

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

# THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

## OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

*An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely*

### ACTS 5:31-32

*"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."*

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

### Lesson #51

### COMMENTARY ON: 11:1-18

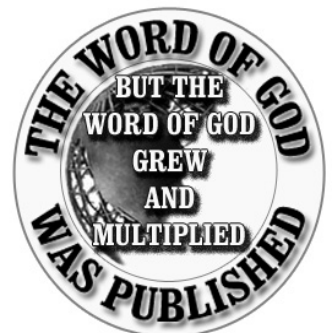
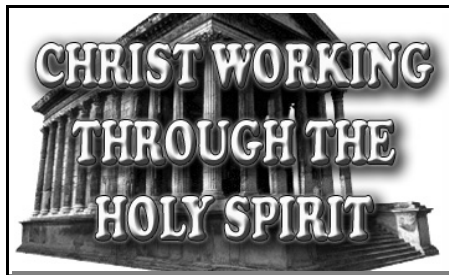
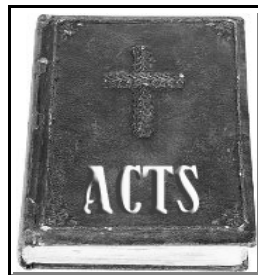
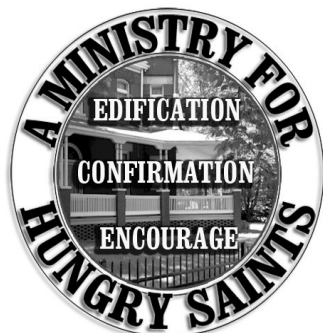
#### PETER REPORTS TO JERUSALEM

A certain spiritual manner is being made known in the book of Acts: it is that of speaking of the wondrous works of God: in particular, reporting what the Lord has done. In this accounting, there is a total absence of any promotion of persons or groups. The attention is drawn to what the Lord has done through those who are walking with Him by faith, and to whom He has revealed the truth. The reports of Divine workings are faithful, and without the embellishment that often characterizes modern day reports of the purported work of the Lord. There are no exaggerations, and observations of the work itself are insightful, consistently giving glory to God. This is an aspect of spiritual life that is worthy of note: being faithful in the stewardship of what we have been given to see and hear, whether in ourselves or others. The testimony given by Peter will reflect his personal humility, as well as his desire for the Lord to be glorified and His purposes declared.

### ACTS 17:26-27

*"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."*

" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

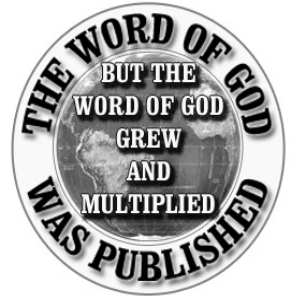


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



## The Book of Acts

### Lesson Number 51



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God's Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.ITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833),WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

**LEXICON LEGEND:** FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

**DISCLAIMER:** The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

# PETER REPORTS TO JERUSALEM

<sup>11:1</sup> And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. <sup>2</sup> And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, <sup>3</sup> Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. <sup>4</sup> But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, <sup>5</sup> I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: <sup>6</sup> Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. <sup>7</sup> And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. <sup>8</sup> But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. <sup>9</sup> But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. <sup>10</sup> And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. <sup>11</sup> And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. <sup>12</sup> And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: <sup>13</sup> And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; <sup>14</sup> Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. <sup>15</sup> And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup> Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. <sup>17</sup> Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? <sup>18</sup> When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." (Acts 11:1-18)

## INTRODUCTION

A certain spiritual manner is being made known in the book of Acts: it is that of speaking of the wondrous works of God – in particular, reporting

what the Lord has done. This is in fulfillment of David's prophecy, "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power" (Psa 145:11).

David also spoke of himself as engaged in this activity: "My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long" (Psa 71:24). And again, "I will . . . talk of thy

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*doings*" (Psa 77:12). The 105<sup>th</sup> Psalm admonished the people of God, *"talk ye of all His wondrous works"* (v 2). The *"sweet Psalmist of Israel"* (2 Sam 23:1) also said to the Lord, *"Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of Thy wondrous works"* (Psa 119:27). In relation to the new and *"better testament,"* this is the result of all the people knowing the Lord. As it is written in prophecy, *"for they shall all know Me"* (Jer 31:34). **The apostolic doctrine confirms that this, in fact, takes place in Christ** (Heb 8:8-13).

Thus, the saints do not speak of the works of the Lord as casual bystanders, but as those who have **seen and recognized** the hand of the Lord. There is a certain insightful exhilaration

detected in their reports, as the people *"rejoice in His salvation"* (Psa 35:9). Isaiah foretold the day of salvation as one in which the people would say, *"Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted"* (Isa 12:4). In this, the exhortation of the Psalmist actually comes to pass: *"Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people His doings"* (Psa 9:11).

This manner of speaking is not prominent in an institutional setting, nor, indeed, can it be. The reason for this circumstance is that the Person and works of the Lord will not contribute to the activities and aspirations of mere men. **It is not possible for the working of God to promote a human agenda, or vault the institutions of men into prominence.** That simply is not the way the Lord works, for such an activity is counterproductive to the fulfillment of His own purpose. God has declared His agenda, and His blessing will not be given to any other order of business.

It is fashionable in our time for professing Christian leaders to point to their outward success as proof of the blessing of the Lord – much like that which was promised under the Old Covenant (Deut 6:3; 7:13). However, because of the recalcitrance of the people, those promises were not ultimately fulfilled. Instead, Israel was actually thrust out of their land, and experienced all manner of outward oppression, by both nature and their enemies.

**Within the framework of the New Covenant, there is not a hint that it promises any form of earthly prosperity.** That is not the manner of the covenant presently being mediating by Christ.

⇨ **NOT ACCORDING TO THE MANNER OF THE OLD COVENANT.** The New Covenant is a different kind of covenant. Its blessings are different. Its promises are different. In its basis, objectives, and effects it is not to be compared with the Old Covenant. Unlike the Old Covenant, the New is realized in the Person of Christ, and by means of faith. The Old Covenant was based upon doing, and doing alone (Lev 18:5).

⇨ **A COVENANT OF REGARD, NOT DISREGARD.** The New Covenant results in a consistent regard for those who are in Christ Jesus. The favor of God is guaranteed to those who abide in Christ.

⇨ **HIS LAWS PUT INTO THE MIND.** In the New Covenant, the people are brought to think differently. Their thought processes are in concert with what God requires.

⇨ **HIS LAWS WRITTEN IN THEIR HEART.** There is also a strong affection for the Lord – a preference for Him, a love of the truth, and a delight in the Lord. His laws are written upon their hearts.

⇨ **GOD WOULD BE THEIR GOD.** That is, He would be the God of the preference, with no competitors.

⇨ **THEY WOULD BE GOD'S PEOPLE.** God would not be ashamed to own the people in Christ, but would be pleased to call them His own.

⇨ **THEY WOULD ALL KNOW THE LORD.** The people would not be ignorant of God or unacquainted with His ways. They would be familiar with Him.

⇨ **GOD WOULD BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR UNRIGHTEOUSNESSES.** God would not speak of the sins of the people as He did with Israel. He would make gracious provision for the removal of sin, thereby permitting Him to be both just and Justifier.

	<b>"THIS IS THE COVENANT I WILL MAKE . . . I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MIND, AND WRITE THEM IN THEIR HEARTS: AND I WILL BE TO THEM A GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE TO ME A PEOPLE: AND EVERY MAN HIS BROTHER SAYING, KNOW THE LORD: FOR ALL SHALL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST, FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR UNRIGHTEOUSNESSES, AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR INIQUITIES WILL I REMEMBER NO MORE."</b>	
	HEBREWS 8:10-12	
<b>THE NATURE OF THE NEW COVENANT</b>		
<b>?</b>	<b>THESE ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE NEW COVENANT, MATERIALS WITH WHICH TO WORK.</b>	<b>?</b>
<b>PRECISELY HOW CAN ONE BUILD EARTHLY PROSPERITY OR RECOGNITION WITH THIS KIND OF MATERIAL?</b>		

*Peter gives a detailed report of the epoch of the conversion of the Gentiles to the apostles and brethren by Given O. Blakely*

⇨ **THEIR SINS AND INIQUITIES WOULD BE REMEMBERED NO MORE.** Remission of sin is a hallmark of the New Covenant. In that remission, there is freedom from the power of sin as well as the guilt that results from it.

It is evident that these remarkable components of the New Covenant are not tailored for life in the flesh. They have to do with one's association with the living God, NOT their connection with this world – which is passing away. Precisely how can you use these benefits to build a religious institution, or accumulate wealth, or achieve recognition in the world. How do they contribute to such ambitions?

**SOMETHING TO BE SEEN**

It is essential to perceive these things because of the nature of the

reports provided in the book of Acts. There is a glaring absence of worldly values and status throughout the book. If you were to attempt to pattern a religious organization after the church in Jerusalem, precisely how would you go about it? How would you go about organizing a service, developing a youth program, or some form of community outreach? What method is found that would provide a pattern for developing a missionary program, or any kind of a training program? See, there is nothing in the record of the early church that approaches newness of life in such a manner.

**THE ABSENCE OF WORLDLY PROMOTION**

In the accounting Peter will give, there is a total absence of any promotion of persons or groups. The attention is

drawn to what the Lord has done through those who were walking with Him by faith, and to whom He had revealed the truth. There is not the slightest hint of an institutional agenda.

Further, the reports of Divine workings are faithful, and without the embellishment that often characterizes modern day reports of the purported work of the Lord. There are no exaggerations, and the observations of the work itself are insightful, consistently giving glory to God. This is an aspect of spiritual life that is worthy of note – i.e. **being faithful in the stewardship of what we have been given to see and hear, whether in ourselves or others.** The testimony given by Peter will reflect his personal humility, as well as his desire for the Lord to be glorified and His purposes declared.

**THE BRETHREN IN JUDEA HEAR WHAT HAD HAPPENED**

*“<sup>11:1</sup> And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.”*

In the book of Acts, we frequently read of the reports of what was accomplished, as well as the accomplishments themselves. This has been characteristic of Divine workings throughout history.

- ⇨ The manner in which the Lord delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage was “heard” in the city of Jericho (Josh 2:10).
- ⇨ The Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was “noised throughout the country” (Josh 6:27).
- ⇨ The Gibeonites “heard” of the “fame” of the Lord, and what He did in Egypt regarding Israel’s deliverance (Josh 9:9).
- ⇨ The Syrians “heard” of the merciful manner of the kings of Israel (1 Kgs 20:31).
- ⇨ The reports of the working of the

Lord were passed down through the generations of Israel (Psa 44:1; 78:3).

- ⇨ The fame of Solomon “concerning the name of the Lord” was “heard” in other lands (1 Kgs 10:1).
- ⇨ The “fame” of Jesus “went throughout all Syria” (Matt 4:24).
- ⇨ When Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead, “the fame hereof went abroad into all the land” (Matt 9:26).
- ⇨ Even Herod the tetrarch “heard of the fame of Jesus” (Matt 14:1).
- ⇨ What took place among the disciples on the day of Pentecost was “noised abroad” (Acts 2:6).
- ⇨ The apostles in Jerusalem “heard that Samaria had received the word of God” (Acts 8:14).

