now, as you go into this and you see all that God begins to do, you have to ask the question.

Well, this man's a Roman centurion. He's from a specially schooled regiment that came from Italy. And now he's a God fearer seeking the God of the Jews, Jehovah.

How is it that he even came to want to know the true and living God? How could that be? He came from the land of Caesar worship. The answer to that question is so good because it answers so many other questions that we have about how God can reach people out there on the earth who have never heard the gospel, who live in pagan lands. And it tells us how much our God is a saving God.

Salvation, if you've never thought of it in these terms before, salvation is a search and rescue operation. So God's great plan of redemption for man is to search out and rescue all those whose hearts are toward him. So how did his heart come to be toward God? Well, the Lord loves man.

When God created everything, put the stars in their place and everything else, we read of the creation in Genesis. He knew man would fall. He knew men would need to be redeemed.

And he built the creation with all of that in mind. So that how does someone come to begin to long for God when they live in a place where there's no Christians, no gospel, no Bible? How does that happen? God

has a starting point for every human being, no matter where they are on the earth. Can you hold your place in the book of Acts in terms of Psalm 19, verse one? This is so encouraging to me.

Psalm 19, verse one. It says the heavens declare the glory of God. And the firmament shows his handiwork.

Day unto day utters speech. Night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

The stars speak. You see that the stars speak. So that God, when he put the stars in their place, put them there for a reason.

Please do not see the stars as just some glitter on the creation. When God put the stars in their place, he did it for a reason. And you can see them all over the world, except in L.A. where there's too much smog and places like that.

But isn't it glorious when you're out in the middle of the desert or even out here on a clear night when you can see all the stars? They speak to you. And what they speak of is the glory of God. The glory of God.

So that anywhere you are on earth, if you will just look up at night, there's the voice of the stars speaking to you that God exists and speak of his glory. If you will respond to just that light, God will give you more light. The Bible tells us in the book of Romans chapter 1 that in the creation, God built into the creation.

All that we see, all the variety is there for a reason. It testifies of God, of his reality and of his great power. Romans tells us that, chapter 1. So that if any would just look at the creation and just stare at it with an open heart, it will speak to them further of God.

So the stars speak to you at night, the creation speaks to you all day. And if you respond to that, God will give you more light. Further, there's all that light in creation then.

Further, there's even more light out there for people that have not had the gospel brought to them. There's more light. You know what it is? It's the light of the Holy Spirit.

God is everywhere at once. He's omnipresent. The Holy Spirit is God.

He is God. He is a person and he's everywhere at once. Now, the Bible says in 2 Peter 3, 9, The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

So there you are out there gazing at the stars going, wow, and it's testifying to you of God. And you look around creation and you go, wow, look at those little baby ducks. There has to be a God.

Oh, it's so cute. And he must be a God of love to have this little ducklings. And last service, the mother duck kept looking in the window.

I thought you were laughing at my jokes. You were laughing because the duck was looking at me. So you have all that light, but then you have the light of the Holy Spirit who's omnipresent.

And because he's God, he's not willing that any should perish. And he's not bound by time or space. So he comes to your heart.

If you respond to the light and creation, he will give you more light. The Holy Spirit is there to testify that that creation is testifying of God. The power of God is present as well as the light of creation.

And Jesus said the Holy Spirit's ministry is to testify of him. There's a lot of light available the world round. If that is enough, then God, if you respond to the light that he gives you, you respond to the work of the Holy Spirit he gives you, if he needs to, he will send you an angel.

Because if you're responding toward him, he will bring you all the way up to Jesus Christ. And this is the way he does it. If necessary, he'll send you an angel.

Do you know that in the Bible, in the Old Testament, an angel came to Samson's parents before he was even born and told them what God wanted to do with him? An angel. Here in the New Testament is a Gentile God-fearer, and an angel comes to him and calls him by name. God knows how much you give.

God knows how much you pray. God sent me here to you. Hi, Cornelius.

Good to meet you, officially. I've known about you for a long time. You see, God will even send an angel.

That may seem far out to you, but it's not far out to God. It's hard for us to imagine that, probably because you haven't had an angel appear to you. But for God, that's the way he works.

The book of Hebrews, chapter 1, says that, no you not, that the angels are ministering spirits sent forth by God to those that are the heirs of salvation. They are completely, totally, and utterly involved in the salvation process. So it's very common, from God's point of view, to use angels in the salvation process.

