

Acts #9: Peter

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon explores the significance of the Body of Christ, Peter's role in the Church, and the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles in the early Church.

Duration: 1:09:47

Scripture: Acts 10:1-11

Topics: "Divine Revelation", "Inclusive Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the revelation that Peter had while praying on a rooftop. Peter saw a vision of a vessel, described as a sheet, descending from heaven with all kinds of animals, both clean and unclean, inside. He heard a voice telling him to rise, kill, and eat, but Peter resisted, stating that he had never touched anything unclean. This happened three times before the sheet went back up to heaven. The speaker emphasizes that this vision was a significant revelation for Peter, as it showed him that preaching the gospel was more than just drawing people into the kingdom of God, but also accepting all people, regardless of their background or status.

Transcript

It's a Sunday evening, February the 4th, 1973, in Richmond, Virginia. Ministry being given through Brother Stephen Tom. Let's have a word of prayer.

Lord, thou art the Holy One. No man can stand before thee, but we praise and thank thee for the presence, Lord, for this new and living way that thou hast opened for us, that we may come, even to thy very presence, to worship, to commune, to wait upon thee, to hear thee. O Lord, what grace, what grace would amaze us all the time that man can come to thy very presence.

O Lord, we pray that we may have ear to hear. What does the Spirit say to the church? In thy precious name, amen. Will you please turn to a very familiar chapter.

The book of Acts, chapter 10. We'll read from verse 1. Acts, chapter 10, verse 1. For a certain man in Caesarea, by name Cornelius, a centurion of the band called Italic, pious and searing God with all his heart, both giving much alms to the people and supplicating God continually, saw plainly in a vision about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming unto him and saying to him, Cornelius, and he having fixed his eyes upon him and become full of fear, said, What is it, Lord? And he said to him, Thy prayers and thy alms have gone up for a memorial before God. And now sent man to Joppa and fetched Simon,

who is surname Peter.

He lodges with a certain Simon, Athena, whose house is by the sea. And when the angel who was speaking to him had departed, having called two of his household and a pious soldier of those who were constantly with him and related all things to them, he sent them to Joppa. And on the morrow, as these were journeying and drawing near to the city, Peter went up on the house to pray about the sixth hour.

And he became hungry and desired to eat. But as he was making ready, they were making ready, an ecstasy came upon him. And he behold, the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending as a great sheet bound by the four corners and let down to the earth, in which were all the prophets and creeping things of the earth and the fowls of the heaven.

And there was a voice to him, Rise, Peter, slay and eat. And Peter said, Ignorize, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common or unclean. And there was a voice again the second time to him, What God has claimed, do not thou make common.

And this took place, and the vessel was straightway taken up into heaven. And as Peter doubted in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold also the man who was sent by Cornelius, having brought out the house of Simon, stood at the gate. And having called someone, they inquired if Simon, who was serving Peter, was not there.

But as Peter continued pondering over the vision, the spirit said to him, Behold, three men sit thee, but rise up, go down, and go with them. Nothing doubted, because I have sent them. And Peter, going down to the men, said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek.

What is the cause for which ye come? And they said, Cornelius Isanchurian, a righteous man, and fearing God, and born witness to by the whole nation of the Jews, has been divinely instructed by a holy angel to send for thee to his house, and hear words from thee. Having therefore invited them in, he lost them. And on the morrow, rising up, he went away with them, and certain of the brethren from Joppa went with him.

And on the morrow, they came to Caesarea. And Cornelius was looking for them, having called together his kinsmen and his intimate friends. And when Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and falling down, bid him homage.

But Peter made him rise, saying, Rise up, I myself also am a man. And he went in, talking with him, and found many gathered together. And he said to them, Ye know how it is unlawful for a Jew to be joined or come to one of a strange race.

And to me God has shown to call no man common or unpleased. Wherefore also having been sent for, I came without saying anything against it. I inquire therefore for what reason ye have sent me.

And Cornelius said, Four days ago I had been fasting until this hour. And the night I was praying in my house, and lo a man stood before me, in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer has been heard, and thine alms have come in remembrance before God. Send therefore to Joppa and thank Simon, who is surnamed Peter.