**Preliminary Conclusions**

There are some preliminary conclusions that are evident in the texts I have just cited.

- ⇨ **Divine workings cannot be concealed.** If a city that is set on a hill “cannot be hid” (Matt 5:14), you may be sure that the working of the Lord cannot remain under the shroud of concealment.
- ⇨ Those who participate in the works of the Lord are **prone to speak of them.**
- ⇨ The works of the Lord are not an end of themselves. **They are rather an appointed means of making the Lord known,** and thereby causing glory to be brought to His name.

**THE APOSTLES AND BRETHREN**

*“And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea . . .”* Other versions read “through Judea,”<sup>NIV</sup> “apostles and believers who were in Judea,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “throughout Judea,”<sup>ESV</sup> “apostles and other believers,”<sup>NLT</sup> and “apostles and the brothers [and sisters].”<sup>ALT</sup>

Behold the harmony in the body of Christ. Although the apostles were placed “first” in the body (1 Cor 12:28), yet they were in no way distinct from the body of Christ. Here they are joined

together with other brethren, or believers, throughout the entire region of Judea.

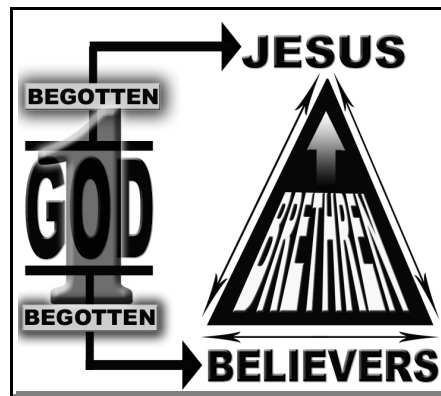
### Who Are "Brethren?"

It may seem rather juvenile to ask such a question. However, the modern church is not known for its use of this term, or that of "brothers." Doctrinally, this is very important word that represents a pivotal kingdom concept. Ponder how it is used in the apostolic writings.

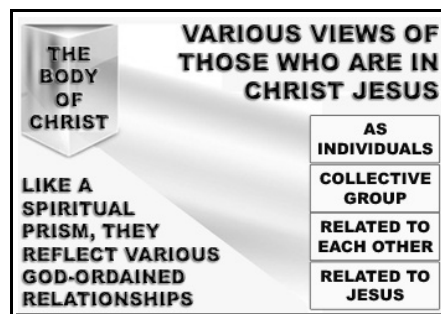
- ⇒ We can "sin against the brethren" (1 Cor 8:12).
- ⇒ Peace, together with faith and love, come from the Father and Jesus to "the brethren" (Eph 6:23).
- ⇒ In obeying the truth "through the Spirit," we do so "unto unfeigned love of the brethren" (1 Pet 1:22).
- ⇒ We know we have passed from death unto life because we "love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).
- ⇒ When we perceive the love of God, because He laid down His life for us, it is apparent that we "ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

The fundamental relationship between brethren is **not** their identity with one another. **Rather, it is their identity with Christ that makes them "brethren."** This is so because Jesus is "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29). Therefore, when He came into the world, and in prospect of the grand redemption He was going to accomplish, it is said that He was made "like unto **His** brethren" (Heb 2:17). Further, they were His "brethren" because they were begotten of God, having the same Father as He Himself had, in His redemptive role. A particular point is made of this in Hebrews 2:11-12. "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of One: for which cause **He is not ashamed to call them brethren.** Saying, I will declare thy name unto **My brethren**, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." In this text "He that sanctifieth" is Jesus Himself, and "they who are sanctified" are the ones being saved. The expression

"are all of One" refers to God the Father. Other versions read, "For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father,"<sup>NASB</sup> "For He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin,"<sup>NRSV</sup> "For the One who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father,"<sup>CSB</sup> "Jesus, who makes people holy, and all those who are made holy have the same Father,"<sup>GWN</sup> and "For both He Who sanctifies [making men holy] and those who are sanctified all have one [Father]." AMPLIFIED



The term "brethren," therefore, is not a mere institutional term, used to denote people of similar persuasion. This is one of those collective terms used to identify either the entire body of those in Christ, and those within a given area. Other collective terms are "the believers" (1 Tim 4:12), "disciples" (Acts 9:1), "them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1), "joint heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17a), "heirs of God" (Rom 8:17b), "the body of Christ" (1 Cor 12:27), "the household of faith" (Gal 6:10), "the house of God" (1 Tim 3:15; Heb 10:21), "the flock of God" (1 Pet 5:2), "the children of God" (Gal 3:26), "the whole family" (Eph 3:15), and "the sheep" (Heb 13:20).



In Christ, "brethren" is a word

that speaks of those who are "born of God" (1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:4,18). **That birth connects them with Jesus, and consequently with one another.**

As used here, we see the marvelous unity of the body of Christ. Those who are ranked "first" by Divine appointment (1 Cor 12:28) are linked together with the rest of the disciples. They do not stand by themselves, even though they are in a unique category. That uniqueness, however, is not owing to their personal achievement, or extraordinary natural abilities. It is rather owing to the role appointed to them by God.

Now, the apostles and brethren together hear the news of what took place in the house of Cornelius. It will be interesting to be exposed to the manner in which the Holy Spirit moved Luke to describe this event.

### THEY ALSO RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD

"... heard that the Gentiles had **also** received the word of God." Other version s read, "also accepted the word of God,"<sup>RSV</sup> "the word of God had been given to the Gentiles,"<sup>BBE</sup> "had welcomed God's message also,"<sup>CSB</sup> "also were being converted,"<sup>LIVING</sup> and "also had received and accepted and welcomed the Word of God [the doctrine concerning the attainment through Christ of salvation in the kingdom of God]."<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Although it appears to be incidental, the word "also" is significant. The idea is that not only had the Jews received the Word (for it was "sent" unto them "first" – Acts 3:26), the Gentiles had "also" received it. Even though this had been in the purpose of God all along, it was largely hidden to the people during the early years of the church. Remember that God gave Peter a special revelation of the acceptance of the Gentiles, which he confessed to be an epoch in his life (Acts 10:28).

I am particularly interested in how this work was reported to "the apostles and brethren." The news was that the Gentiles had "received the word of God." **Had this been reported by some groups of our time, the following might have been said.**

- ⇒ The household of Cornelius were baptized in the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues.
- ⇒ They all spoke with tongues.
- ⇒ They were all baptized into Christ.
- ⇒ They received the anointing.
- ⇒ They received Christ into their hearts.
- ⇒ They were all saved.

None of those things are untrue. However, this is not the manner in which the report went forth. Note what they heard: *“that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.”*

<b>THE FACTS IN THE CASE</b>	
<b>WERE BAPTIZED WITH WATER</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SPOKE WITH TONGUES</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE SPIRIT FELL ON THEM</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD</b>	<b>1</b>

By saying *“also,”* the report highlighted that what had taken place at the house of Cornelius was, at the foundational level, precisely the same thing that had taken place among the Jews. The details differed slightly, but the substance did not. The Jewish disciples, for example, *“waited”* until they were endued with power, tarrying in Jerusalem (Lk 24:49). At the house of Cornelius the Spirit was poured out while they were hearing the proclamation of the risen Christ. Also, when they received the Spirit, He was poured out in Jerusalem as the prophets had declared (Zech 12:10). In the case of Cornelius and those with him, the Spirit was poured out in another region.

However, with both the Jews and the Gentiles, receiving the Word of God

was the foundation of what was experienced. In both cases, the Spirit of God was given to the people – a *“gift”* from God. In both cases, the people spoke in other languages of God Himself: the Jews spoke of *“the wonderful works of God”* (Acts 2:11), and in the case of the Gentiles *“they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God”* (Acts 10:46).

When the people on the day of Pentecost were baptized and added to the church, it is said that they had *“gladly received the word”* (Acts 2:41). When the report of the marvelous conversion of the city of Samaria reached the apostles it is written that they *“heard that Samaria had received the word of God”* (Acts 8:14). When the spiritual nobility of the Bereans was described, it is written, *“they received the word of God with all readiness of mind”* (Acts 17:11). In describing the conversion of the Thessalonians, Paul wrote, *“And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost”* (1 Thess 1:6). And again he wrote, *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe”* (1 Thess 2:13). Even when addressing those in a backslidden and retrogressing state, James admonished them to *“receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls”* (James 1:21).

Receiving the Word of God is pivotal to both the new birth and the maturing of spiritual life. That is because it is *“living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Heb 4:12). The word of God’s grace *“is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified”* (Acts 20:32).

However where the Word of God is not declared, the arm of God will not be revealed (Isa 53:1). **When other messages upstage what God has declared, and human emphases supplant the report that God has sanctioned, the legitimacy**

**of human response is open to question.** When it becomes fashionable for the Bible to be used to buttress the ideas of men, all of the power is pulled out of it. I will go so far as to say that in the average religious setting of our day, where additions to the institution are taking place, it would be exceedingly difficult to determine if people are receiving the Word of God or not. There are too many human innovations and appeals being made to the people. They range from special seating arrangements, unique lighting effects and visual presentations, to non-threatening entertainment. Appeals are made that present Jesus as ready and willing to resolve unpleasant circumstances, mend marriages, and bring victory over unpleasant habits. Domestic issues are treated as though they superceded spiritual ones. Whether or not this is specifically said, this is the impression that is left with the people.

Now, I am saying that, in such circumstances, just saying the people have received the Word of God has a strange sound to it. What God has said is not the emphasis. Rather, what men need appears to be the stress. Further, unless that need has been defined by the Creator, and justifies a Savior being sent into the world, I do not know how it can be given any priority in preaching.

However, none of the unbecoming circumstances with which we are faced today existed during the time of our text. Such things were introduced when unperceptive men and opportunists were given a place in the professing church. Paul warned the elders from Ephesus that certain would rise from the ranks of church leadership, *“speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”* (Acts 20:30). Following the fulfillment of that word, and in the minds of those falling prey to their emphasis, reporting that people had *“received the word of God”* would no longer be a satisfactory way of speaking.

But this is a proper way of speaking among *“the elect of God”* (Col 3:12), and the report resonates with truth and power to insightful souls. I am grateful for such words in Scripture, and for the effect they have upon the heart.

**THOSE OF THE CIRCUMCISION CONTEND WITH PETER**

*“<sup>2</sup> And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,<sup>3</sup> saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.”*

As soon as Peter returns to Jerusalem, it will become apparent that God had not yet taught them what He had “showed” to Peter. **There was not a kind of theological time line when the understanding of all believers was upgraded.** Spiritual advancement is not always synchronized among the saints. As long as we occupy the domain of time, there will be “*little children*,” “*young men*,” and “*fathers*” within the household of faith (1 John 2:13-14). However, even though there are certain distinctions in the spiritual attainments of the saints, there are “*common*” things that bind them together, and make them teachable. There are “*the common faith*” (Tit 1:4) and “*the common salvation*” (Jude 1:3). There are also the realities that produce “*the unity of the Spirit*”: one body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and One God and Father of all (Eph 4:4-5).

The effectiveness of these common realities will be confirmed in this text. Even though, at the first, there is a disparity in the understanding among the brethren, yet the faithful report of the working of the Lord will bring unity among them.