And he comes here to Cornelius at the 9th hour of the day, 3 o'clock in the afternoon. And, one more thing, because our God is a rescuing God, don't forget what happened in chapter 9 of the book of Acts. Saul of Tarsus was marching toward Damascus with a band of persecuting men, bent on capturing, imprisoning, and seeing Christians go to their death.

And right in the middle of that, Jesus Christ himself, risen from the dead, parted the heavens and appeared to him, and talked to him personally, and personally led Saul of Tarsus to salvation. And it didn't take months and weeks. It was, boom, you, I want you.

You're going to follow me, and you're going to do great things for me. Go to Damascus, sit there for a few days, and you're going to get your marching orders. Three days later, he got his marching orders.

He marched for the rest of his life, apprehended by the power of God, energized by the power of God, saved by Christ himself. Do you understand, then, there isn't anywhere on earth that there isn't hope for an individual who will respond to the light that is given to them, that they won't be given more light and more light and more light until they are led all the way up to Jesus Christ. Now, you might then say, well, that's really good because it lets me off the hook.

I never did want to be a missionary anyway. Go to Africa with creepy, crawly critters and bugs. No, it doesn't let you off the hook.

Because, you see, you notice how the angel comes to Cornelius and he says, Go send some men to Peter. God has chosen to use men. The most common way is, in the end, he uses men to bring the word of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ gave us the Great Commission. In Mark 16, 15, he said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. That's the Great Commission from Jesus Christ.

So the Lord has designed that his people be sensitive to minister, whether it be Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, or the uttermost parts of the earth, wherever God will call you. Some are called to stay, some are called to go. Some are called to give, some are called to be supported by that, etc., etc.

But God has designed that all of his people lock arms to sweep through the world, the harvest in the world, and bring in as many and save as many as is possible. I wonder if you understand that. I wonder if you understand how important it is to jump in and lock arms with the brethren and be involved in the work of his kingdom.

Let me tell you an account, a story I came across years ago. I've never forgotten it. Many years ago, a family lived out in the country and they were farmers.

They had huge fields planted with wheat. The wheat had grown high by this time. And they had a little child.

And the little girl wandered off one day. And the parents became alarmed and they began to search everywhere for her, but they could not find her. Searched for days.

Finally, in desperation, they went to every community around and they pleaded with the people to come to their farm and to start there and help them in one last effort to find their vanished little child. So all of these people assembled together. They came back to the farm.

Somebody got the idea. They said, let's all line up in front of the field and literally lock arms. And then we'll sweep through the field back and forth until we've covered every inch.

If she's lost in this field, we will find her. And so they locked arms and they swept through the field back and forth and back and forth until someone suddenly shouted out, here she is. But tragically, it was too late.

She was already dead. You see, at that point, they all began to weep. Someone shouted out, oh God, if only we had locked arms sooner.

You see, that's the way I feel about the Great Commission. Christians are so busy goofing off, trying to find a new way, when Jeremiah said, call for the old path, fighting each other, bickering over doctrine, falling in love with doctrine instead of Jesus, so busy doing everything but what the Lord asked us to do, to lock arms and sweep through the world and find souls. I pray that God will put in all of our hearts the necessity, the greatness, the love that is involved in fulfilling the Great Commission and working together.

So here, this man is approached by an angel and then instructed to send men to Peter, who's already involved in the harvest. This is our saving God. You know, not only is this the answer to those on the farthest parts of the earth that have never heard the gospel, it's also the answer to a question you might have like this.

Well, what about, I have a, help me, I have a friend who's in a dead denomination or a dead church or whatever. They're in a place where the Bible's never taught. They don't have a chance of ever hearing the Bible because it's not taught or the gospel they hear is so garbled, they're never going to understand the

real saving issues of the gospel.

What about them? Is there any hope for them? The answer is the same. You respond to the light that's given to you and God will bring you all the light you need to bring you all the way up to the saving arms of Jesus Christ. Same goes for the cults.

What about my family that's Mormon? Generation after generation, same thing. If there's someone in there who responds to the light that's given to them, the Holy Spirit, God will bring them all the way up to the true Christ. Jehovah Witness, you name it.