He lodges in the house of Simon Athena by the sea. Who, when he is come, will speak to thee? Immediately therefore I sent to thee, and thou hast well done in coming. Now therefore we are all present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

And Peter opened his mouth, saying of the truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that hears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him. The word which he sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all things.

I think probably for the sake of continuation, I have to go back a little bit and fill in a little bit. So those who have been here before, I hope you will bear with me. I hope I will use just as short a time as possible just to bring us to this point.

Luke, the beloved physician, was used of the Lord to give us two of the books in the New Testament. In his first discourse, the gospel according to Luke, he told us what the Lord Jesus began, and you underline that word began, began to do and to teach. Then in his second discourse, the book of the Acts, he told us what the risen Lord continued to do and to teach.

When our Lord Jesus began to do and to teach on this earth, he did all these in a body, which he took upon himself as his incarnation. He used that body for over 33 years. But when he continued to do and to teach after he was resurrected from the dead and ascended up to heaven, he took upon himself another body, the body of Christ.

That corporate body, the body of Christ. And in that body he has continued to do and to teach up to the present moment. It is a body that came into being on the day of Pentecost.

Because on the day of Pentecost, 120 individual believers, a congregation praying with one accord, and the Holy Spirit came. And they were baptized into one body. That was the beginning of that body.

And from that day onward you'll find this body gradually grows. This body gradually takes up a form according to the heavenly design. And it is in this body that the risen Lord is able to continue to do and to teach in the growth of the person.

We may say roughly there are three stages. The first stage we call it the stage of childhood. And during the stage of childhood you'll find as we look back, it is one of the happiest moments of our life.

Why? Because we are being cared for. We have no concerns, no responsibilities, no problems. And if any problems should arise, our parents would take care of them.

We are just enjoying what our parents have provided for us. And then after that we grow into the adolescent stage. And this is the most difficult time.

It is not only difficult for the one who is growing, but for all who are around him or around her. It is a period of conflict, of turmoil. A period of doubting everything, questioning everything, throwing off all traditions, trying new ideas, seeking for a future.

But you know that is the most exciting period. Very thrilling. Whether a person can come out to manhood or womanhood, or whether that person will become just a failure depends largely upon this period.

Because this is the formative period. And after you come out of adolescence into manhood or womanhood, then it is just a matter of maturing. That's what I feel about the Book of Acts.

You know the body of Christ is organic. And because it is organic, the way it grows seems to me follow the same order as the growth of a person. I see Acts chapter 1 through chapter 5 as the childhood of the body of Christ.

The happiest moment of the Church. Everybody who reads these chapters feel fine. All those who believe, all how they are, they were happy.

From 120 to 3,000 and then to 5,000, and then the Lord adds to the Church daily. Oh, the growth of a child is tremendous. And all those who believe in the Lord, how they persevere in the teaching and the fellowship of the Apostles, in the breaking of bread and in prayer, and how they were one in spirit and in soul, and nobody said anything belonged to Him, they hear everything full of love.

Every happy time. No problem. Whenever a problem came in chapter 5, a little problem did come, and you'll find the Holy Spirit solve them right away.

You don't need to worry about that. Your parents did. Everything was provided.

Glory. I believe when we read the Book of Acts, we often wish that we can go back to childhood. Then you'll find from chapter 6 to chapter 15, an entirely different scene.

The Body of Christ entered into a period of great conflict. Tremendous problems. And you really don't know how it will turn out, whether it will be formed according to the heavenly pattern, as the Body of Christ, the vessel, fit for the Master's needs, or whether it will be a wreck.

When you read these chapters, you know. But these chapters are very clear. And then from chapter 16 to 28, and 29 and 30, and 31, 32, and so on and so forth.

Today, maybe tomorrow. You know, the Book of Acts is never finished. It's still going on.

Not just chapter 26. No chapters are edited. It is just material.

Until it is fully grown. And then the bridegroom will come and claim it as his. We mentioned last time that during the period of formation, these formative years, these are most important years.

Chapter 6 to chapter 15 are the most important chapters in the Book of Acts. Let me use another illustration. The life of Christ is the new wine.

The new wine is poor. But the new wine seeks for a new winery. But you cannot put the new wine in the old wine steen.

The old wine steen has lost its elasticity. It is rigid. It is thick.

