

SERIES ON THE APOSTLE PETER
SERMON #4 OF 5: PETER REMAINS TEACHABLE

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(Based on Hobb's lessons on Peter; and material from H. Leo Boles)

TEXT: ACTS 10

OPENING READING: ACTS 10:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

1. Series on Peter
2. Review:
 - 1) Peter's First Test: his encounter with deity, and his awareness of his own sinfulness.
 - 2) Peter: The Impulsive Disciple his tendency to speak and take action with little thought; but even though he stumbled, he continued to try.
 - 3) Peter: The Dark Hour -- his denial of Christ, and his rise above failure.
3. We've learned that despite our imperfections, God loves us (**Rom. 5:8**).
4. He loves us and uses us in His service (**2 Cor. 4:7**).
5. In today's lesson, we learn that Peter Remains Teachable.
 - 1) "One mark of a wise person is his willingness to recognize that he does not know it all." (Hobbs)
 - 2) If we even get to the place where we think we know it all, we are in trouble (**1 Cor. 10:12**).
 - 3) It is sad that there are those who close their minds to the truth.
 - 4) Cartoon of an angry man: "Some minds are like concrete, all mixed up and permanently set."
6. Let's note our background reading (**Acts 10:1-8**).
 - 1) Place: Ceasarea, the resident city of the procurator of Judea, Samaria and Idumea, some 28 miles north of Joppa; 54 miles NW of Jerusalem along the Mediterranean Sea.
 - 2) Man: Cornelius, a Roman name.
 1. Possibly a descendant of the noted Cornelian family of Rome.
 2. He was a *centurion*; from the Latin *centurio*, for the number 100; a man in charge of 100 soldiers.
 3. He is described as a part of the Italian regiment or cohort: soldiers which were sent to any part of the empire where needed.
 4. Interesting that he was a man given to benevolence and prayer, especially because he was a Gentile and a Roman soldier.
 5. Once before, there was a centurion similar to Cornelius, whom the Jews loved, who built them a synagogue (**Luke 7**).
 6. McGarvey (in his commentary on *Acts*), writes of Cornelius, and the fact that he was not a Jew but a Gentile:
"How then could he have acquired the character which is here ascribed to him? No possible heathen education could have imparted it to him. It could be acquired only by contact with Jewish people."
 - 3) Vision: 9th hour -- 3 p.m.
 1. Cornelius learns that his prayers and acts of benevolence went up as a memorial before God.
 2. But note in particular, the angel informs him that there is something which he must do (**10:6**).

3. True, he was a good man; by some people's standards, they would ask, "What else does he have to do?"
4. Even here, despite his goodness, he is an unsaved man.
5. His task is to send for Peter to hear the word of God.
6. **Acts 11:14**
7. Much has happened to Peter since our last study of him.
 - 1) He had been baptized with the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:1-4**).
 - 2) His sermon is recorded for our reading in **Acts 2**, as the keys of the kingdom or entrance requirements to be of the body of saved were given.
 - 3) In **Acts 3 and 4** he was chastised for preaching the gospel of Christ.
 - 4) In **Chapter 5** imprisoned but freed.
 - 5) He has been to Samaria to lay hands on the people and impart spiritual gifts.
 - 6) But now, he has to learn a new lesson.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE VISION (10:9-16).

- A. Setting:
 1. Peter is on a housetop, a place of flat roofs, outside stairways; places of solitude.
 2. The time frame was the 6th hour: noon; one of the 3 Jewish hours of prayer (**Psa. 55:17; Dan. 6:10**).
 3. Peter was hungry at this noon hour, waiting for the meal to be prepared.
 4. Scripture says he fell into a trance --a unique word used by Luke.
 - 1) Thayer describes it as though Peter came out of himself.
 - 2) The nearest correlation I could suggest would be like the state of a daydream.
- B. Peter sees an interesting vision; that of an object descending.
 1. This was an object like a sheet, that had 4 corners, and it was bound, designed to hold something in.
 2. **Acts 10:12**
 - 1) There were all kinds of 4 foot animals, which some have suggested would have included that which was clean, and unclean to a Jew.
 - 2) There were indeed certain foods which a Jew was not permitted to eat.
 - 3) When God finished defining which animals they could eat, He stated (**Lev. 11:4**).
- C. The command is given to Peter: "*Rise Peter, kill and eat.*"
 1. Peter replies as he showing that he has always been careful to eat only that which was permitted.
 2. **Acts 10:14**
- D. But now Peter hears words which would have been classified as revolutionary to say the least.
 1. **Acts 10:15**
 2. This occurred 3 times, and then the sheet was received up into heaven.
 3. Perhaps the repeating of not calling what God had cleansed as common was necessary for it to proverbially sink in to Peter's mind.
- E. Peter had exercised the terms of admission into the kingdom in **Acts 2**, but now was learning the difficult lesson that all nations would be accepted into the kingdom, or church.