**WHEN PETER WAS COME UP TO JERUSALEM**

*“And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem . . .”*

It is approximately fifty direct miles from Caesarea to Jerusalem, perhaps decidedly more, considering the roads traveled. Already, Peter has remained for several days with the brethren who gathered at the house of Cornelius. The arrival of Peter in Jerusalem, therefore, could have been as much as two weeks later.

The centrality of Jerusalem during the life of the early church ought

to be noted. This city is mentioned sixty times in the book of Acts. Even when early believers were scattered due to persecution, the apostles had remained in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). Peter and John were sent from Jerusalem to Samaria (Acts 8:14), and after they had spent time preaching in Samaria, they returned to Jerusalem (Acts 8:25). This is where the newly converted Saul sought to join himself to the disciples (Acts 9:26). Later, when a question arose about the instruction of Gentile believers, Paul and Barnabas would go up to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders “*about this question*” (Acts 15:2). Later they would deliver to the churches “*the decrees*” that were “*ordained of the*

*circumcision contended with him.*” Other versions read, “*took issue with him,*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*criticized him,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*had an argument with him,*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*began to argue with him,*”<sup>GWN</sup> “*protested to him,*”<sup>NJB</sup> “*contended against him,*”<sup>PNT</sup> “*found fault with him,*”<sup>WEMOUTH</sup> “*began to bring charges against him,*”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “*disputed with him,*”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> “*found fault with him [separating themselves from him in a hostile spirit, opposing and disputing and contending with him],*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “*were full of criticism.*”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Considering that the church in Jerusalem was, at this time, almost totally Jewish, precisely who are those who were “*of the circumcision?*” It does

**In keeping with the way in which the Lord works among His people, some required insights can only be acquired by means of other members of the body of Christ. Those who insist that they cannot accept a truth unless Christ Himself shows it to them must deal with this text.**

*apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem*” (Acts 16:4).

Therefore, Jerusalem is to be seen as a kind of spiritual hub. Yet, perfect knowledge was not found there, as our text will confirm. In keeping with the way in which the Lord works among His people, **some required insights can only be acquired by means of other members of the body of Christ.** Those who insist that they cannot accept a truth unless Christ Himself shows it to them must deal with this text. It must be seen that Christ does, indeed, open the eyes of men’s understanding. Often, however, he does it through the words of fellow believers.

**THE CIRCUMCISION CONTENDED WITH HIM**

*“ . . . they that were of the*

not appear that it was any of the apostles, for they were very familiar with the conversion of the Samaritans, which strongly suggested salvation was not confined to “*the circumcision.*” **I conclude that this refers to those Jews who were unusually zealous for the necessity of circumcision being continued in Christ Jesus.** Perhaps they were representatives of the same group who later would go down to Antioch and tell Gentile believers “*Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved*” (Acts 15:1).

Although these people were unusually zealous concerning the appropriateness of fellowship with Gentiles, it must be remembered that prior to meeting Cornelius, Peter himself had entertained this view. He had said to those gathered in Cornelius’ house, “*Ye*

know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28). As of the time of our text, however, this revelation had not been made known to the Jews who were confronting Peter.

I gather, therefore, that these men were in Christ Jesus, identified with His church, and yet were especially zealous for maintaining the view of the Gentiles that was held forth under the

root word that means, “to be separated.” <sup>THAYER</sup> and refers to “debating an issue dispute, contend, argue.” <sup>FRIBERG</sup> The picture is that of taking Peter to the side and taking serious issue with him on a matter.

I am from a generation that was characterized by strong disputation on religious matters. Frequently these jousts were considered to be among friends, but feelings and convictions were strong, and issues were openly discussed with much fervency. These discussions could degenerate into mere fleshly disputing, to be sure. However this was not always the

of having extensive dialog with non-Jews is confirmed in the disciples thoughts about Jesus, concerning the dialog He had with the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob. “*And upon this came His disciples, and marveled that He talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest Thou? or, Why talkest Thou with her?*” John 4:27). They did not take the Master to task on the matter, for they honored Him. However, the whole incident was confusing to them because of the attitude reflected in our text.

#### The Jewish Reasoning

As I have stated before, in the commentary on 10:28, the Law did not specifically prohibit the Jews from eating with Gentiles. However, it did strictly forbid intermarriage with them. Of the heathen nations it is written, “*Neither shalt thou make marriages with them: thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son*” (Deut 7:3). It also spoke of a familiarity with the heathen that could move the people to make a covenant with them, and even become idolatrous, worshiping their gods: “*Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice: And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods*” (Ex 34:15-16).

Following their entrance into Canaan, Joshua had also warned the people about alliances with the heathen. “*Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you: but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you*” (Josh 23:12-13).

It is clear from these text that the original reasoning of devout Jews concerning refraining from intimacy with the heathen, was not prejudicial. It

**First, this confirms the seriousness with which early believers addressed matters regarding religion, or the outward display of faith. They did not address issues as mere matters of opinion, but heartily embraced what they perceived as truth.**

Old Covenant. The epochal nature of the conversion of those gathered together in the house of Cornelius is confirmed by the impact of the report of that event upon the men who contended with Peter, from the church in Jerusalem.

**First, this confirms the seriousness with which early believers addressed matters regarding religion, or the outward display of faith.** They did not address issues as mere matters of opinion, but heartily embraced what they perceived as truth. We know these men were not religious bigots, because they immediately yielded to the truth when exposed to it. **We know from this that they were being governed by their conscience, and not a mere party spirit.**

As well as having a love for the truth itself, Peter as held in high regard by these men. However, their regard for him was not sufficient to embrace something they had not yet seen. Remember, Peter has had the advantage of the Lord showing him the truth on this matter. Prior to that, he was of the same persuasion as these men.

The word “*contended*” is a strong one, and even sounds so. It comes from a

case, and it certainly was not the case in this text. As will be seen, people of strong spiritual persuasion can be moved to change when they discern the will of the Lord.

#### YOU WENT IN TO UNCIRCUMCISED MEN

“*Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.*” Other versions read, “*and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them,*” <sup>NIV</sup> “*You went to men without circumcision, and took food with them,*” <sup>BBE</sup> “*You fellowshipped with Gentiles and even ate with them,*” <sup>LIVING</sup> “*for having visited and eaten with men who were not Jews,*” <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “*You actually went in and shared a meal with uncircumcised men!*” <sup>PHILLIPS</sup> and “*You stayed in the homes of Gentiles, and you even ate with them!*” <sup>CEV</sup>

There is no record that Peter and those with him ate with those of the household of Cornelius. However, owing to him staying there for several days, and the fact that Peter does not contest this remark, it is almost certain that this was the case.

The persuasion of the wrongness

rather reflected a determination not to culture friendships that would lead them into the conditions concerning which God had warned them. Sound Jewish teachers knew that familiarity with the heathen would break down the resistance of the people to idolatry and other practices that would incur the indignation of God against the people.

#### A New Circumstance Had Arisen

Known to Peter, but unknown to those now contending with him, a new circumstance had come about since Jesus had died and risen again. The Gentiles, like the unclean meats, had been “cleansed.” The salvation of God now included them. The “middle wall of partition” had been “broken down,” and God was making “one new man,” or new generation, out of both Jew and Gentile. As it is written, “For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace” (Eph 2:14-15).

#### Something to Consider

There is still something to consider concerning relationships with other people. In our day, there is a looseness concerning such associations that is unbecoming of the people of God. There is still a danger of certain kinds of mingling that will bring about unequal yokes – believers marrying unbelievers. Paul speaks of this to the Corinthians, who had become lax in their social conduct. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an

infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor 6:14-17).

While God has cleansed the

It behooves every child of God to learn how to live wisely in this regard. There are countless professed believers who have drifted away from the Lord because they forged unequal yokes with those who are in darkness. They did not take seriously what the Lord has said on this matter, and thus have fallen into a state that is fraught with eternal jeopardy.

I do not know how it is possible to

**I do not know how it is possible to defend a condition in which those under a superior covenant are characterized by reasoning that is more flawed than those who functioned under an inferior covenant.**

Gentiles, He has **not** cleansed unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, or infidels. Now, however, godly wisdom will be required in order to know where to set limits concerning contact with such people. This is why it is written, “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time” (Col 4:5). And again, “That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (1 Thess 4:12). And again, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor 15:33).

The Spirit also testifies concerning the conduct of believers toward those who claim identify with Christ, yet are living in contradiction of that claim. “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: **with such an one no not to eat**” (1 Cor 5:11).

defend a condition in which those under a superior covenant are characterized by reasoning that is more flawed than those who functioned under an inferior covenant. I understand that it is wrong to impose laws and ordinances that move people to live artificially and without heart or understanding. However, it is equally wrong, if not more so, to so teach people that they conclude they can live in the midst of defilement without themselves becoming defiled, or imagine that evil communications do not corrupt good manners – **a matter on which we are not to be deceived** (1 Cor 15:34).

Once again, I emphasize that the result of Peter’s testimony confirms those who were contending with him were **not** factionists or sectarian in their manners. They were rather people whose understanding had not yet matured on the matter of the Gentiles. God will use this occasion to clarify the matter to them, and they will receive it.

## HOW PETER GAVE THE REPORT

**“But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying . . .”**

It is important to note how Peter

responds to the criticism leveled against him. It appears that he sensed the sincerity of the people, even though their conclusions were incorrect. He also doubtless recalled that he had thought

the same thing prior to his experience at Cornelius’ house. Note the wisdom that is reflected in his answer. **He will rehearse what the Lord did, and how He did it.**

*Peter gives a detailed report of the epoch of the conversion of the Gentiles to the apostles and brethren by Given O. Blakely*

I am convinced that Peter's explanation is driven by the persuasion that the works of God are recognized by those who know Him.

**REHEARSING**

*"But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning . . ."* Other versions read, *"explained it to them . . . from the beginning,"*<sup>NKJV</sup> *"proceeded to explain to them,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"explained everything to them,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"began to explain to them,"*<sup>RSV</sup> *"gave them an account of it all,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"set forth the matter to them,"*<sup>DARBY</sup> *"expounded the thing . . . to them,"*<sup>GENEVA</sup> *"began to address them,"*<sup>MIRD</sup> *"explained everything to them,"*<sup>NJB</sup> and *"began [at the beginning]"*.<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The words *"rehearsed the matter*

covered the world, all flesh died, and Noah and his family were saved.

- ⇒ **THE SELECTION OF ABRAHAM:** he was called to go to a certain country, was given the promise of being a blessing, and the source of blessing, that nations would come from him, and that the ultimate Seed, the Messiah would come from his lineage.
- ⇒ **THE DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL FROM EGYPT:** this involved ten plagues, the spoiling of the Egyptians, observing the Passover, coming out of Egypt at midnight, and crossing the Red Sea.
- ⇒ **GOD SENDING HIS SON INTO THE WORLD:** a birth was involved, a flight

inquiring souls.

