Sermon Highlights

Adjusting to God's Word: Overcoming Prejudice and Growing in Christ

Summary:

Drawing from Acts 11:1-18, this sermon examines Peter's defense before the Jerusalem church after his visit to Cornelius's household. Pastor Bruce Gordon highlights the significance of this passage appearing three times in Acts, emphasizing that repetition in Scripture signals extreme importance. The sermon addresses how deeply held preconceptions and prejudices can blind believers to what God is doing, using the circumcision party's confrontation of Peter as a central example. A core theological argument is made that personal experience must always be tested against and subordinated to the Word of God. The sermon also stresses the need for humility in admitting error, patience toward younger believers who are still growing, and the proper response to God's truth, which is to glorify Him and align oneself with His Word.

Key Points:

- When something is stated three times in Scripture, it carries extreme importance, as God has carefully condensed His Word through the Holy Spirit

- Preconceived religious convictions, even among genuine believers, can create dangerous blind spots that hinder the work of God

- The early church struggled with division and factionalism from its very beginning, particularly around issues of Jewish law and Gentile inclusion

- Personal experience is not a sufficient standard for spiritual truth and must always be measured against and confirmed by Scripture

- God speaks primarily through His Word, and believers who neglect Scripture should be cautious about claiming direct divine revelation

- Peter's response to his accusers demonstrates the proper approach: state what God has said, let Scripture stand on its own, and trust God to defend Himself

- Humility is essential in the Christian life, including the willingness to admit when one has been wrong

- Spiritual maturity is a process, and mature believers must extend patience and grace to those who are still growing in their faith

- The Jerusalem church's eventual silence and glorifying of God illustrates what happens when believers submit themselves to the truth of Scripture

- The early church's partial acceptance of Gentile salvation, while still resisting full integration, shows that spiritual growth rarely happens all at once

Scripture Reference:

- Acts 11:1-18, in which Peter recounts and defends his visit to Cornelius's household before the Jerusalem church, describing the vision God gave him, the arrival of Cornelius's messengers, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles

Stories:

- The repeated account of Peter's vision in Joppa and his subsequent visit to Cornelius in Caesarea, now told a third time as Peter defends his actions before the Jerusalem church

- A reference to early 19th century preachers who passionately defended slavery from their pulpits, used as an illustration of how sincere believers can hold deeply wrong convictions with great confidence

- A brief reference to the Day of Pentecost, which Peter invokes as a parallel to what occurred in Cornelius's household, lending credibility to his account before the Jerusalem council