Whatever it is, God's plan for redemption is a search and rescue operation and he is able. He is able and he loves to use people just like you and just like me in the process. He's chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

So the appearance of this angel is full of instruction. The advice he gives in verse 5, he says, Now send men to Joppa and send for Simon, whose surname is Peter. You see how careful God is? Simon, whose surname is Peter.

Why does he say that? Because of verse 6. He's lodging with Simon, a tanner. He's at Simon's house. Go send for Simon at Simon's house, whose house is by the sea and he will then tell you what you must do.

That is so great. I'm not going to tell you, but he'll tell you. You just go there and he'll tell you.

John Phillips recorded these words there so good at this point. He said the Lord knew all about Peter. The angel was able to give exact instructions for finding him.

This should encourage you so much. He went on to say, God never forgets a name, never loses an address, never makes a mistake, never has moments of hesitation in knowing where we are or what we are doing. There is something immensely comforting in that to God's saints.

He who tracks the journey of a hundred billion stars in each of a hundred million galaxies, who knows the path, this history, the destiny of every speck of dust in cosmic space, knows all about me. Those are comforting words. He knows about me and my comings and goings by land, by sea and air and he knows exactly where to find me anytime he wants me.

He knows how to send people across my path into my life to accomplish his own inscrutable purposes. Nothing is more interesting in the book of Acts than to see how he keeps track of men. Does he need a man to meet an Ethiopian traveling away from Jerusalem with a great longing in his soul? He knows right where Philip is.

Does he need a man to find blind Saul of Tarsus on a street called Straight? He knows right where Ananias lives. Does he need a man to give the gospel to a good but still unregenerate Roman centurion? Get this one. He knows Peter's present temporary address.

Temporary address. His eye is on the sparrow, as the song says, and he's watching over me. This is our God.

And so the man, Cornelius, fears God. He's got light. He responds.

He's given more from an angel of God. In verse 7, he goes out to the men who work for him. Verse 7, when the angel spoke to him and had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier.

He handpicked this soldier from among all the others. There would have probably been a hundred he was in charge of. And, verse 8, when he had explained all these things to them, he took great care to explain to them the words that had come from God to him.

I love that. No wonder God comes to this man. He takes great care with the words of God.

Great care with the things of God. And he tells them exactly what happened with the angel because it's going to be critical to whatever's going to happen when they get there. He will explain to you what to do next.

So he gives them all the word of God exactly. I pray that each one of us, as we study the word, will be as careful with it as Cornelius was to give it to these men. And he sent them to Joppa.

The presentation of light. We come then to what I would call prayer on wings. And I just want to touch on this because it's such a sweet thought.

I call it prayer on wings. You'll see why. Verse 9. The next day as they went on their journey and drew near the city.

Isn't this great? They're already on the way to the house where Peter is. And they're near the city. They're even near the house.

Peter goes up on the housetop to pray about the sixth hour. So it's right around noon. Peter goes up on the housetop to pray.

Peter has a place to pray. Peter has a time to pray. That's because Peter is a man of prayer.

God tends to open heaven to those that have a place to pray. Jesus said, Go in and shut the door and your father in heaven will meet with you there. So he has a place and a time and he's there.

But he is at this point in time, you have to understand, in an unusually inspired mood. Can you think of why? Why is he in Joppa? Because he was on his way traveling through and two men came to him and said, Can you come over here to Joppa? A woman has died. He went and he knelt down and he prayed.

He prayed. He didn't touch her. He didn't command her.

He knelt down. He prayed to see what God might do in response to prayer. And then she opened her eyes and sat up.

Then he helped her get to her feet. God raised her from the dead in response to his prayer. Can't you see he's in a rather inspired mood about prayer? God just raised someone from the dead in response to his prayer.

So he's up on the top of the house as they had them there near the Mediterranean Sea, enjoying the cool breeze, taking in a little sun. And it's around lunchtime and you know he's praying, thinking about the wonder of prayer in his life. Almost like I wonder what's going to happen next as I pray.

So Lord, here I am. I have no doubt that Peter was there marveling at the mysteries and the majesties of prayer. I wonder if you know the mysteries and the majesties of prayer.

See, one of the reasons God raised Dorcas or Tabitha from the dead is because of what he wanted to do next. He's about to shift from Christianity being viewed as a sect of Judaism. He's about to shift from there to opening the door to the entire Gentile world.

That means the rest of the world to Christianity. It is a monumental, huge thing that's about to happen. So God does a huge thing in the life of Peter to prepare him for something that's really, in a sense, even bigger.