- ⇒ **THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST:** when Jesus comes again, God will show Him in all of His glory, the heaven and the earth will pass away, the dead will be raised, the wicked will be gathered together for destruction, the righteous will be gathered to Christ, the day of judgment will occur, and Satan and his hosts will be forever banished from the Lord and those who have been gathered to Him.
- ⇒ **The conversion of the Gentiles:** directing Cornelius, illuminating Peter, the gathering of a host to the house of Cornelius, the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit, the confirmation of the acceptance of the Gentiles, the granting of repentance, and the purifying of their hearts by faith.

**That is, there was a single work of God that was wrought at the house of Cornelius, and it was comprised of several different parts – like a building is made up of individual stones. What took place at that time was one of God's "wonderful works"**

*from the beginning*" are translated from a single Greek word (ἀρχαίμενος). The word means "to rehearse a thing from the beginning."<sup>STRONG'S</sup> **That is, there was a single work of God that was wrought at the house of Cornelius, and it was comprised of several different parts** – like a building is made up of individual stones. What took place at that time was **one of God's "wonderful works"** (Psa 40:5; 78:4; Acts 2:11). The fact that this was a single work required that it be rehearsed *"from the beginning."* This would bring out more clearly what the Lord was doing.

It is good to think of God's *"wonderful works"* in this way – of some objective that was completed in several stages, or by various means. **Some of those single works with multiple facets include the following.**

- ⇒ **THE CREATION:** there were six different days of creation, with various orders of creation.
- ⇒ **THE FLOOD:** rain was sent, a flood

into Egypt, growing up in Nazareth, being revealed at His baptism, being tempted, and ministering among the people.

- ⇒ **THE DEATH OF JESUS:** involved being rejected, tried, mocked, crucified dying, taking away the sins of the world, destroying the devil, plundering principalities and powers, reconciling the world, and making peace.
- ⇒ **THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS:** involved defeating death, overcoming the grave, His death being validated, ascending into heaven, being enthroned at God's right hand, and receiving all power in heaven and earth.
- ⇒ **THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEW COVENANT:** involved sending forth the Holy Spirit, inspiring His disciples, a rushing mighty wind, cloven tongues of fire, speaking in other languages, proclaiming the Gospel, directing

A rehearsal of the acts of the Lord is a recounting of what actually took place in His works. In the song of Deborah, she made reference to the rehearsal of the righteous acts of the Lord: *" . . . there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of His villages in Israel . . ."* (Judg 5:11). David referred to such a rehearsal when he wrote, *"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness"* (Psa 145:7).

**EXPONDING**

*" . . . and expounded it by order unto them, saying . . ."* Other versions read, *"explain to them in orderly sequence,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"precisely as it had happened,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"step by step,"*<sup>RSV</sup> *"in detail what had actually happened,"*<sup>CJB</sup> *"point by point what had happened,"*<sup>GWN</sup> *"methodically,"*<sup>MIRD</sup> *"exactly what had happened,"*<sup>NLT</sup> *"narrated and explained to them step by step [the whole list of events],"* and *"how the situation had actually arisen."*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

To expound a matter is to set it before the people, exposing their minds to both the scope and the details of the matter being expounded. What is being set forth is presented in an orderly manner, so that the sense of it can be perceived. Conclusions will be drawn, and

principles will be set forth. All of this means that the person delivering the word has an understanding of what actually took place in the events being described.

As will be seen in this very text, it is the implication of the facts that gives them their power. For example, a person could speak eloquently, affirming that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again. However, if what was accomplished in those realities is not made known, they have no power over the individual. Unless a person knows WHY Jesus died, and what took place at that time, the report is powerless. If men proclaim that He raised from the dead, yet are mute about what has resulted from that resurrection, and how He is alive with all power in heaven and earth, what good is the proclamation?

If men declare with Paul that they are determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified, yet fail to expound that crucifixion as Paul did

**. The Divine economy makes no place for purported ministries that do not contribute to the edification and maturity of those who have been begotten by God.**

(Rom 3:24-25; 4:25; 5:9; 8:3 1 Cor 5:7; 6:20; 2 Cor 5:14-15,19,21; 8:9; Gal 1:4; 3:13; 4:4-5; Eph 1:6-7; 2:13-16; Col 2:14-15; Heb 2:149:14, etc), how will the message have a God-honoring impact upon the people?

**The church of our day sorely requires deliverance from stifling academia.** It is time to bring an end to the dominance of religious leaders who lack the understanding and aptitude required to perfect the saints and ready them for *“the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Eph 4:11-12). Whatever has caused professing believers to remain in a spiritually juvenile state, that has deprived them of wisdom and spiritual understanding,

needs to be purged from the church. It is time to *“purge out . . . the old leaven,”* as we are enjoined to do (1 Cor 5:7). **The Divine economy makes no place for purported ministries that do not contribute to the edification and maturity of those who have been begotten by God.**

Our text provides a slice of genuine spiritual life, brought about when men are given *“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus”* (2 Cor 4:6). This is the vision without which the people will surely perish (Prov 29:18). In our text, the manner in which obstacles are overcome is lived out before us, and it is refreshing to consider.

## PETER REPORTS HIS VISION

***“<sup>5</sup>I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:<sup>6</sup> Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.”***

Peter does not argue with those who have raised an objection concerning what he is reported to have done. He makes no attempt to justify his action with human reasoning. Instead, he will simply rehearse in order the things that took place, and draw some conclusions that will be obvious to those with spiritual minds.

In my judgment, **if God has not said or done something that bears directly on any subject of controversy, it is doubtful that any lasting good can come from pursuing it.** If the only way we can defend our actions it by affirming

they reflect our own preference, or that we are strongly persuaded of the propriety of such endeavors, then there is no need to engage in a heated controversy over it. Because they rest on the foundation of human reasoning, such contentions will awaken the flesh, and make a place for the entry and influence of the wicked one. This is always the case when human opinion and preference are placed upon the throne of the heart.

### WHAT HE SAW

*“I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me . . .”*

There is exacting precision in everything Peter says. He does not embellish his report, as flesh is prone to do. He simply states the facts in the case.

⇒ *“I was in Joppa”* (10:8-9).

⇒ He was *“praying”* (10:9).

⇒ He was *“in a trance”* (10:10).

⇒ He saw a vision: *“a certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners”* (10:11 does not call this a vision, but recounts the vision itself).

⇒ The sheet *“came even to me”* (10:11 says it was *“let down to the earth.”* Later it is written that Peter pondered the meaning of *“the vision”* – 17,19).

### WHAT HE DID

*“<sup>6</sup> Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.”*

Peter says he *“fastened”* his eyes on the contents of the sheet and *“considered”* considered what he saw.

Peter rehearses the exact categories of animals mentioned in the tenth chapter: *“fourfooted beasts, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air”* (10:12).

Here Peter reports that he fastened his eyes on the animals, and *“considered”* what he saw. This is not stated in the historical record of the event, which simply states the contents of the sheet. However, what followed substantiates that Peter did, in fact consider what he saw, for his response was one that could only follow a due consideration of what was set before him.

We know from the context and Peter’s response that he pondered the vision with the Law of God in mind, and its precise definition of *“clean”* and *“unclean”* meats. He did not think within the context of his natural appetite or mere personal preferences. His view was driven by what he had been taught through the Law.

**Further, Peter will filter the opportunity set before him through his understanding of the will of the Lord.** This provides us an index of what is involved in loving the Lord with all of our heart, soul, MIND, and strength. That spiritual posture constrains the

individual to consider opportunities within the context of right and wrong, as perceived in one’s understanding of the Scriptures.

In our day, there has been such a significant departure from the truth that this type of thinking is virtually unknown among *Christians*. If it is countered that Peter’s thinking was wrong, it must be perceived that this is only true because his understanding was deficient at that point. The **way** in which he thought was correct, and the reason for his thinking was right. He only lacked enlightenment to arrive at a proper conclusion – and he received it.

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## PETER REPORTS THE HEAVENLY COMMUNICATION

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*“<sup>7</sup>And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. <sup>8</sup> But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.”*

In the historical record of the event Peter is reporting, we are told that Peter was hungry at the time of the vision, and that some food was being prepared for him. He had gone *“to the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance . . .”* (10:9-10). Peter does not cite this detail here, because it is evident from the dialog that follows. The command that is given to Peter would have no significance if he had not been hungry.

**It is a principle that teaching, such as that realized when Peter was on the housetop, has no impact if it is not within the context of perceived need or desire.** Men cannot effectively be taught truth by mere rote. Peter’s natural hunger caused him to look with greater interest and discretion upon the living creatures that had been lowered from heaven and set before him in the vision of reference.

### WHAT WAS SAID

*“And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.”* Other

versions read, *“kill and eat,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“take them for food,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“slaughter and eat,”*<sup>CJB</sup> *“Kill these animals and eat them,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“Kill and eat whatever you wish,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> and *“kill something and eat it.”*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

This is a precise report of what was said when the voice from heaven spoke to Peter: *“Rise, Peter, kill and eat”* (Acts 10:13).

This voice came from heaven, and it is confirmed that it was not a temptation, or test, like the time Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac as a burnt offering to God (Gen 22:1-13). Among other things, this shows that those who command men *“to abstain from meats”* are not reflecting the mind of God (1 Tim 4:3). **Whether this is done in the name of health of that of religion, it is nothing more than a human opinion – and it is at variance with what God has said about eating meat** (and there were no vegetables in the sheet lowered from heaven). Without laboring this matter, God has addressed the subject with unusual clarity – even though, at the time he had the vision, Peter had not yet seen it. *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to*

*abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained”* (1 Tim 4:3-6).

Now, whatever a person may personally think on this subject, whether Peter or someone of our generation, the strength of the above instruction is most arresting to consider. Keep in mind that this is a kind of commentary on *“kill and eat.”*

The sources of the teaching being exposed are those who have *“departed from the faith,”* are giving heed to *“seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> speak lies in their hypocrisy, and have a seared conscience. Remember, what is being taught is that marriage is forbidden, and men ought to abstain from meats.

Such teaching directly contradicts both the creation and the intention of the Lord. First, God created the *“meats”* in question *“to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and*

know the truth” – which, at the time of his vision, Peter did not know. Second, “every creature of God” is good, and is not to be refused, “if it be received with thanksgiving.” Third, such food is “sanctified by the word of God” (what God has said) and “prayer” (in blessing and thanksgiving). It is this perspective that made it right for the voice from heaven to command Peter to “kill and eat” what he saw.

Note that Paul also told Timothy that if he “put the brethren in remembrance of these things,” he would be a “good minister of Jesus Christ.” I do not dare to imagine how a “minister” is to be considered who does **not** do this!

remember that Peter’s experience appeared to be only related to matters of diet at the time, and how that bore upon his understanding of the Law of God. His understanding was enlarged only as he took seriously the words that were spoken to him.

**HOW PETER RESPONDED**

“<sup>8</sup> But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.”

Again, Peter’s report is most precise. In the record of the actual event, Luke reports, “But Peter said, Not so, Lord: for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean” (Acts 10:14).

nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” The Amplified Bible reads, “Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule [who discipline themselves and regulate their lives by this principle], even upon the [true] Israel of God!” Walking according to the rule of new creaturehood is the same as putting on the new man (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). It is the same as “not” living unto ourselves, but “unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor 5:15). This is what is involved in reckoning ourselves to be “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11).