II. THE VISIT (10:17-33).

- A. Peter was perplexed and unsure as to the meaning of this vision; and while pondering these thoughts, Cornelius' servants arrive.
1. **Acts 10:19-20**
 - 1) Of interest, Cornelius is said to have sent the servants in **vs 8**.
 - 2) The Spirit says that He sent them (**vs 20**).
 - 3) This confirms that what was transpiring was God's will.
 2. Peter then inquires of these men as to the reason for their visit.
 - 1) They speak favorably of Cornelius, and explain that he was warned by God to hear words spoken by Peter.
 - 2) Peter upon hearing these words grants these Gentile servants lodging.
 - 3) Peter was not so prejudiced that he would not allow Gentiles a place to stay; for was he not himself staying with a tanner, one who would be unclean to the Jews?
- C. As our story proceeds, beginning with **vs 24**, Cornelius had made preparation for his visit.
1. We especially want to take note that he had taken the liberty to call together his relatives and friends.
 2. I am afraid that perhaps he may put some of us to shame in the area of personal evangelism.
 3. How many of us invite our friends and relatives to hear the word of God be preached?
- D. As Peter arrives, Cornelius attempts to worship him.
1. Observe please that Peter was not the first pope!
 2. Our impulsive brother in Christ was not so haughty and proud that he would let others worship him (**Acts 10:26**).
 3. No doubt he can still remember his encounter with deity: *"Depart from me O Lord, for I am a sinful man"* (**Luke 5:8**).
- E. As Peter talked with Cornelius, and saw those who had assembled, he reveals to us plainly that this was a new lesson that he needed to learn.
- Note **Acts 10:28**
- F. Cornelius then proceeds to explain why he has called for Peter.
- G. As he closes out his explanation, observe **10:33-35**.
- H. We can certainly commend the attitude of Peter.
1. Here we indeed learn that he has humbled himself, and has remained teachable.
 2. If only we could all possess the same attitude.
 3. Sometimes in the church we have difficulty in that when someone encounters some new knowledge of the truth, they show reluctance to accept it.
 4. Now granted, Peter showed some reluctance in receiving this new truth.
 - 1) After all, he had been taught his whole life not to eat that which is unclean.
 - 2) But now he learns in the vision that it had reference to the Jewish attitude toward Gentiles.
 - 3) True, in **Deut. 7** we learn that the Jews were the chosen ones of God.
 - 4) But upon realizing the truth of God's intention, Peter accepts this truth.
 5. Like many who have taught the gospel before me, and who teach it now, and who will teach it in the future...

- 1) When presented with the truth of God's word, people reject it.
- 2) "That's not the way that my parents taught me," or, "that's contrary to what my preacher said."
- 3) Friends, the only way to be sure of what is the truth must come from God's word.
- 4) **Acts 17:11**

