*DEVOTIONAL*

January 22 - 27

*Peter’s Witness*

**Monday, January 22 Acts 10:1-8**

*“Find a man named Simon Peter”*

Cornelius lived in Caesarea, a seaport on the Mediterranean coast that was rebuilt by the Jewish King Herod the Great and named in honor of Caesar Augustus. It was the center of the Roman administration of the province of Palestine and even had a temple dedicated to Caesar. Cornelius was a centurion, which means that he was in command of a hundred Roman soldiers. He and his family were known to be “devout and God-fearing,” terms used of Gentiles who attended the synagogues and honored Jewish laws and customs.

Luke gives two features of the piety of Cornelius: his regular prayer and his generosity to the needy. These represent the God-ward and person-ward sides of religion as taught in the Bible. Cornelius has a vision - Cornelius later tells Peter that he was praying at the time (v. 30) - in which an angel tells him to summon Peter from Joppa. The angel says nothing about what will happen as a result of Peter’s coming. Despite the lack of details, Cornelius obeys immediately.

*You guide those, Lord, whose hearts are turned to you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, January 23 Acts 10:9-16**

*“Do not call anything impure that God has made clean”*

Peter, who has been sharing the gospel with his fellow Jews and with Samaritans, is about to share it with Gentiles. One day while he was at the tanner’s house, Peter went up on the rooftop to pray. While he prayed, he received a vision of a giant sheet being let down on the earth. It contained all kinds of animals, reptiles, and birds, some of which Peter, as a Jew, was not permitted to consume based on the food regulations of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. When the Lord commands him to “Rise, kill and eat,” Peter is shocked.

The Lord was not contradicting Leviticus and Deuteronomy, or giving Peter a new diet, but getting through to him about the people he should love and reach with the Gospel. The vision was parabolic and, like the Lord’s parables during his life on earth, it had a simple point. The church was not to call non-Hebrews “unacceptable” and make the Body of Christ exclusively Hebrew. This is so because God considers Gentiles “acceptable” to receive the Good News and, by faith, to experience salvation through his Son.

*No one, Lord, is outside your will to hear the Gospel and believe. Amen.*

**Wednesday, January 24 Acts 10:17-23a**

*“Peter was very perplexed”*

Peter was “perplexed,” meaning he was completely at a loss to know what he should do about the astounding truth the vision had revealed (v. 17). And he “thought” about the vision (v. 19). Here the Greek word is *dienthumounmenou,* a double compound, meaning that he revolved the truths in his mind, over and over again, in an effort to understand the implication of the strange revelation. In order to ensure that Peter comes to the right conclusion about the vision, God arranges for its meaning to be clear.

While Peter wondered and thought, the Lord had already arranged an experience for Peter that would bring him understanding. At the very time Peter was receiving the vision, emissaries from Cornelius were on the way. And while he was contemplating what the vision meant, Gentile men were at the gate. The Holy Spirit instructs Peter to go with them for they have been sent by God. Before they set out on their journey, Peter offers them hospitality. God has shown Peter truth and is giving him the opportunity to act on it.

*May we know your truth, Lord, and then may we live it. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONAL*

January 22 - 27

*Peter’s Witness*

**Thursday, January 25 Acts 10:23b-33**

*“Here we are, waiting to hear the message”*

In keeping with the regular practice in the early church, Peter takes some fellow believers rather than go on this assignment alone. If ever there was a group prepared to receive whatever the Lord has made ready, it was Cornelius and his family. They not only shared the centurion’s belief, but also his longing for something more. Cornelius shows great humility, especially for a centurion. But Peter will have none of it as such reverence is reserved only for God. He and Cornelius are equal before God.

Peter’s discovery, as he explains to his audience, is the pivotal message of this whole passage: “God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean” (v. 28). A big shift has taken place in Peter’s thinking, for he now realizes that no longer are the typical Jewish distinctions among people significant. They have been rendered void once and for all. The Apostle Paul will later state that there is now “Neither Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

*All are worthy, Lord, to receive the Good News about you. Amen.*

**Friday, January 26 Acts 10:34-43**

*“Then Peter began to speak”*

Peter’s speech is typical of evangelistic messages of Acts. Each speech is unique and relevant to the audience, but certain features are common to all of them. The audience in Cornelius’ house consisted of a unique type of Gentile in that they were God-fearers who were familiar with the Jewish Scriptures, practiced care for the poor, and consistently prayed to God. Thus, for example, Peter was able to refer to the Jewish prophets (v. 43). Peter’s message is an important model for us in presenting the gospel to devout people who, like Cornelius, may know something about God but are ignorant of the saving gospel of Christ.

In his speech, Peter testifies that there are witnesses to the events he describes. The testimony of the eyewitnesses was important to the Christians in the first century and is so for all generations. This is because Christianity is based on events surrounding Christ’s ministry on earth. Though we ourselves have not seen the risen Christ with our own eyes, our faith rests on the fact that he did rise from the dead and that a host of reliable witnesses attested this fact.

*We preach you, Lord, the risen Christ through whom is forgiveness for sin. Amen.*

**Saturday, January 27 Acts 10:44-48**

*“The Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message”*

Later Peter explained to the Christians in Jerusalem that the way the Holy Spirit came on these people was “as he had come on us at the beginning” (11:15). It was accompanied by speaking in tongues and praising God. In spite of all the leading that God had given up to this point, Jewish believers are astonished that Gentiles have received the Holy Spirit. With such unmistakable evidence that these Gentiles have indeed been converted, Peter does not hesitate to baptize them immediately.

With his scruples about table fellowship with Gentiles overcome, Peter seems to have accepted Cornelius’ invitation for him to stay a few days. This gives time for the news of what Peter has done to travel to Jerusalem before he arrives there. The consternation of the Christians there must have been immense because not only had their leader baptized Gentiles, he was also having continuous table fellowship with them. This indicated in a powerful way that Cornelius and company were indeed accepted into the Christian community.

*We are one in your Spirit, Lord, and there is to be no division among us. Amen.*