Little. If you put the new wine into the old wine steen, the new wine continues to ferment and to expand, and the result is it breaks through the old wine steen, and the new wine is wasted. The new wine must be put in the new wine steen.

The life of the Lord Jesus is the new wine. Judaism is the old wine steen. Any ism is an old wine steen.

If you try to put the life of Christ into any ism, both suffer. So the Lord is looking for a new wine steen. What is this new wine? The Body of Christ.

That's it. So you find in the formation of this new wine steen, the Body of Christ. It is born.

Now it goes through a period of formation where it will be forced to be part of the old wine steen, and thus loses the freshness, the power, the life of the new wine, or whether it can become a new wine steen,

completely new, to be filled with a new wine. This is the question here in these chapters, from chapter 6 to chapter 15 of the Book of Acts. Thank God.

He raised up a few key persons. And through these few key persons, he was able to direct the Body of Christ, the Church, in these days into that new wine steen as he had. And brothers and sisters, that's what we are interested in at this moment.

Now last time when I was here, we fellowshiped together on three of the key men. We began with Stephen, continued with Philip, and finally we have Paul. Now of course we cannot go back again, because if we go back again, we cannot go ahead.

But anyway you'll find here God has raised up first Stephen as the pioneer of the heavenly wine, of the new wine. The Church is not a part of Judaism. It is a new creation, a new wine steen, a new baptism.

And because he was pioneering this, he became the target. And this is furthered a little bit forward by Philip in joining the Samaritans with the Jews. There was tremendous prejudice between these two.

But here you'll find the Samaritans were joined to the Jews, and the Jews to the Samaritans. Then God raised up a most unusual man in the person of Paul. He was the very symbol of Judaism.

And God shattered his Judaism completely and used him as a master builder of the body. And this evening we would like to continue with the fourth key man, and that is Peter. You know Peter came to the Lord through his brother Angel.

We all know that. Angel, his brother, was with John the Baptist. And when our Lord Jesus passed by, John the Baptist said, Behold the Lamb of God.

And the second time when John the Baptist testified to this, Angel and his companions, they left John the Baptist and followed the Lord. They stayed with the Lord that night. And the next morning Angel rang to find his brother Simon and said, We have met the Messiah.

So he brought Simon to the Lord. And it was a love at first sight. When the Lord saw Simon, and when Simon saw the Lord, and you know, they didn't just have a glance, because the word there is they look over.

You know? The Lord looked over Peter and Simon, and Simon looked over the Lord, and it was first light. Immediately he got a revelation. A revelation from the Heavenly Father.

Not by flesh and blood. Because our Lord Jesus says, Simon, Barjona, you are blessed. Because this is not something instructed or taught to you by the flesh and blood.

It is the Heavenly Father who has revealed the Son to you. Thank God for that revelation. But you know, the revelation of the Father concerning his Son is only the first part.

There is a second part. Because immediately after Peter confessed the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the Lord said, Simon, it is the Father who has revealed this to you. The Father reveals the Son to you.

Nobody knows the Son but the Father. Nobody knows the Father but the Son. And those whom the Father or the Son is pleased to reveal.

And now the Father has revealed the Son to Simon. Oh, you are Christ. And after he had received that revelation, the Son began to reveal.

The Father revealed the Son. And after the Son is revealed, the Son continues to reveal. What did the Son reveal to you? You are Peter, a living Son.

I will build my church upon this rock. And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against me. But how? How will the foundation be laid? How can the church be built on this rock? The Lord said, I must go.

I must suffer. I must die. But on the third day, I will be raised.

Brothers and sisters, this is tremendous reality. It is as tremendous as the first part of the revelation. The Father revealed the Son to Peter.

And the Son revealed his purpose of coming. Why does he come to this world? He comes to build. But in order to build his church, he has to go to the cross.

Because death and resurrection is the principle of building. Not only of laying the foundation, but of building the house. Did Peter understand? Did Peter get it? He got the first part.

But he missed the second part. Why? Because when our Lord Jesus said, I will build my church upon this rock, it went in this ear and went out that ear. Do you know what remained in his mind? All that remained in his mind was, it was too cold.

You have to go to Jerusalem and die? You don't need to do that. So Peter hold on to the Lord and said, now Lord, don't do that. Be good to yourself.