III. THE PROCLAMATION.

- A. Peter seizes the opportunity and begins to preach unto them Jesus.
 1. What is it that leads souls to be obedient to the gospel of Christ? It is the preaching of Christ and Him crucified (**1 Cor. 1:23**).
 2. As Philip taught the Ethiopian, "*he began at the same scripture...*" (**Acts 8:37**).
- B. Beginning with **vs 38** he teaches them how that Jesus did many wonderful works through power and the Holy Spirit.
- C. The essence of his message was to preach and affirm Christ's deity, death, burial, and resurrection.
 1. The things which Peter preached are the very heart of the gospel (**1 Cor. 15:1-4**).
 2. **Rom. 1:16-17** "*For I am not ashamed...*"
- D. Peter then powerfully ended his sermonette (**Acts 10:42-43**).
- E. Was it not Peter who first needed to be faced with deity before he could confess his own sinfulness?
 1. And now he powerfully makes his listeners aware of the Christ.
 2. The prophets gave witness to Christ (**Isa. 7:14; 9:6**).
 3. Paul told those of Ephesus who only knew of the baptism of John (**Acts 19:4**).
- F. Now Peter is commanded of the Lord to testify that God ordained that Jesus will be the Judge (**Acts 17:30-31; 2 Tim. 4:1; 2 Cor. 5:10**).
- G. Whoever believes (acts on) this message, and believes in Him shall receive remission of sins.
 1. Peter preached this same message on the day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:38**).
 2. He preached this basic message even to those who witnessed the healing of the lame man (**Acts 3:19**).
- H. **Acts 10:44-46a**
 1. The Jews present were astonished at what they had witnessed.
 2. As McGarvey notes: "The considerations which caused the amazement were, first, that the Holy Spirit was 'poured out' upon them directly from God, as it had never been before on any but the apostles; and second, that this unusual gift was bestowed upon the Gentiles"
- I. And perhaps I could add thirdly, that they spoke in tongues (**Acts 11:17**). Peter affirms it was the same gift; not one of speaking ecstatic utterances as some claim, but different languages (**Acts 2:6,11**).
- J. There are those in the religious world today that claim that the baptism that saves is Holy Spirit baptism.
 1. I would have you note that these Gentiles have received that baptism, the same as that which the apostles had received in **Acts 2**.
 2. But Peter, speaking by inspiration of God, plainly asks: "*Can anyone forbid water...*" (**Acts 10:47-48**).
- K. If Holy Spirit baptism saves then why would Peter have commanded water baptism?

1. Someone asks, How do you know that **vs 48** refers to water baptism?
2. Because in each instance in Acts where people were baptized in the name of the Lord they were baptized in water.
3. In particular recall the account of **Acts 8**, where Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water and he baptized him; *"and when they were come up out of the water..." (Acts 8:38-39)*.
- L. Peter makes it clear in this passage of the importance of baptism; notice that he commanded it.
 1. If you recall, Cornelius had been told to send for Peter: **11:14** *"who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved."*
 2. These words included Peter's command for them to be baptized, clearly showing that baptism was essential to their salvation.
 3. **Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21**
- M. Peter later rehearses this account to the Jewish brethren (**Acts 11:18**).

CONCLUSION:

1. In this lesson we've noted that Peter has kept an open mind/heart; and was receptive to truths from God not previously known.
2. We admire him for not fighting the will of God, and for his willingness to preach the gospel without fear or favor.
3. The lesson for us must be the same if we would be saved:
 - 1) As I noted, Peter was receptive to truths from God not previously known.
 - 2) Perhaps the truths which Peter presented on this occasion you were not fully aware of.
4. Remember that Cornelius was an outstanding individual in that he was kind, benevolent, and prayerful man.
 - 1) He possessed the quality of moral goodness which we can surely admire.
 - 2) But he was not saved; --and if he died in that state, he would have been lost for all eternity.
 - 3) Too many have thought that moral goodness is the standard by which God will usher people into heaven.
 - 4) Certainly moral goodness comes with Christianity, but those with moral goodness alone have not been cleansed by the blood of Christ.
 - 5) Song: What can wash away my sins?...
5. If we want to learn and accept the truth:
 - 1) We must keep an open mind/heart concerning God's will.
 - 2) We must do all that God has commanded us, in order to be saved.
 - 3) We must not cling to what man believes/thinks, but obey the word of God.
6. We thank God today that as Gentiles we have been included in God's plan for saving man.
 - 1) What a joy it is to know that the same terms of admission given to the Jews who became Christians have been afforded to us.
 - 2) Plan of salvation: believe (**John 8:24**); repent (**Luke 13:3,5**); confess Christ (**Rom. 10:9-10**); and baptism for the forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**).