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**Ministry of the Holy Spirit**  
**Acts 10:1-22**  
**Lesson 18 – Breaking Prejudices**

**Acts 10:1-22 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup>At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. <sup>2</sup>He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. <sup>3</sup>One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" <sup>4</sup>Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. <sup>5</sup>Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. <sup>6</sup>He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea." <sup>7</sup>When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. <sup>8</sup>He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa. <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>He 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, "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."

**Discussion Questions**

1. What is the difference between racism and prejudice?
2. What characteristics of Cornelius showed that God was already at work in him?
3. What does Cornelius teach us about God's ability to reach people before we do?
4. Why is it dangerous to assume that God only works through people who look like us, worship like us, or come from our background?
5. "Have you ever been surprised by someone God used to teach, encourage, or challenge you?"
  - a. What changed in you about your perspective of God and other people?
6. What old beliefs and traditions was Peter holding onto when he said surely not when God told him to eat?
  - a. Why did God repeat the vision three times?
7. What are some modern-day examples of the kinds of barriers Peter had to overcome?
8. "What is harder—changing behavior or changing the way we think about people?"
9. According to the sermon, why do we often resist God's interruptions?
  - a. How can an interruption become a divine appointment?

- b. What opportunities might we miss when we refuse to step outside our comfort zones?
  - c. Can you think of a time when an unexpected interruption turned into a blessing?"
10. What prejudice, assumption, or stereotype is hardest for Christians to recognize in themselves?
  11. How does the Gospel challenge our tendency to categorize people?
  12. According to the sermon, why can't we fully obey God while holding on to prejudice?
  13. How does seeing people through God's eyes change the way we treat them?
  14. Share your major takeaways from the Lesson/Sermon this week.

### **A World-Wide Ministry—In Caesarea (Part I): Breaking Down Prejudice, 10:1-33**

**(10:1-33) Introduction:** prejudice and partiality exist. From the beginning of time prejudice has existed (Cain and Abel, Genesis 4:1f). Prejudice is everywhere in the world—in every nation, state, city, and neighborhood. Prejudice (discrimination) even exists within families between parent and child, brother and sister, family and relatives. Feelings toward and against people are a tragic reality. Note several facts about prejudice.

1. There are at least two basic reasons for prejudice.
  - a. People differ. They differ in nationality, color, beliefs, religion, speech, looks, behavior, ability, energy, position, status, social standing, possessions, wealth, birth, heritage. Prejudice arises when people feel they and their differences make them better than others.
  - b. Mistreatment causes prejudice, both mistreating others and being mistreated. When a person mistreats others or is mistreated by others his nature is immediately aroused to become prejudicial and judgmental. The mistreatment that gives rise to prejudice covers a wide range of behavior: ignoring, neglecting, joking, gossiping, opposing, cursing, abusing, fighting against, persecuting, passing over, segregating, enslaving.
2. The present passage strikes a fatal blow against prejudice. It shows forever that Jesus Christ has erased all prejudices and barriers between people. Jew and Gentile are now one in Christ Jesus. This is the subject of the present passage. However, before launching into the passage, some background will be helpful in understanding just what is happening and the significance of it.

The Jews, like all other people of the earth, had developed their own laws and customs; and every Jewish child was born and reared in the environment of those laws and customs. They, like all other people, were steeped in their own nationality and looked upon other people with suspicion. However, there were two factors which made the Jewish prejudice run deeper than most.

1. The Jewish people had always been mistreated, enslaved, and persecuted much more than the other people of the world. Through the centuries the Jewish people had been conquered by army after army, and by the millions they had been deported and scattered over the world. Even in the day of Jesus they were enslaved by Rome. Their religion was the binding force that kept Jews together, in particular their belief that God had called them to be a distinctive people (who worshipped the only true and living God) and their rules governing...
  - the Sabbath
  - the temple
  - intermarriage
  - worship and cleansing
  - diet, what foods they could and could not eat

Their belief and their rules kept them from alien beliefs and from being swallowed up by other people through intermarriage. Their religion was what maintained their distinctiveness as a people and as a nation.