You may recall that Jesus was completely intolerant of those who lived contrary to what they professed. He solemnly warned His disciples of those who “say and do not” (Matt 23:3). Even under the Law, God upbraided those whose lives contradicted what they said with their lips (Isa 29:13-14), and Jesus confirmed that condition was condemned when He was on the earth (Matt 15:8-9). Paul also taught that those who maintained a form of godliness, while rejecting the power of it, were not to be rejected by the people of God (2 Tim 3:5). **The sudden influx of counselors and psychiatric specialists within the professing church as not changed this situation, even though they speak as though this is not the case.**

My point in mentioning this is that, in Peter, we are being exposed to a man who lived within the parameters of his conviction and persuasion. **That is the kind of man that will be given further light.** Such fits within the parameters mentioned in Psalm 25:14: “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him: and He will show them His covenant” (Psa 25:14). It is nothing more than an exercise in vanity for one lacking this quality to seek for understanding.

**You may recall that Jesus was completely intolerant of those who lived contrary to what they professed. He solemnly warned His disciples of those who “say and do not” (Matt 23:3). Even under the Law, God upbraided those whose lives contradicted what they said with their lips (Isa 29:13-14), and Jesus confirmed that condition was condemned when He was on the earth (Matt 15:8-9).**

These days, it has become fashionable for *Christian* dieticians to be given undue influence among believers. These men, for the most part, have taken God out of the consideration of foods. Whatever good they may be thought to have contributed to the household of faith, they cannot remove the words of the Spirit that food is “sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” **If a person cannot put the health of their body in the hands of the Lord, I do not know how it can be substantiated that they can “commit the keeping of their souls” to the Lord** (1 Pet 4:19).

If all of this seems irrelevant,

Peter’s entire life had been ordered by his understanding of the word of the Lord. He had never allowed himself the luxury of ignoring the word of the Lord in order to gratify fleshly preferences. Again, I want to emphasize how unusual such a posture of life is in our time – even among professing believers in Christ! **I do not know that it can be substantiated that a person will receive increased understanding if he has not lived up to what he already knows.**

This is stated doctrinally in Galatians 6:15-16: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing,

**PETER REPORTS HIS RESPONSE TO THE WORDS FROM HEAVEN**

“<sup>9</sup> But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”<sup>10</sup>

And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.”

Peter continues his detailed report of the epochal event, starting at the beginning and proceeding in an

*Peter gives a detailed report of the epoch of the conversion of the Gentiles to the apostles and brethren by Given O. Blakely*

orderly manner to the conclusion.

**HEAVENLY PERSISTENCE**

*“But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”*

Again, Peter is precise in his report. The historical record states that the heavenly voice said, *“What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common”* (Acts 10:15). Peter is told not to even SAY something is *“common,”* or polluted, that God has *“cleansed,”* or purified – whether he was convinced that what he said was right or not! **Let it be clear that it is wrong to say anything that contradicts what God has said or done!**

Here we are exposed to a certain heavenly manner. When men say something that contradicts the mind and word of the Lord, heaven is neither neutral nor tolerant. **Men may be content when there is a variance between how men think and what God says, but this is not the case in heaven.** One of the basic postulates in the salvation of God is that of a fundamental agreement between the saved and the Savior. Given due heed, salvation will lead men into this unanimity just as surely as is seen in the case of Peter.

*“What God hath cleansed”* is not the statement of a hypothetical case. This is a revelation of something that has already occurred. The word translated *“hath cleansed”* speaks of an action that has already occurred, the effects of which are ongoing. In other words, the animals that Peter viewed were once *“unclean,”* but a Divine judgment had made that distinction obsolete. Their former uncleanness was only tentative in order to assist men to understand some higher principles – particularly regarding distinctions among men.

The precise time when *“all meats”* were *“purged,”* or cleansed, is revealed to

have been during Christ’s ministry. When speaking of what really polluted men, Jesus declared, *“Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?”* <sup>NASB</sup> **(Thus He declared all foods clean)**

**was only reliant upon his memory in giving this report.** His heart was right, and thus he was directed into the giving of a flawless report of what had taken place.

Also, we ought to note that valid observations can only be made when an

**The same is true of the preaching of the Gospel, itself. The results that the Gospel are calculated to produce cannot be brought about by any other message of emphasis. A person cannot be begotten of God through a spurious message, for God does accomplish His work through lies. Neither, indeed, can a person be brought to spiritual maturity by means of another message.**

(Mark 7:18-19).

No further explanation is provided. It was Peter’s responsibility to ponder what had been said, seeking to understand it – and that is precisely what he did.

**THE END OF THE MATTER**

*“<sup>10</sup> And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.”*

Three consecutive times Peter was commanded to *“Rise, kill and eat,”* and three times he responded, *“Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.”* Again, this precisely accords with the historical record in the tenth chapter of Acts: *“This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven”* (Acts 10:16).

**We must not assume that Peter**

accurate and faithful report is given. Those to whom Peter is bearing witness will draw a conclusion from what he reports. **That conclusion will only be as valid as the report is accurate.**

The same is true of the preaching of the Gospel, itself. **The results that the Gospel are calculated to produce cannot be brought about by any other message of emphasis.** A person cannot be begotten of God through a spurious message, for God does accomplish His work through lies. Neither, indeed, can a person be brought to spiritual maturity by means of another message. This can only be accomplished *“according to”* the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as affirmed in Rom 16:25. Within the professed *Christian* community there are a staggering number of attempts being made to convert people and to bring them to maturity that ignore the Divine means that have been appointed by the Lord Himself. All such efforts are labors that are in vain.

**PETER REPORTS THE CONFRONTATION OF THE MESSENGERS FROM CORNELIUS**

*“<sup>11</sup> And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from*

*Caesarea unto me. <sup>12</sup> And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren*

*accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house . . .”*

I want to draw your attention to the total lack of any form of distortion in Peter's report. There is no exaggeration, no critical omission, and no carnal embellishment. **One of the besetting sins of many religious leaders is their tendency to overstate things in their reports, or make things appear to be more remarkable than they really were.** This is the result of the lingering effects of pride, against which all believers must exert themselves. Under the New Covenant pride is addressed more directly, revealing something of its nature.

Cor 10:12).

- ⇨ **COMMENDING ONESELF.** *"For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth"* (2 Cor 10:18).
- ⇨ **HAVING A LOFTY VIEW OF ONESELF.** *"For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself"* (Gal 6:3).
- ⇨ **A QUEST FOR VAINGLORY.** *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than*

*blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy"* (2 Tim 3:2).

- ⇨ **NOT BEING CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY.** *"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble"* (1 Pet 5:5).

I mention these traits because of their glaring absence from Peter's report. Although he is reporting an epoch – something that had never been reported before – **yet he makes no effort to overstate the case.** He does not attempt to impress the people with his own accomplishment, but yields himself to the Lord – even in the reporting of things in which he has been involved.

#### LED BY THE SPIRIT

*"And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. <sup>12</sup> And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting . . ."*

#### They Were Already There

Peter reports that three men had already come to the door – "immediately." The historical account states that *"while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there"* (Acts 10:17-18). There is no contradiction in the account, for the historical record states they had already arrived, and had even inquired concerning his presence there.

I do not doubt that a Jewish mind, cultured in the Scriptures, and acquainted with the working of the Lord, immediately associated this report with Divine coordination. The accounts of Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, and others would have shaped the way they thought about such things. On the other hand, those who are **not** acquainted with Scripture are unable to correctly assess the report of Divine workings. They tend to think more of human initiative, coincidence, and happenstance.

**One of the besetting sins of many religious leaders is their tendency to overstate things in their reports, or make things appear to be more remarkable than they really were. This is the result of the lingering effects of pride, against which all believers must exert themselves.**

- ⇨ **THINKING TOO HIGHLY OF ONESELF.** *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"* (Rom 12:3).
- ⇨ **MINDING HIGH THINGS.** *"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits"* (Rom 12:16).
- ⇨ **BEING PUFFED UP.** *"And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you"* (1 Cor 5:2).
- ⇨ **IMPROPER GLORYING.** *"Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"* (1 Cor 5:6).
- ⇨ **OVERESTIMATING ONE'S STRENGTH.** *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"* (1

*themselves"* (Phil 2:3).

- ⇨ **LIFTED UP FOR A FALL.** *"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil"* (1 Tim 3:6).
- ⇨ **NOT CONSENTING TO WHOLESOME WORDS, BUT TEACHING OTHER THINGS.** *"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings"* (1 Tim 6:5-4).
- ⇨ **BEING HIGHMINDED.** *"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy"* (1 Tim 6:17).
- ⇨ **LOVING SELF AND BEING BOASTFUL.** *"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud,*

**The Spirit Bade Me**

The record in the tenth chapter of Acts reads, “. . . *the Spirit said unto him . . . go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them*” (10:19-20). Those who are acquainted with the Lord know that the Spirit stands behind, and is involved in, what He directs men to do. The fact that He told Peter to go with the men suggests that. Furthermore, the fact that the Spirit told him **not** to doubt makes the conclusion unavoidable that the Spirit had, in fact, directed the men to come to Peter. It was not uncomfortable for Peter to speak in this manner, nor was it offensive to those who heard him speak. This would not be the case in some circles in which I have traveled.

**HE DID WHAT HE WAS TOLD TO DO**

*“Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house . . .”*

At this point, Peter does not recount what the men said to him when he confronted them. They had reported the character of Cornelius, the vision that

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he had received, and the commission they had been given. The fact that the Spirit had told Peter to go with the men “*nothing doubting*” made the appropriateness of his response clear. Further, the essentials concerning Cornelius will be covered by the report of his words to Peter.

The historical account does not specify the number of men that went with Peter. This is the first time that number is made known. Acts 10:23 states that “*certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.*” In the record of what took place at the house of Cornelius, they are referred to as “*they of the*

*circumcision which believed . . . as many as came with Peter*” (10:45). These six men were apparently with Peter, and are substantiating witnesses to what Peter now testifies.

To this point, Peter's words confirm the seriousness of giving accurate testimony. Any testimony that purports to have to do with the working of the Lord, or the experience of His great salvation, is to be delivered with absolute truthfulness. It is to contain no hidden agenda, or in any way misrepresent what took place.

**PETER REPORTS HIS ARRIVAL AT CORNELIUS HOUSE**

*“<sup>13</sup> And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;<sup>14</sup> Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”*

It will become apparent that in his report Peter endeavors to show the involvement of God in this whole incident. **The fact of the matter is that it is more important to know what the Lord has done than what has happened to men.** When men make human experience the paramount matter, they have drifted away from the moorings of faith.

To this point, Peter has accented heaven's involvement.

⇨ He saw a certain vision of a sheet “*let down from heaven*” (11:5; 10:11).

⇨ He heard “*a voice from heaven*” commanding him to “*Arise, kill, and eat*” (11:7; 10:13).

⇨ When Peter responded, “*the voice*” answered him again “*from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common*” (11:9; 10:15).

⇨ Upon the arrival of the men from Cornelius' house, Peter reports that “*the Spirit*” told him to “*go with them, nothing doubting*” (11:12; 10:19-20).