Be kind to yourself. He was not ready for the cross. And because he was not ready for the cross, he was not ready for the church.

We often say, if you preach the church, you get the cross. If you preach the cross, you get the church. Here you'll find the Lord Jesus told Peter of the church.

That is this body of Christ. This new wine thing he is going to make. But it has to come by the cross.

Peter rejected the cross. And therefore the vision of the church evaporated. He had to be tested beyond his measure.

In a sense, when the Lord was crucified on the cross. You may say that. Peter really died.

Peter hit the bottom at that time. When Christ was crucified on the cross, Peter denied the Lord three times. He hit the bottom.

He went into death. He too, you know that, on the day of Pentecost. God was able to use him as a spokesman.

Not only for the head, but also. But Peter's works were mainly among the Jews. He was an apostle to the Jews.

And he was very faithful. He moved among the Jews. And nobody else.

Well, at one time he was sent to Samaria, that's true. But Samaritans were partly Jews. They were not completely Gentiles.

So you'll find that in the early days, in the beginning, the church, the body of Christ, were composed mostly of Jewish believers. And even though some might not be Jews, at least they were apostolate. You know, they endorsed Judaism.

They declaimed. They were Judaized. In the case of a eunuch from Africa, most likely he was apostolate.

He came to Jerusalem to worship. So even though he was a Gentile, yet he was apostolate. In other words, he was connected with Judaism.

So you know, at that time, even the apostles, they thought that Christianity, or the church, or the body of Christ, was just part of Judaism. Maybe the reformed Judaism. That's the reason why, you'll find, the concept was very deep and strong.

If you want to be a believer, you must become a Jew too. You must be circumcised. You must become a Jew.

Then you can become a believer, a Christian. They cannot see that the body of Christ is the new one thing. It is different from any other.

They couldn't see that. They thought that it was just composed of the Jews. But God, in his sovereignty, began to move.

You know, the movement of the Holy Spirit is most fascinating. If God should tell Peter in Jerusalem that he is going to send him to the house of Cornelius, probably Peter will go like Jonah, trying to go the opposite direction. But the Lord did not tell him anything.

It seemed as if he was moved by circumstance, from one place to another, until finally he was in Joppa. He didn't know why he was in Joppa, but he was there. The Lord just moved him without his knowing to Joppa, to open the gospel.

The Jews had nothing to do with the Gentiles. The Jews were completely separated from the Gentiles. They were not even entering into the home of a Gentile.

They could not eat at the same table with a Gentile. According to Leviticus, chapter 11, God gave ordinances to the Jews that there are certain things they can eat. Things that are clean they can eat.

You know, creatures with split hooves and chew the cud at the same time. These are clean animals that Jews can eat. And if they do not chew the cud or split the hoof, these are unclean, they cannot eat.

And so on and so forth. You read Leviticus 11 and you'll find what are clean and what are not clean. Now what is the reason for that? In Leviticus 11, the reason given is because God said, I am holy.

Therefore you must eat. That's the reason why. They can only eat the clean things and they should not eat the unclean things.

You read the Old Testament. You cannot find any commandment to the Jews that they should not enter into the house of a Gentile. There is no such commandment.

It is largely because of Leviticus 11. In this matter of food, they become separated from the Gentiles. It is because they cannot eat unclean food.

Just like today, if you are a kosher Jew, an orthodox Jew, you cannot eat any food that is not kosher. And because you cannot eat any food that is unkosher, you cannot go to any home and eat. Because their food is not kosher.

That's the same thing, you know. So here you'll find it is mainly because of this matter of eating, this habit of eating, this law that governs eating, that gradually, gradually, the Jews become completely separated from the Gentiles. They consider themselves as clean.

The Gentiles are unclean because they eat unclean. So, no Jew will enter into the house. They can do business, but they cannot go there and be entertained and eat at the same table.

This is the Levitical law of cleanness. Now why did God give them such a point? Because God was preparing a people for the coming of Christ. And after Christ had come, then you'll find all these things, especially the ceremonial law, when the reality has come, the shadow.

