

## Lessons from the Early Church

### **Pt. 5 - Gospel to the Gentiles**

**Prejudice:** *An adverse judgment or opinion formed beforehand or without knowledge or examination of the facts.*

Prejudice cannot survive in a heart softened by the Holy Spirit and in tune with God's voice.

*Acts 10:1 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius...<sup>3</sup> One day at about three in the afternoon Cornelius had a vision...<sup>9</sup> About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.<sup>10</sup> Peter became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance...<sup>11</sup> He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners.<sup>12</sup> It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air.<sup>13</sup> Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."<sup>14</sup> "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."<sup>15</sup> The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."<sup>16</sup> This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.<sup>17</sup> While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate.<sup>18</sup> They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.<sup>19</sup> While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you."<sup>20</sup> So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."<sup>21</sup> Peter went down and said to the men...*

*Acts 10:21 Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"<sup>22</sup> The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say."<sup>23</sup> Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along.<sup>24</sup> The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.<sup>25</sup> As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence.<sup>26</sup> But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."<sup>27</sup> Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people.<sup>28</sup> He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.<sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"<sup>30</sup> Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me<sup>31</sup> and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor.'<sup>32</sup> Send to Joppa*

for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’<sup>33</sup> So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism<sup>35</sup> but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.”

### **The criteria for acceptance with God:**

1. Fear Him: trust.
2. Do what is right: repentance.

### **Core Value: Every Soul Matters to God**

*Acts 10:36* You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup>You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached - <sup>38</sup>how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. <sup>39</sup>“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup>but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen...<sup>42</sup>He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup>All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.” <sup>44</sup>While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. <sup>45</sup>The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup>For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup>“Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”<sup>48</sup> So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

### **Key Questions:**

1. Who are my Gentiles?
  - Who have I decided isn't worth reaching?
  - Who have I decided is too difficult to reach?
  - Who have I decided doesn't deserve to be reached?
2. How does God view my Gentiles? He sees them as objects of His love and grace.
3. Is there room for prejudice in the body of Christ?

4. If I reject someone God accepts, what does that say about me?

<sup>1 Jn. 4:7</sup> *Dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

If I have been hurt by others, the right response is love.

Who's allowed in our church? Everyone.

**Key Decision:** Because every soul matters to God, every person will matter to me.