

FAMILY DEVOTIONS

A weekly study to strengthen families



The Second Pentecost

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ACTS 10:13-15 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

ACTS 10:28 ...said unto them, 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 shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

GALATIANS 3:26-28 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

In its infancy, the church was almost 100% Jewish. That should not surprise us. The inspired writings of the Old Testament were all penned by Jewish writers. Moses, David, and the prophets were all Jewish. All of them were descendants of Israel. The promised Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, was Jewish. His disciples were Jewish, and all of their festivals, including Pentecost, were Jewish festivals. Because of this, when the day of Pentecost was fully come in Acts chapter 2, only Jews were present, and, for the next 9-10 years, all new converts were Jewish. This, of course, was concerning when one considers the commandment of Jesus to "make disciples of ALL NATIONS" (Matthew 28:19). The question we must ask ourselves is why did it take ten years for the gospel to reach the Gentiles when Jesus clearly commanded His disciples to minister to them.

A careful study of scriptures and history reveals that the separation between Jew and Gentile was more significant than just participation in ceremonial worship. Unfortunately, instead of welcoming the stranger and loving them as commanded by God in the Mosaic law, the Jews treated the Gentiles as inferior human beings. The Law commanded them not to learn the way of the heathen, but it did not command them to treat them as inferior or be unjust toward them. The sin of racism and prejudice found its way into their community. They became infected with it. Their treatment of the Samaritan population was certainly an example of this: they avoided them at all costs. The Jewish people would walk miles just to avoid them. Jesus, of course, rejected these racial prejudices and cultural barriers as evidenced by His ministry to Samaria in John 4.

No doubt the Jewish people were also greatly offended by the Gentile occupiers who ruled their land. Daily, the Romans oppressed the Jewish nation and committed many injustices against them, including the greatest injustice of all, the killing of Jesus.

It would appear that racism, prejudice, and offenses all worked to create an impenetrable barrier to the spreading of the gospel, but what is impossible with men is possible with God! They needed a divine intervention. They needed a miracle!

Application

The miracle began with a Gentile Roman army officer named Cornelius who lived in the coastal city of Caesarea. He was a "devout and God-fearing" Roman centurion who was hungry for God. In a vision, an angel of the Lord told him to send for a Jew named Simon Peter. He was told that this Peter would tell him how to be saved.

So the men sent by Cornelius made the 30 mile trip down the coast to Joppa. While they were traveling, God began demolishing Peter's anti-Gentile prejudices. To do that, He spoke to Peter through the now famous vision involving "clean" and "unclean" foods, showing him how what God had cleansed he should not consider inferior.

Like Cornelius, Peter was instructed by God's Spirit to overcome his prejudices and reach out to the other party. The results of their obedience was the second Pentecost or outpouring of the Spirit recorded in Acts 10.

God had done the impossible! He had brought two parties that were separated by racial bias and offenses together, resulting in a tremendous outpouring of the Spirit. The Cross did away with their hatred for each other and made peace between them uniting Jew and Gentile in one body (Ephesians 2:16).

Discussion

1. What barriers did Cornelius and Peter need to overcome before they could meet?
2. Do you think the parties involved were aware of their own biases and prejudices? How is this relevant to our situation today?
3. What did Jesus teach concerning the treatment of our enemies?
4. How did Jesus teach us to respond to oppressive rulers and injustices?
5. Is our battle with flesh and blood? Explain.

Prayer Focus

Pray that the Lord would remove the bias and prejudice from our own hearts so we can experience revival and an outpouring of the Spirit.

Pray that God would miraculously intervene in our community to help key people overcome their prejudices and come together.