To this point, these are the fundamental things that Peter has reported. All of his involvement, whether in word and deed, were driven by these realities. In fact, what Peter is really doing is rehearsing “*the righteous acts of the Lord*” (Judges 5:11). **He is reporting what the Lord has done.**

This is the same thing that took place on the day of Pentecost. The people heard the Spirit-filled disciples speaking “*the wonderful works of God*” (2:11). Peter also spoke in this manner as he addressed the people, declaring what the Lord had done.

⇨ He reported Jesus as “*a Man approved by God among you*” (2:22).

⇨ He spoke of “*the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” that drove the death of Christ (2:23).

⇨ He declared that God “*raised up*” Jesus from the dead, loosing the hold of death upon Him (2:24).

⇨ He referred to the oath that God swore to David, affirming that He would “*raise up Christ to sit on his throne*” (2:30).

- ⇨ He affirmed again that **God** “*raised up*” Jesus (2:32).
- ⇨ He declared that Jesus had “*received from **the Father** the promise of the Holy Spirit*”<sup>NKJV</sup> (2:33).
- ⇨ He announced that, in the capacity of the exalted One, **Jesus** had “*shed forth*” the Holy Spirit which the people then saw and heard (2:33).
- ⇨ He proclaimed that **God** had made “*that same Jesus whom, ye crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (2:36).

Proper glory is brought to God when His doing is perceived as fundamental in the matter. This is even true when His chastening hand is being seen. Ezra recognized the hand of the Lord in the great woes that had come upon Israel. “*And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou **our God** hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this*” (Ezra 9:13).

I have taken the time to say these things because it is possible for a testimony to become an end of itself – simply to relate what has happened to the individual. Valid testimony, however, involves making known what “*the Lord hath done*” (Psa 126:2-3). Isaiah also declared that this principle that is woven throughout the record of Divine dealings: “*That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that **the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it***” (Isa 41:20).

**HE SHOWED US**

“*And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter . . .*”

Immediately, Peter draws attention to the angel who was sent to the house of Cornelius. Devout Jews knew that angels do not roam about, going here and there at will. **When they appear on earth, it is because they have been sent on a mission by God Himself.** There are numerous records of angels being “*sent*” by the Lord (Gen 19:13; Num

20:16; 2 Chron 21:15; 32:21; Dan 3:28; 6:22; 10:11; Zech 1:10). They are described as God’s “*ministers*” (Psa 104:4), sent forth to “*do His commandments*” (Psa 103:20). Informed souls know that the presence of an angel indicates that God Himself is at work. **Whatever the angel says or does is a revelation of the righteous decrees and acts of God.**

Although the historical record includes the words of the angel concerning heaven’s recognition of Cornelius’ “*prayers and alms,*” Peter makes no reference to them here (Acts 10:4). **The fact that God had sent an angel to speak to Cornelius confirmed that he was within the circumference of Divine favor.** Nothing more needed to be said about that favor.

**WORDS WHEREBY THEY WOULD BE SAVED**

“*14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.*” Other versions read, “*words by which you and all your household will be saved,*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*a message through which . . . will be saved,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*words . . . through which . . . may get salvation,*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*message for you which will enable you and your whole household to be saved,*”<sup>CSB</sup> “*discourses, by which thou wilt live,*”<sup>MED</sup> “*I you how you and everyone in your household can be saved,*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*sayings by which thou shalt be saved,*”<sup>YLT</sup> “*sayings by which thou shalt be saved,*”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “*He will give and explain to you a message by means of which you and all your household [as well] will be saved [from eternal death.*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

This is evidently the more full, or complete, revelation of what the angel had said to Cornelius.

- ⇨ In the historical record, Luke reported that the angel said concerning Peter, “*he will tell thee **what thou oughtest to do***” (Acts 10:6). **THIS EMPHASIZES THE PURPOSE OF THE WORDS – TO DIRECT CORNELIUS.**

- ⇨ The men reported to Peter that the angel had told Cornelius to “*send for thee into his house, **to hear words of thee***” (Acts 10:22). **THIS ACCENTS THE NECESSITY OF HEARING A SPECIFIC MESSAGE, AS COMPARED TO THE MERE CONVEYANCE OF A PLAN OR PROCEDURE.**

- ⇨ When Peter arrived at his house, Cornelius told him the angel had said concerning Peter, “*who, when he cometh, shall **speak unto thee***” (Acts 10:32). **THIS PLACES THE STRESS ON THE NECESSITY OF A PERSON BEING CONFRONTED WITH A MESSENGER THAT HAS BEEN SENT BY GOD** – for “*how shall they preach except they be sent?*” (Rom 10:15).

- ⇨ Later, at the Jerusalem conference concerning the acceptance of the Gentiles, Peter reported this incident in these words: “*God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth **should hear the word of the gospel, and believe***” (Acts 15:7). **THIS EMPHASIZES THE CONTENTS OF THE MESSAGE, AND THE FUNDAMENTAL RESPONSE OF THOSE HEARING IT.**

When a strictly academic approach is taken to Scripture, reports such as those given concerning this event can be confusing. If a person is looking for some kind of pattern, or procedural outline, either frustration will be experienced, or a distorted emphasis will be adopted. **The truth of the matter is that more is being accomplished in the saving of men than is ordinarily perceived.** When men make it their primary aim to “win souls,” “lead people



to Christ,” or bring people to “accept Christ,” they stand in danger of adopting a method rather than delivering a message. There is a vast difference between seeking to garner results and being a faithful steward of the Gospel of Christ. In the record before us, the emphasis is place upon **what** is said, not **why** it is said.

If it is true that the “words” delivered by Peter were intended to be ones by which Cornelius and those with him “shall be saved,” **ought not the stress to be placed on the words themselves?** If “the power of God unto salvation” is found in the message, precisely what kind of allowance is given to men to shape that message, structure it so that it is well pleasing, or present it in a way that is calculated to produce results?

- ⇒ This word was published throughout all Judea, beginning at Galilee, after the baptism that John preached (10:37).
- ⇒ God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power (10:38a).
- ⇒ Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil (10:38b).
- ⇒ Jesus was effective because God was with Him (10:38c).
- ⇒ Peter and those with him were witnesses of what Jesus did in the land of the Jews and Jerusalem (10:39a).
- ⇒ The Jews slew Jesus and hanged

through Jesus’ name, whoever believed in Him would receive remission of sins (10:43).

In his own words, Peter provides the reason why he was preaching the message. Jesus told him to preach to the people. Jesus told him to testify that He had been ordained to judge the living and the dead. **That is why he was preaching.** He knew that the Lord Jesus Himself accompanied the message. He knew that the Holy Spirit worked through that message, convincing men of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). All of this is unquestionably confirmed by what happened **while** he was preaching.

**UNGODLY DIVERSIONS**

Since the professing church has fallen into the hands of opportunists, its entire thrust has been changed. The objective now is recruitment and the increase of numbers. Every effort is being made to justify this quest. The appeal is no longer the Gospel itself. Some of the tactics that are now employed are as follows.

- ⇒ Special buildings that will appeal to the masses. These included everything from cathedrals and commodious auditoriums to gymnasiums and family centers.
- ⇒ Special programs for special people groups. These include youth, senior citizens, singles, and married people.
- ⇒ Special recovery groups for divorced people, those enslaved to chemical substances, pornography, and other sinful involvements.
- ⇒ Special church staffs are developed to meet the needs of the people. These include counselors, family life ministers, youth ministers, children’s ministers, etc.
- ⇒ Special studies and courses are offered on the family life, managing finances, obtaining employment, world religions, etc.
- ⇒ Special services are created to give the people what they prefer: contemporary worship services, traditional worship services, early

**The message itself is designed to produce results. It does not require the wisdom and strategies of men to do so! The power of God is in the Gospel – the record God has given of His Son. How could any man hope to add something to it to make it effective?**

**The message itself is designed to produce results.** It does not require the wisdom and strategies of men to do so! The power of God is **in** the Gospel – the record God has given of His Son. How could any man hope to add something to it to make it effective?

In confirmation of this, let me remind you once again of what Peter actually declared to Cornelius and those assembled in his house.

- ⇒ God is no respecter of persons (10:34).
- ⇒ In every nation the one who fears God and works righteousness is accepted by Him (10:35).
- ⇒ God sent the word of the Gospel to Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (10:36a).
- ⇒ Jesus Christ is Lord of all (10:36b).

- Him on a tree (10:39b).
- ⇒ God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day (10:40a).
- ⇒ God showed the risen Christ openly (10:40b).
- ⇒ God did not show Jesus to all of the people, but only to witnesses that had been chosen beforehand (10:41a).
- ⇒ The witnesses were those who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead (10:41b).
- ⇒ Jesus commanded these witnesses to preach to the people (10:42a).
- ⇒ Jesus commanded the witnesses to testify to the people that He had been ordained by God to judge the living and the dead (10:42b).
- ⇒ All of the prophets witnessed that

worship service, brief gatherings, etc.

⇒ Outreach efforts include making friends with those in the community, becoming involved in community projects, and being a general resource for various political involvements.

Someone might ask, "Is anything really wrong with these things?" That is not even a proper question! The issue is

not if anything wrong can be found in them, but precisely what is it about them that fits into God's revealed priorities? Exactly what do they do that God's "power unto salvation" does not do? Precisely where is Jesus in such approaches, and what role does the Gospel have in them?

Why are such approaches not found in Scripture? Is it because they are

areas in which God has made an allowance for the creativity and wisdom of men? **Or, is it possible that they represent an understanding that is actually foreign to the Word of God?**

It seems to me that when we read an account like the one before us with some degree of discretion, it is not possible to avoid making some comparison with modern religious trends.

**PETER REPORTS THE HOLY SPIRIT FALLING ON THOSE WHO HEARD**

*"<sup>15</sup> And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup> Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."*

Peter now relates what happened

**Fruitless labors are never right, however men may seek to justify them!** This is why Paul was "afraid" of the Galatians, standing in doubt of their legitimacy. They were not producing genuine fruit. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain" (Gal 4:11). And again, "for I stand in

speech,"<sup>NJB</sup> "in my beginning to speak,"<sup>YLT</sup> "so sooner had I begun to speak,"<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and "as soon as I began to speak."<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup>

This sheds great light on the manner in which the Word of God is to be delivered. Notice, there was no attempt to grab, so to speak, the attention of the hearers. **Peter already had their attention!** They had come together "to hear words" by which they would be saved. Thus he gave no elaborate introduction. He did not give an extensive review of what had happened to him on the housetop. **Whether men like to hear it or not, it is possible to deliver a message in such a way as to obscure the truth of God, throwing all manner of dust upon the subject and into the eyes of the hearers.**

Peter obviously had much to say, but he was only able to **begin** saying it when heaven interrupted him, reacting to his message. He certainly must have been speaking "words . . . taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words"<sup>NASB</sup> (1 Cor 2:13). There can be no question about the acceptability of Peter's proclamation. The message he delivered was one conducive to the believing of the Word.