Therefore you'll find in Colossians chapter 2, it is said, verse 14, "...having his faith blotted out, the handwriting in ordinances which stood out against us, which was contrary to us, he hath taken it also out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Our Lord Jesus has blotted out the handwriting in ordinances that stood out against us. Some people tell us that the handwriting is here. As you'll find in the first note of David.

Handwriting, obligation to which a man is subject by his signature. A bond. You sign your name under it.

You say you're going to fulfill it. When the law of God was given among Sinai, the children of Israel signed their name as it were. All that God has said we will do.

And because they signed their name, they were obligated to fulfill the law. And if they do not fulfill the law, they are condemned. They are condemned.

But here you'll find when Christ died on the cross, he has blotted out, he had blotted out the handwriting in ordinances that has stood against us. And not only that, he has taken it also out of the way, having nailed it. Some people tell us that it is a custom in the old days.

Suppose you sign an IOU. And a person has that paper in his hand. Now you are obligated to pay it.

But one day after you have paid it, you've got the IOU back. And what do you do? You just hang it to a nail on the door to show everybody that it is paid already. So this is what has happened.

Taken out of the way, having nailed it. This IOU is nailed on the cross. It's taken away.

We are no longer under the law. We are under. So when Christ comes, he has fulfilled the law.

He has taken that which opposes us out of the way. All the ceremonial laws, especially, have already found their fulfillment. From now on it is a miracle.

Because moral principles of brothers and sisters, it is very difficult for a Jew to accept that. All his life Peter has kept the Levitical law of cleanness. And then one day the law said, you can indeed do that.

Did God contradict himself? Where was the law? You say one thing at one time, and now you are saying another thing. You say that you should not touch any unclean things. Because you are holy.

And you want us to be holy. But now you say lines of tyranny. You are just contradicting yourself.

Do you find sometimes you are in the same situation? Thank God he is the living God. The law is given as an emergency measure. It is temporary.

It is to set us up to Christ. When Christ comes, these things are substituted or replaced by Christ. Not that God is contradicting himself.

God is now working according to his permanent design. To separate the Jews from the Gentiles is God's temporary measure. But now Christ has come.

God is going to bring us into his permanent design. And his permanent design is, in this seed all the nations, in this seed of Abraham, in singular letter, Christ. All the nations shall be holy.

Now this is God's original design. But how easy for us human minds to hold on to the old. Especially we say it comes from God.

It does. But it is confused. In any way, you find that Peter, he went to Japan.

And he stayed with another man called Simon, a tanner. Because you know, a tanner, because he tanned the skins, you know, that makes the wineskins. And in tanning the skins for the wineskins, you know, the odor is terrible.

Therefore they do not allow a tanner to live in the city. A tanner has to live outside the city. He lived by the seashore.

There are lots of waters there. So Simon went there and stayed with him. As a matter of fact, when I was in Joppa, I found that house.

I went there because I remember the Bible said Joppa. Now Joppa today is high tide. So one day I went there.

But nobody seemed to know the place. I went there and went there and I saw a great cathedral somewhere. But no, that wasn't it.

And nearby I went and then I saw a house there with a sign on there. Simon the tanner's house. I don't know whether that is the original house or whether it is not.

I don't know. But anyway, it's all gone commercial now, you know. You knock the door and somebody comes in and you have to pay something, give something, you know.

And then you can go in and you see all these dye urns there, you know. And I go up from the stairs and up to that roof, you know, and overlook the scene where Peter prayed on that roof. It's quite interesting.

But that's nothing. But anyway, you find Peter. He was there.

He was there. And it was at noontime. He was hungry.

Do not feel bad if you get hungry. That's natural. Now Peter felt hungry and his host was preparing the lunch, you know.

So he went up to the rooftop and he started to pray. Now I wonder when you're hungry, can you pray? The problem is when you pray, you think of food. And that's what Peter was doing.

You know, he was praying, but of course naturally because he was hungry, when he was praying he thought of food. And the Lord gave him a vision. Brothers and sisters, you know, sometimes when the Lord begins to reveal things, it comes so naturally.

You can hardly believe it. You think that a revelation or a vision has to be so spectacular and supernatural that it just shocks you. But very often you find it's just in the common occurrence of things.

The vision comes. Look at Moses. He was in the desert and he saw a burning bush.