To open the doors of the Gospel to the Gentile world. It happens through prayer. And it happens because Peter is open and his life is surrendered to the Lord and he's on that great adventure.

I wonder if you give time and a place for prayer so that you know of these things. If not, now is the day to begin. Just simply say, that's it right there, Lord.

That's what I want. Do it, Lord. You're the one who made Peter the way he was.

You can do it for me. Please do it in the name of Jesus. And you just begin one day at a time.

So there he is. He's up there praying with prayers on wings, as I call it. He's just completely inspired and he's going on to what's going to happen next.

We come then to his prejudice, which must be overcome. You see, Peter is still full of prejudice. But you can see what God's been doing.

Verse 9, The next day as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray about the sixth hour. At this point in time, God intended to change his thinking and free him. So in verse 10, He became very hungry and he wanted to eat.

But while he made ready, because in those days it took a while to prepare a meal, He couldn't just say to Simon the Tenor, Can you send a few of your fellows out to In-N-Out Burger or Taco Bell or whatever? It took a while. So as they're preparing for the food, and this is good because he's even a bit distracted by his hunger. You know how you go to prayer and things distract you? Mark it.

If you go to prayer, things will distract you. The phone will ring, someone will knock at the door. I always just say, Go away, the devil sent you.

I'm just kidding. But things always happen. So here he is.

He's hungry. And so I like this. God just uses his hunger to set him free from something huge, which is his prejudice.

So verse 10, He goes into a trance and verse 11, Heaven opens and an object like a great sheet down at the four corners descending to him and let down to the earth. Inside of it were all kinds of four footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, birds of the air. In other words, the Jewish law, the law of Moses enabled them to eat only things outlined as clean, according to the law.

And then there were all these unclean things they couldn't eat. That is one of the biggest things God used to separate them from the Gentile world. So right at the crux of the matter.

And that was one of their biggest points of prejudice right at the heart of the matter. While he's hungry, God says, basically, we're done away with all that. Christ has come.

He's risen from the dead. He's fulfilled the law. The law has been folded up, put away, and all that's left is Jesus Christ and walking with him.

It's time, Peter, you put away your Judaism. You now have Jesus. It's time for you.

Here's what he's telling him to love all men. And to not be afraid to give the gospel to all men. And so a voice came to him, said, rise, Peter, kill and eat.

At this point, Peter is going to have to let go of something if he's going to go forward. Look at the text. Verse 14.

Peter said, not so, Lord. How do you like that? Not so, Lord. Rise, Peter, kill and eat.

Not so, Lord. For I have never. Well, I never.

How dare you ask me to do that, Lord? Not so, Lord. I never. You know, that is quite an oxymoron, isn't it? Not so, Lord.

It's either not so or it's Lord. It cannot be both. It's either.

And just be honest with God. It's either not so or it's Lord. It cannot be not so, Lord.

It's a contradiction of terms. So you would think that one time of piping off like that would be enough as God continued to talk to him. But you read, he says, not so, Lord.

I've never eaten anything common or unclean in verse 15. And a voice spoke to him again a second time saying, would God has cleanse. You must not call common really getting deeper at his attitude.

You must not. Peter, come on. You're dealing with God here.

Don't be like this. And then this is amazing. Verse 16.

This was done how many times? Three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again three times. Peter, rise, kill and eat.

Not so, Lord. Rise, kill and eat. No.

Rise, kill and eat. Peter, this is the third time. Do you know? Do you remember anything about the third time in your life? Yes, Lord.

You name it. You've got it. I'll do it.

Now, just what do you want me to do? And the object is taken up into heaven again. And God's gotten through to him. You see, God has sufficient resources to get through to us.

And for that, I am so very glad because I know my own heart. How often it's so unwilling, so uncaring, so full of prejudice, so full of not so, Lord. You know what is great here? Just one quick thought.

In Matthew, when Peter said to Jesus, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. They're at Caesarea Philippi right there by the mouth of the Jordan River. And Jesus said, The Father has revealed this to you.

Then he said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus said, And I say, You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. What he was saying is on the rock of the confession that I am the Christ, the Son of God, I will build my church.

That's how I will build my church, on that message that you just gave me. You've got the message. And so I give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

The keys are basically the words of the gospel. People do all kinds of creative, strange things with that text. But the keys are the keys to the kingdom.