**AS ON US AT THE BEGINNING**

" . . . the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." Other versions read, "the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning,"<sup>NKJV</sup> "the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning,"<sup>NASB</sup>

**This sheds great light on the manner in which the Word of God is to be delivered. Notice, there was no attempt to grab, so to speak, the attention of the hearers. Peter already had their attention! They had come together "to hear words" by which they would be saved. Thus he gave no elaborate introduction.**

as he was speaking. This will fully justify not only what he did, in going in to the Gentiles, but what he declared to them. This is the "fruit" by which the validity of his person, action, and words will be established – just as Jesus said when "His disciples came to Him" on "a mountain" (Matt 5:1). "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Mat 7:16-20).

doubt of you" (Gal 4:20). **Paul did not change his tactic toward the Galatians in order produce a more favorable result.** Instead, he called them back to the message that he had originally proclaimed to them (Gal 1:8-12).

In my judgment this aspect of the kingdom of God has been greatly, if not altogether, obscured by the modern church.

**WHEN I BEGAN TO SPEAK**

"And as I began to speak . . ." Other versions read, "while I was talking,"<sup>BBE</sup> "I had hardly begun speaking,"<sup>CJB</sup> "when I there commenced speaking,"<sup>MRD</sup> "I had scarcely begun to

*“the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“the Holy Spirit came on them, as on us at first,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“the Holy Spirit came down on them, just as on us at the beginning,”*<sup>CSB</sup> *“the Holy Spirit came to these people. This was the same thing that happened to us in the beginning,”*<sup>GWN</sup> and *“the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning!”*<sup>LIVING</sup>

This is also what the historical record declared: *“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word”*(Acts 10:44). Those who were with Peter were astonished *“because that on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 10:45). It was then that Peter observed they had *“received the Holy Ghost as well as we”*(Acts 10:47).

Therefore, what took place at the house of Cornelius was precisely the same thing that took place on the day of Pentecost to the disciples – *“as on us at the beginning.”* **The experience of the disciples, therefore, was not an exclusive or unique one, else this observation could not have been made.** Neither does Peter make any distinction between the manner in which the apostles received the Spirit, and that exhibited at the house of Cornelius. In fact, he makes a point of the similarity, not any disparity.

**THEN I REMEMBERED**

*“<sup>16</sup> Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.”*

In order to remove all doubt concerning what was taking place, Peter correlates it with Christ’s own word concerning being baptized with the Holy Spirit. Those words were spoken after Jesus rose from the dead, and immediately prior to His ascension into heaven. They are found in Acts 1:5: *“And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence”*(Acts 1:4-5).

John the Baptist also referred to

this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and he declared it to *“the people,”* who were considering in their hearts whether or not John was the Christ. To these people John said, *“I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: **He shall baptize you***

*hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he **hath shed forth this**, which ye now see and hear”*(Acts 2:33).

The difficulty with this text comes when men assign a unique meaning to being *“baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

**For purposes of clarification, the following expressions are not found in any version of Scripture: “baptism of the Holy Ghost,” “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” and “baptism of the Spirit.” Nor, indeed, is the phrase, “baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of . . .” expressed in Scripture. No standard version of Scripture speaks of being baptized “in water” or “in the Spirit.” Baptism is always said to be “with water” or “with the Holy Spirit”**

*with the Holy Ghost and with fire”*(Luke 3:16; Matt 3:11). Mark omits the words *“and with fire”*: *“I indeed have baptized you with water; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost”* (Mark 1:8). John says of Jesus, *“And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost”* (John 1:33). Another version reads, *“And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’”*<sup>NASB</sup>

**However, Peter does not recall the words of John the Baptist, but of the Lord Jesus, for whom John prepared the way.** The point here is that John did not say this was an experience unique to a certain believers, nor is there any indication that Jesus intended to leave that impression. Now, Peter positively affirms that is not the case, for **same** gift was poured out upon Gentile believers.

This is doubtless the experience to which Peter referred on the day of Pentecost: *“Therefore being by the right*

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No standard version of Scripture speaks of being baptized “in water” or “in the Spirit.” Baptism is always said to be “with water” or “with the Holy Spirit” (Matt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16).

With their theological jargon, unlearned men have thrown the blanket of obscurity over this text. They then use their own terminology to promote an experience they represent as being a second work of grace in which the individual is made more competent. We will see now if this reasoning will hold up under the assessment of Peter.

Will he speak about the experience of the hearers in Cornelius’ house as it is commonly spoken of in certain circles today? Or will he speak in a manner that is in perfect harmony with the ways of the Lord?

**PETER REPORTS HIS RESPONSE**

*“<sup>17</sup> Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?”*

Note that in his explanation,

*them **equal** unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day”*(Mat 20:12).

⇒ *“For many bare false witness against him, but their witness **agreed** not*

any way received the Holy Spirit in the way realized by the apostles. In this text, however, we have one of the apostles – even the chief among the twelve – commenting on this very subject. Consider these facts.

⇒ There can be no question about the validity of his observation. God had illuminated Peter, and the Holy Spirit had sent him to the house of Cornelius.

⇒ Peter had delivered a word concerning the Lord Jesus that was honored in heaven.

⇒ The historical record states that when the Spirit fell upon those who heard the Word at Cornelius’ house, Peter observed they had “*received the Holy Spirit just **as we have***”<sup>NKJV</sup> (Acts 10:47).

⇒ Luke was inspired to record the incident, together with two separate reports of it – all of which are perfectly consistent (Acts 10:47; 11:17; 15:8).

Rather than referring to any distinction between the manner or quantity of the Spirit given to the apostles and those gathered at Cornelius’ house, Peter cites their sameness. This, of course, is the very thing that caused those who were with him to be “*astonished*.” Peter does the same thing when referring to the faith that is obtained by all of the people of God, stating that it is “*a faith of the same kind as ours,*” or “*a faith of equal standing as ours*”<sup>NRSV</sup> (2 Pet 1:1). One has to wonder what kind of reasoning moves people to draw conclusions concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit that clashes with the revealed statements of Peter, who had the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 16:19).

**BELIEVED ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**

*“ . . . who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ . . . ”* Other versions read, “*when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ,*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*after believing in the Lord*

**He did not fasten on what men did, but on what was done by the exalted Christ! This would allow for a proper and Christ-honoring conclusion to be reached by those hearing Peter’s explanation.**

Peter makes no reference to the recipients speaking in other languages and magnifying God. This was obviously not the primary thing on which he focused. That is, however, something that flesh would tend to do. **He did not fasten on what men did, but on what was done by the exalted Christ!** This would allow for a proper and Christ-honoring conclusion to be reached by those hearing Peter’s explanation.

**THE LIKE GIFT**

*“Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us . . . ”* Other versions read, “*the same gift as He gave us,*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*the same grace, as to us also,*”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “*equally gave the gift to the Gentiles . . . as he did to us,*”<sup>MRD</sup> “*the identical gift he gave to us,*”<sup>NJB</sup> “*the equal gift God did give to them as also to us,*”<sup>YLT</sup> and “*gave them exactly the same gift as he gave to us.*”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The Greek word translated “*like*” is ἴσους (ee-sos), and has the following lexical meaning: “*of number, dimension, quantity equal, same,*”<sup>FRIEBERG</sup> “*pertaining to that which is equal, either in number, size, quality, or characteristics - equal, equivalent, same,*”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> “*equal portion,*”<sup>LEH</sup> and “*the same.*”<sup>GINGRICH</sup> This word is also used in the following texts, which provide a perspective of its meaning. I have highlighted the English word used in the translation of ἴσους.

⇒ *“Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made*

*together”*(Mark 14:56).

⇒ *“And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive **as much** again”*(Luke 6:34).

⇒ *“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself **equal** with God”*(John 5:18).

⇒ *“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be **equal** with God”*(Phil 2:6).

⇒ *“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained **like precious** faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet 1:1).

⇒ *“And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are **equal**”*(Rev 21:16).

I come from a theological background in which considerable effort was expended to distinguish the manner and quantity of the Holy Spirit that was received by the apostles. Rather than elaborate arguments were developed to diffuse any notion that all believers in

Jesus Christ,<sup>NASB</sup> “had come to put our trust in the Lord Yeshua the Messiah,”<sup>CJB</sup> “when we came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>NAB</sup> “when we first believed on the Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “when we believed in (adhered to, trusted in, and relied on) the Lord Jesus Christ.”  
AMPLIFIED

Here again, Peter speaks of the gift of the Holy Spirit in a manner quite different from many of our day. First, he has pointedly identified the gift of the Holy Spirit with the words of Jesus concerning being baptized with the Holy Spirit. Second, he has associated what was experienced by those of Cornelius’ house with the experience of the disciples “at the beginning.” Now, he identifies it with a condition found within the people who received the Holy Spirit: “who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

I understand that Peter told those on the day of Pentecost that they would “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” after they had repented and been baptized (Acts 2:38). Paul also taught that the Holy Spirit is given to us “because ye are sons” (Gal 4:6). Here, however, Peter goes down to the root of the matter – the great enabling factor – believing on the Lord Jesus Christ!

This is precisely the observation made by John concerning Jesus’ promise of the rivers of living water flowing out from the belly of the one who believed on Him. “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. **He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive:** for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified”<sup>NKJV</sup> (John 7:37-39). Paul also made this association in delineating the matter of the Ephesian brethren receiving the Holy Spirit. “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also **after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory**” (Eph 1:14). In his letter to the Galatians, Paul also associated receiving the Holy Spirit with

faith: “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might **receive the promise of the Spirit through faith**” (Gal 3:14).

In its entirety, and in all of its various aspects, the salvation of God is always “by grace through faith” (Eph 2:8). **This does not exclude obedience, but is rather the foundation of all obedience,** which is appropriately called “the obedience that comes from faith”<sup>NIV</sup> (Rom 1:5). It is most unfortunate that men have so confused the matter of salvation that they haggle about the gift of the Holy Spirit.

I want to again draw your attention to the manner in which reference is made to the Holy Spirit coming on those gathered with Cornelius.

- ⇨ The Spirit “fell on all them which heard the Word” (10:44).
- ⇨ On the Gentiles was “poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit”<sup>NKJV</sup> (10:45).
- ⇨ They “received the Holy Spirit just

to” the disciples (15:8).

I do not know how the Spirit could have added more clarity to this event. It is as though He extended Himself to relate the giving of the Holy Spirit to the promise of Jesus, the hearing of the Word, the “gift of the Holy Spirit,” and believing on the name of Jesus. **How tragic it is that it is possible for anyone to adopt a view that makes it difficult to receive these revelations.** Yet, I am among those who struggled for many years with being able to simply receive and repeat what God had said on this subject. I am thankful for being freed from such inhibiting views. I also entertain a certain disdain for a theology that binds living men hand and foot, like Lazarus was when he exited from the tomb (John 11:44).