Now that is the most common sight in the desert. It happens every day. And yet something... Now this was Peter.

So he was there praying and of course he was thinking of food. And as he was praying, he saw in a vision a vessel. He cannot describe it.

He said a vessel as of a sheet coming down from heaven with four corners tied. And it is lowered down to earth so that he can see in that sheet. It is filled with all kinds of quadrupeds, creeping things, and fowls, both clean and unclean, all mixed together.

And then he heard a voice. Peter, rise up, kill, and eat. And he said, No, Lord.

I have never touched any unclean thing. And the voice said, What God has claimed. Let no man make it.

And this happened three times. And three times Peter said, No, Lord. No, Lord.

No, Lord. And then, brothers and sisters, that is a tremendous... You know, Peter is a fisherman, was a fisherman. But he didn't see a net.

He didn't see the fishes. God took him out of his own realm, you know, to show him something new. Why? Because what God was teaching him is more than preaching the gospel.

He was a fisherman, fisher of men. He was preaching the gospel as if he was drawing the net, drawing the fishes out of the sea into the kingdom of God. Now that seems to be the work of Peter.

But here the Lord wanted to show Peter something more. Instead of a net casting into the sea and gathering up these fishes, it was a vessel as of a sheep, of a great sheep, hanging on four corners and coming down from heaven. You invert it, and what do you see? A tent.

A tabernacle. It is originated in heaven. It comes down to earth to gather up all these clean and unclean things.

And it returns. That is the vision of the church. Brothers and sisters, the church is not something earthly in origin.

Even towards the very end in Revelation, you'll find John said, I saw the new Jerusalem coming down. The church is a heavenly body. According to God's original design, it came from heaven.

It is not something originated by man. It is not something organized by man. It is not a human ingenious invention.

The church comes down from heaven. It comes from God. But it touches the earth.

Why? To gather. To gather. To gather in that great suit all kinds of possible creeping things and flowers, both clean and unclean.

And it will go back to earth. For the word of God says, rise up, kill and eat. What does that mean? It means that have fellowship.

Eating is fellowship. People have fellowship with that which is in the sheet. Make no distinction.

Jesus said no. I cannot. I'm a Jew.

I have to keep the Levitical law, the ceremonial law of purity. I have to do that, the law says. For God has claimed that no man consider God.

And you know, this refers not only to what the Levitical law said, clean, unclean, but also to what the Levitical law said, clean. Those, the Jews and the Gentiles, are all claimed by the blood of Christ. Levitically speaking, according to ceremonial law, the Jews are clean, the Gentiles are unclean.

But when you come to the presence of the Lord, we are all unclean. There is no difference. The Jews must be cleansed by the Lord just as the Gentiles.

And they are. And that is the argument you'll find in the letters to the Galatians. Even we Jews are saved like the Gentiles.

Not by work, but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. What God has claimed, let no man call unclean. God has taken away the wall of partition.

In Ephesians chapter 2, He has taken away the wall of partition. The only thing that comes through the law, He has made us one. He is our peace.

Brothers and sisters, this is the church. What is the church? The church is designed by God. It has its origin, its root in heaven.

It includes all who are claimed by the Lord, both the Jews and the Gentiles. And the law says, have fellowship with all, make no distinction. Peter said, No.

I want to have fellowship only with the Jews. I want a Jewish church. And let them have their Gentile church.

Gentile church. The law said, No, I have only one sheep, not two sheep. I have mixed them up.

And you know, Peter was so bound by the traditions, so bound by the law, so bound by the past, he just couldn't, he just couldn't. Even though he knew it was the Lord that was talking to him, he said, No, Lord, no, Lord, no, Lord. Do nothing is very easy to break away from tradition.

Do nothing is easy to break away from the past. It's very difficult. It's very difficult to let the old pass and enter into the newness.

That is difficult. God was leading Peter into the fullness and he found himself unable. Unable to.

Three times and the sheep went up to heaven. And at that very moment, the messengers from Cornelius arrived at the door. They knocked the door and said, We want to find a man.

Simon, surnamed Peter, is he here? And Peter was still pondering over the vision. Now what does that mean? And the Lord said, Go down. Go with us.

I have sent them. And down they went. So Peter went.