What is the key? You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. The only way to salvation. What is so good here is that as he goes through this whole process, God is effectively saying, You've used a few of the keys here and there.

You went up to Samaria. You got real daring. You went up to the half-breed Samaritan Jews.

You even came down here to Joppa. And you've used them freely with your Jewish fellow men. But I want you to use the keys to the kingdom with everybody.

Remember what I told you, Peter. So as he thinks on these things, this is what he would be thinking about. Verse 17.

Now, while Peter wondered within himself with the vision has meant had meant, that's what he would be thinking about. Behold, the men had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house and stood before the gate. Isn't that good? The angel says, go to the house of Simon, the Tanner, and you'll be told by the guy there, Simon, Peter, what to do.

That's because God and this is in advance. That's because God knew that he was fully able. The turn Peter's heart.

God is confident in his own ability. I'm glad because then I can be confident in his ability for me. So.

While he's there, they're standing before the gate as all this is going on, just as he gets it all worked out. They're standing before the gate and they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. Verse 19, while Peter thought about the vision, the spirit.

This isn't just a voice. Now, the spirit said to him, behold. Three men are seeking you.

Arise, therefore, and go. You find that all the way through the book of Acts. Arise and go.

Go down and go with them. Then notice the next two words doubting nothing. Peter, I have done everything necessary.

You know me. This is enough. You know, this is me leading you.

Now you go with them and you don't doubt and you let me work. For I have sent them. Peter, remember Tabitha the other day when I raised her from the dead, when a few men came seeking you? Well, there's three men seeking you now.

So you go and you see what happens. And don't you doubt. So the presentation of more light to Cornelius, the prayer on the wings, the prejudice now overcome.

And then the last thing is that when God is doing something big and new, there will effectively be his work on both ends. So I just call the fourth thing here prophecy on both ends. God talking to them on both ends.

Verse 21, Peter went down to the men who had been sent from Cornelius and said, Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come? They said, Cornelius, the centurion, a just man, one who fears God as a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house and hear words from you. Boom.

It all falls into place. OK, Lord, I get it. I get it.

And here's the first test. Will I or will I not take the gospel to the Gentiles? I know what you're asking me to do. I'll do it.

So as they're speaking through the things, it gets late. And so he invites them to stay for the night. And I just wish I could have seen Peter's face throughout the evening at dinner, sitting around having coffee.

And he's sitting there looking at Simon, the tanner. Jews had nothing to do with tanners because they handled all these dead bodies of unclean animals. He's got a Roman centurion sitting there from Italy.

He's got two Gentile God fears there. He's surrounded. And I just wish I could have seen his face marveling, just sitting there.

He must have been thinking the whole evening. God, every time I think I've wrapped my mind around how big your love is, I find that it's so much bigger. If nothing else, Lord, you are teaching me even more how great your love is and how great your love is for people that I don't love and how you want to fill me and work in me so that I will love them and I will love them enough to want to see them saved even though I never loved them before.

Isn't that a great thought? Our God is an awesome God. He's a saving God. And I'll tell you something, the Christian life is the greatest adventure there is.

All this and heaven too. All this and heaven too. Are you on the journey? If not, believe today on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask him to forgive you of your sins. Ask him to fill you with this Holy Spirit and lead you and guide you. Become a Christian today.

If you've just been playing games with God as we bow our heads to pray now, just say yes to Jesus and no to sin. Yes to Jesus and no to the devil. Yes to Jesus and no to yourself.

Give your life to Christ. Believe on Christ. And then ask him to lead you from here.

And he will. Let the adventure begin. And if you've wandered from him, if you're a million miles from God, guess what? You're only one prayer away.

One prayer away. Lord, thank you for being such a loving, gracious, saving God. Thank you, Lord, that you have chosen to involve us in your great plan of redemption, both in saving us and using us to see others saved.

Thank you, Lord God, that we can have such a personal fellowship and relationship with you. Lord Jesus, fill us with your Holy Spirit. Reveal your light to us, Lord, and reveal your plan to us, Lord.

Lead us and guide us as you led these men in the passage. For there are still many who need to know of your love. And we will give you all the glory as you give us the love and the strength that we wouldn't have otherwise.

We go forth in confidence in you that you are fully able to finish what you have begun. And we ask these things in expectation, for we pray them in Jesus' name. Amen.

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