**HE WOULD NOT WITHSTAND GOD**

“... what was I, that I could withstand God?” Other versions read, “who was I that I could stand in God’s way?”<sup>NASB</sup> “who was I to think that I could oppose God?”<sup>NIV</sup> “who was I that I could hinder God?”<sup>RSV</sup> “who was I to go

**Here is an honest man – a person with spiritual integrity. God had acted in stark contradiction of the way Peter formerly viewed things, and he did not have to spend a lot of time thinking about it.**

- as” Peter and the disciples did (10:47).
- ⇨ The Holy Spirit “fell” on them, as on the disciples at “the beginning” (11:15).
- ⇨ Peter was moved to recall “the word of the Lord,” that they would be “baptized with the Holy Spirit”<sup>NKJV</sup> (11:16).
- ⇨ God “gave them the same gift” as He did the disciples when they “believed on the Lord Jesus Christ” (11:17).
- ⇨ God “acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did

against God?”<sup>BBE</sup> “who indeed was I to be able to forbid God?”<sup>DARBY</sup> “So who was I to interfere with God?”<sup>GWN</sup> “who was I to argue?”<sup>LIVING</sup> “So, could I stop God?”<sup>IE</sup> “who was I to be able to thwart God?”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “who was I to try to stop God?”<sup>ISV</sup> “who was I and what power or authority had I to interfere or hinder or forbid or withstand God?”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “who was I to think that I could hinder the working of God?”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Here is an honest man – a person with spiritual integrity. God had acted in stark contradiction of the way Peter formerly viewed things, and he did not have to spend a lot of time thinking about it. I suppose he could have stepped

**Now, we will see how those who contended with Peter will respond to his report – a factual and straightforward recounting of what the Lord had done. Their conclusion will be startling to those who have confined themselves to the traditions of men, and are fundamentally ignorant of the word of the Lord.**

forward and cited what was perceived to be the proper sequence of certain *steps* – but he did not. He might have suggested that this was quite different than what the disciples had experienced at the first – waiting for ten days to receive what these Gentiles received while he was still speaking – but he did not! He might have objected to such a rapid conferment of the Holy Spirit, while he and the disciples had spent over three years with Jesus before they received the blessing – but he did not!

Instead, Peter gives his assessment of the situation. He

considered a failure to agree with what the Lord had done to be an attempt to “withstand” the God of heaven. Such a response on his part would have been nothing less than standing in the way, blocking the entrance into the kingdom like the scribes and Pharisees did (Matt 23:13). He saw resistance as nothing less than an effort to “oppose God,”<sup>NIV</sup> “hinder God,”<sup>RSV</sup> “go against God,”<sup>BBE</sup> “interfere with God,”<sup>GWN</sup> and try to “stop God.”<sup>IE</sup>

Thus, Peter has accounted for going in to the Gentiles and eating with them. He has made no effort to explain what HE did, but rather proclaimed what

God did. He knows that whatever the Lord does is right, for “all of His works are done in truth” (Psa 33:4).

Just how can we characterize a person who objects to the way the Lord works? If, for example, the Lord cuts off some natural branches, and grafts some branches from a wild olive tree into their place (Rom 11:17), who is the person who will object? It is good to culture a spirit that enables one to receive what the Lord has obviously done, refusing to stand in way of His working. If God acts in a way that contradicts our theology, then we have no alternative but to abandon any and every view that competes against His righteous works.

Now, we will see how those who contended with Peter will respond to his report – a factual and straightforward recounting of what the Lord had done. Their conclusion will be startling to those who have confined themselves to the traditions of men, and are fundamentally ignorant of the word of the Lord.

## THE REACTION OF THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS TO THE REPORT

**“<sup>18</sup> When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”**

The group with which Peter has shared these things is described as “they that were of the circumcision.” It is assumed that they were a part of the group who had heard the report of the Gentiles receiving the word of God – “the apostles and brethren that were in Judea” (11:1-2). These were people who were in Christ Jesus. Will they be able to process what Peter has said, or will they call for a caucus to carefully examine his words?

### WHEN THEY HEARD THESE THINGS

“When they heard these things...”

Other versions read, “when they heard this,”<sup>NASB</sup> “when they heard these words,”<sup>MRD</sup> “this account,”<sup>NJB</sup> “when the group

heard these things,”<sup>IE</sup> “this statement of Peter,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “on hearing this.”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup>

It appears there was not a long delay. Rather, a response was given immediately upon hearing Peter’s words – “when they heard.” This is the kind of response that is always produced when people receive the word of God.

### THEY HELD THEIR PEACE

“... they held their peace...”

Other versions read, “they became silent,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “they quieted down,”<sup>NASB</sup> “they had no further objections,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “they were silenced,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “they said nothing more,”<sup>BBE</sup> “they stopped objecting,”<sup>CJB</sup> “they fell silent,”<sup>ESV</sup> “they desisted,”<sup>MRD</sup> “This account satisfied them,”<sup>NJB</sup> “all their objections were answered,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “they stopped arguing,”<sup>IE</sup> “they had no answer to make,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “they were quieted and made no further objection,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “they had no

further objection to raise.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Although there was some contention at the first, the rehearsing of the righteous acts of the Lord settled the matter. No further objections were raised, and Peter was not criticized any more. What was it that brought about such a change? When Stephen recounted the works of the Lord, the people soundly rejected him, and even stoned him to death (Acts 6-7). When Paul provided an extensive history of the works of the Lord, he was rejected by Jews in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia, who chose to contradict and blaspheme what he had said (Acts 13:45-46). What made the difference in this case? Why were these Jews quieted by Peter’s report.

Among other things, it is because they knew the Lord – just as God had promised concerning all who enjoyed the New Covenant (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11). Upon hearing what the Lord had done,

*Peter gives a detailed report of the epoch of the conversion of the Gentiles to the apostles and brethren by Given O. Blakely*

they were able to recognize His hand. Like Peter himself, they could not withstand God, and therefore yielded to His ways and wisdom. Although they had never before known God in the capacity of being no respecter of persons, Peter's report of Him working in that manner was sufficient to convince them.

### THEY GLORIFIED GOD

*“. . . and glorified God, saying. . .”*

Other versions read, *“praised God,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“gave glory to God,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“began to praise God,”*<sup>CJB</sup> *“extolled the goodness of God,”*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *“gave God the glory,”*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

Interestingly, the words *“praised”* and *“glorified”* are not synonymous. In my judgment, certain translators did not do well in using the word *“praised”* in this text. There are at least two words used for *“praise”* in the New Covenant Scriptures. The first is *αἰνέω*, which is primarily related with thanksgiving – a *“thank offering”*<sup>STRONGS</sup> (Heb 13:15). The second is *ἑταίριον*, which has to do with laudation, or extolling the virtues of God (1 Pet 4:11).

The word *“glorified”* is translated from a different word (*ἐδόξασαν*), which means *“to extol, magnify . . . to cause the dignity and worth of some person to become manifest,”*<sup>THAYER</sup> *“enhancing the reputation of God.”*<sup>FRIEBERG</sup> Here, the idea has more to do with speaking **about** God rather than speaking **to** Him. It is openly declaring what God has been seen to be doing. It is to point out with insight what the Lord has done.

Now, this is precisely what these brethren will do. They will declare that they have seen the hand of the Lord in what Peter has testified. They will also be able to correlate that work with what is involved in being made alive unto God.

### GRANTED REPENTANCE

*“Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”*

Other versions read, *“repentance that leads to life,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“a change of heart, so that they may have life,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“resulting in life,”*<sup>CSB</sup> *“led people . . . to turn to him so that they can change the way they think and act and have eternal life,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“granted life-giving repentance,”*<sup>NAB</sup> *“the privilege of turning to Him and receiving eternal life,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> and *“to change their hearts, and have life too.”*<sup>IE</sup>

These brethren did not conclude that Jesus had baptized the Gentiles with the Holy Spirit – although that is the word that Peter recalled. They did not draw attention to them speaking in tongues – although that is what they did. They observed that God had granted, or given, them repentance. With the single exception of this verse, the word repentance in any form is totally absent in the tenth and eleventh chapters of Acts. Yet, upon hearing Peter's report,

*likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus”* (Rom 15:5).

⇒ *“That he would **grant** you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man”* (Eph 3:16).

⇒ *“The Lord **grant** unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he*

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these brethren correlated what had happened with what Peter had announced in Jerusalem some time earlier: *“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to **give repentance** to Israel, and forgiveness of sins”* (Acts 5:31).

Although men are commanded to repent (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 26:20), yet it is still true that they must be *“granted”* to do so. The word *“granted”* is translated from the Greek word *ἔδωκεν* which has the root meaning, *“to give something, bestow . . . of one's own accord to give something,”*<sup>THAYER</sup> *“appoint, assign,”*<sup>FRIEBERG</sup> *“to give out,”*<sup>LEH</sup> and *“bring, grant, cause, produce,”*<sup>GINGRICH</sup> In its varied forms, this word is used four hundred and fourteen times in Scripture. There is never any question about what it means. Particularly when referring to the Lord, it is translated with unwavering consistency.

*ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well”* (2 Tim 1:18).

⇒ *“To him that overcometh will I **grant** to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne”* (Rev 3:21).

Of all of the preaching and teaching acquaintances I have had over the last fifty-six years (2008), I can scarcely recall a single one that has expressed this view of what took place at the house of Cornelius – even though it is a revealed perspective! Among those acquaintances, this is not a way of speaking about God. This is owing to the pervasiveness of human opinion, and the undue exaltation of human wisdom and the institutions that it breeds.

However, here we have the observation of men with understanding – *“spiritual understanding”* (Col 1:9). They hear what took place at the house of Cornelius and affirm that God had *“granted them repentance unto life.”*

Note, there is no record that Peter reported their baptism. At least Luke did not include such a report. His agenda was not to promote baptism, or to engage in a defense of it, for there had not yet

⇒ *“**Give** us this day our daily bread”* (Matt 6:11).

⇒ *“And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and **grant** unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word”* (Acts 4:29).

⇒ *“Now the God of patience and consolation **grant** you to be*

been erroneous teaching on the subject. At the time of our text, there was no question concerning the necessity and

ministry of baptism. There were doubts concerning the acceptance of the Gentiles and the propriety of being closely aligned

with them. However, the faithful reporting of the works of God resolved the matter for the tender of heart.

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## CONCLUSION

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**When controversies among professing believers are perpetuated, it is because of a lack of familiarity with God Himself.** Considering the nature of the New Covenant, it is not acceptable for this condition to remain for a long period of time. Divine activity, and the faithful report of it, will dispel many of these contentions, putting their perpetrators to silence. **However, when theology is systematized, and positions become the treasure of the people rather than the Lord Himself, Divine working will not be found.** Thus, when being confined to human opinion and the wisdom of men,

division is actually cultured, and gaps between professing believers grow wider and wider. This is a transgression of such monumental proportions that is fearful to even consider it.

There is such a thing as *“the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Eph 4:3). There is also the reality of *“the unity of the faith”* into which *“we all”* are to come (Eph 4:13). Where obvious progress is **not** being made in the matter of unity, a serious deficiency exists, and it must not be overlooked. Our text has

proclaimed a unity between a host of people: Peter, the six brethren with him, Cornelius, his servants, one or more soldiers, his relatives, his friends, the apostles, and the brethren – some of whom were contentious at first.

**Knowing this, precisely how would one go about justifying a lack of unity among those claiming identity with Jesus Christ?** What form of reasoning can allow for the perpetual lack of harmony among those who wear Jesus’ name?

**Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 5/9/08. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Fifty-second lesson will cover verses 19 through 30 of the eleventh chapter: “THE WORD OF GOD SPREADS.” In our continued exposure to the manifestation of newness of life, we see how the Word of God spread. This is done without human methodologies, in strict concert with the truth itself, and with a zeal and consistency that cannot be obtained by the wisdom of men. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.**

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*Peter gives a detailed report of the epoch of the conversion of the Gentiles to the apostles and brethren by Given O. Blakely*

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