And he said, You know it is not lawful for a Jew to enter into the house of a Gentile, but the Lord has told me. Do what the Lord has planned. Let no man call it unclean.

That's why I'm here. Thank God the gospel came to the Gentiles. And the Holy Spirit sealed it with his approval.

Brothers and sisters, the body of Christ is the heavenly body. That it touches the earth. All the principles that govern the church is heavenly.

But it is very practical. In the church, in the body of Christ, there is neither Jesus, neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision, neither barbarian, nor schism, neither bondman, nor sinner. Why? It is Christ.

All and all. If it is Christ, can you make any distinction? The distinction is gone. All the natural distinctions are all in faith.

Blotted out. No more on the cross. No more I O U. We are free in Christ to have fellowship with all our brothers and sisters.

It is a new creation. All the old discriminations are on the cross. And the Lord said, Rise up, heal, and eat.

Have fellowship. Do you know there is something most wonderful? Cornelius. He was a Gentile.

A Roman. A sanctuary of the then called Italics. It means that all his soldiers were Italian.

They came from Rome. And they garrisoned that place in Caesarea. But he was a pious man.

He was not a propellant to Judaism. But somehow he admired the purity that he found in Judaism. So you find that he was practicing giving alms and praying much.

And God knew the heart. Whether you are Jew or Gentile, if you are really seeking God's love. But the strangest thing is this.

God sent an angel to Cornelius. And yet when that angel came to Cornelius, that angel did not preach the gospel to Cornelius. That he might be saved.

He said, that angel said, You send people to Joppa and get Peter to come and tell you how to be saved. He said, that's very cumbersome. God can do it very easily with you if you send an angel.

Why not just let an angel give the message? No. God never acts by exceeding. He always acts according to preaching.

You know, if he should send an angel to preach the gospel, he may preach a perfect gospel. But he has no experience of salvation. So the result will be an orthodox church.

Very orthodox. Got no life. Another thing.

You know who was probably incestuous? If you remember your Bible. Just recall. Who was probably incestuous? That great evangelist.

Isn't it? Right? You don't believe me? All right. Let's look at the Bible. Acts 8. Verse 40.

And Philip was found as a voter. And passing through, he announced the glad tidings to all the cities till he came to Caesarea. This great evangelist Philip bought in Caesarea.

Now if God wanted Cornelius to hear the gospel, Philip was there. Next door. Why not send Philip? Why send people to take a day's journey to go to Joppa and get Peter to come and it took altogether four days? Back and forth.

That again is a strange way of the Holy Spirit, you know. He never acts because it is convenient. He always acts according to preaching.

Philip was an experienced, used, true evangelist. And certainly if the Spirit of the Lord told Philip, go next door to see Cornelius and give the gospel to him, Philip would be most happy to do that. Get Peter.

Why? To maintain the oneness of the body. Why did God use Peter to open the door to the Jews and the same person to open the door to the Gentiles? To keep the unity of the body of Christ. If it is Philip, probably you will have a Gentile journey.

Brothers and sisters, you will find in the foundation of the body of Christ how the Lord stretches again and again this oneness of the body of Christ. In this body there can be neither Jew, Christ, or any law. Thank God.

Even though Peter was so prejudiced, so bound by tradition, God somehow did break through somewhat. He had his relapse, of course. But God did break through at that juncture.

So the Gentiles and the Jews, they were all baptized by one Spirit into one body wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile. And we are all made to drink of the same fruit. That is the Church.

Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, we do worship Thee because Thy ways are always higher than our ways. Thy minds are always higher than our minds. How often we will act according to expedient days, thinking that we are wise, but Lord, Thou knowest better.

Shall we pray and thank Thee for preserving the nature of the oneness of the body of Christ? Shall we pray and thank Thee because Thou hast cleansed us in spite of what we are and Thou hast made us one. And Thou dost desire that we fellowship one with another in the spirit of love. O Lord, we do pray that this vision may not be lost to Thy people today.

O that Thy body may be that vessel specially designed and chosen to contain Thyself and to express Thyself. Lord, we do worship Thee. Thou art great.

In the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen. We give Thee all the praise, Lord, and crown Thee with bachelors' chains with every wiling joy and divine.

O make us one, Lord, in that one true love. O make us one true love.

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