

“Why Did the Church Cross the Street?”

January 22, 2017

Acts 1:8- Jesus’ commission to the 1st generation of His followers: “First in Jerusalem→ Judea→ to the remotest parts of the world.

[Yet, they had to be prodded by HS throughout Acts to move from their established comfort zones into the great, adventurous commission.]

CORE- Acts 10. How the Lord shifted Peter’s perspectives & expanded his heart to reach people outside of his Jewish “comfort zone.” He is doing the same thing with us—calling us to “cross the street.”

Acts 10 (New Living Translation)

1. SUMMARY OF THE STORY

a. Cornelius

- **Not just a Gentile—a Roman Army officer—doubly hated by Jewish people**
- **Had been exposed to Romans gods (*i.e., Jupiter, Mars, Venus*)—yet, had come to love & revere the God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob**
- **He prayed continually—had a real relationship with God**
- **He was generous to the poor & contagious—his whole household believed!**
- **God sent an angel to Cornelius to prepare him—but God sent a person to preach the gospel to him.**

b. Peter

- **On the housetop, the traditional “patio” of many homes.**
- **During prayer, he fell into a “trance” (*to amaze, overwhelm the mind*)**
- **Sheet of kosher/non-kosher foods—went against everything Peter had been taught as a Jew**
- **Peter’s response (*the ultimate oxymoron*): “Not so, Lord (*absolute Ruler of my life*)!” (NOTE: Not 1st time he said, “No!” to Jesus. Mt. 16:22; Jn. 13:8)**
- **God spoke/gave vision to Peter 3 times (in addition to speaking to Cornelius)**
- **The message: “*What God calls ‘clean’ you must not call ‘impure’ or ‘unacceptable’ to God!*”**
- **NOTE: OT- the unclean always contaminated the clean. NT- Greater is He; the holy triumphs over the unholy (*i.e., Jesus touching lepers*)**
- **Peter “lodged” (*to entertain as an honored guest*) the 2 servants and the soldier who came from Cornelius’ house.**

- NOTE: It was forbidden for a Jew to have Gentiles in their homes, to sit at the same table with them, and have fellowship with them.
- **Peter was willing to RE-EXAMINE HIS TRADITIONS & PREJUDICES in light of God’s Word to him—expanding his heart for a lost world!**
- NOTE: The major theme of this chapter is the changing of Peter’s heart!
- **Here are some of the traditions Peter “crossed”:**
 - **Daily prayer of devout males: “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob—I thank You that You did not make me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman!” (NOTE contrast with Galatians 3:28)**
 - **If a Jew married a Gentile—a funeral was held for the Jew.**
- **Peter’s sermon emphasized the “whosoever” of God’s heart!**
- **Cornelius’ house experienced a “Pentecost” (not a generic version)—declaring new life, new beginnings, and a new belonging!**

2. OBSERVATIONS

- a. To fully participate in what God was doing—**PETER NEEDED TO CHANGE.** He had come a long way since denying Jesus—already in Acts he had **preached boldly, healed the sick, and even raised the dead. But he still needed to grow.**
- b. God wasn’t changing His mind—**He was REVEALING MORE OF HIS HEART.** Psalm 103:7- **“He made known His WAYS to Moses, His deeds to Israel.”**
- c. **It’s hard to LET GO of things we learned in our FORMATIVE YEARS.** We rest in what we’ve learned—and respect those we’ve learned it from.
- d. Peter’s **worldview changed when he was captured by THE HEART OF GOD** and then **connected with the hearts of those God loved.**
- e. Peter’s **CONFESSION CONFIRMED THE CHANGE:** *“God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.” (10:28). “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable.” (10:34-35 NRSV).*

Bottom Line: We must stop condemning others due to the fear of compromise & contamination—in order to connect w/them & see them connect w/ God.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE LORD:

- **Are there traditions of men hindering me from walking in the newness of Your life?**
- **Are my core beliefs foundation stones (to be built upon) or “former things” (to move on from)?**

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- **Am I willing to change my opinions and my perspectives?**
- **Am I willing to be stretched, inconvenienced, misunderstood, even maligned—for the changes I make?**
- **Am I willing to connect with those (that I previously rejected)?**