Jewish leaders knew this. They knew that *their religion* was the binding force that held their nation together.

Therefore, they opposed anyone or anything that threatened or attempted to break the laws of their religion and nation.

2. The Jews misread and misinterpreted God's Word and purpose for them. God had called Abraham and given birth to the Jewish nation for one primary purpose—that they might be His people, His witnesses, His missionaries to the rest of the world. God had given the Jews His Word and instructed them to take His Word to the world and tell them about God. They were to bear witness that God *is*—God does exist—and that men are to worship and serve Him and Him alone.

It was here that Israel failed. Instead of proclaiming God and His Word of righteousness and morality to the world, Israel separated itself from the world, hoarding and claiming that God and His law were theirs and theirs alone. They became *separatists*, extremely prejudiced, building barriers and partitions between themselves and the other people of the world (Gentiles). Prejudice became so deep-seated that attitudes such as these were adopted:

⇒ They called other people "dogs."

⇒ They would have no contact with a Gentile unless absolutely necessary, and then after contact, they had to go through a religious ceremony to be cleansed.

⇒ They would not help a Gentile woman who was giving birth lest another Gentile be born into the world.

It was into such a world that the church was born, a world of prejudice, the prejudice...

- of Jew against Gentile.
- of Gentile against Jew.
- of Gentile against Gentile.

How was God going to overcome and break down the walls and barriers of prejudice that had been built up through the centuries of history? How was He going to get His church, His people to break away from their Jewish roots and reach out to the whole world?

That is the point of the present passage. The doors of God's salvation are about to be gloriously swung open to the people of the world. Every man will soon have the wonderful privilege of hearing the marvelous message proclaimed: God is love and has sent His dear Son into the world that the world might be saved and not perish. The present passage shows how God broke through the prejudicial environment and customs of his dear servant, Peter, and led him to swing open the door to a Gentile soldier who was desperately crying out to God.

The story is one of the great stories of history, and it should be studied by all people everywhere. A study of this event shows that God has broken down the barrier of prejudice between men racially and religiously, and that He means and intends them to be erased forever—in the name of His dear Son who came to show that God loves all men and wishes all men to be saved.

The subject of the passage can be titled: "The Breakdown of Prejudice" or "The Opening of the Door to the Gentiles." The door could not be opened until the existing prejudices were dealt with; therefore, the story deals mainly with the breaking down of the prejudices between the Gentile Cornelius and the Jewish minister Simon Peter.

Because of the length of the story and *its significance*, the event is divided and dealt with in three parts.

Part 1: The Breakdown of Prejudice (Acts 10:1-33).

Part 2: The Message to be Preached to the World (Gentiles) (Acts 10:34-43).

Part 3: The Holy Spirit Given to the World (Gentiles) (Acts 10:44-48).

**1. (10:1-8) Prejudice— Jew vs. Gentile— Seeking God:** the breakdown of prejudice in the Gentile, Cornelius. Note: it is God who breaks down prejudice. Prejudice is so deep-seated in the heart of man, only God can erase it and reconcile man.

1. Cornelius was a soldier, a military officer, a Centurion in the Roman army (see Deeper Study #1, Centurion—Acts 23:23 for discussion). The Italian band simply means that all the soldiers (100) under his command were from Italy. Cornelius was stationed in Caesarea. This is important to note, for Caesarea was a Gentile city, a place in which strict Jews would never set foot, not if preventable.

2. Cornelius had an unusual reverence for God. He was...

- a devout man: one who worshipped the true and living God.
- a God-fearing man: one who sensed the presence of God in the world and knew he was responsible to God to live righteously, justly, and morally toward all men.
- a benevolent and charitable man: one who gave to charity, and note he gave "much."
- a praying (*deomenos* <sup>PWS:3001</sup>) man: the word means *begging of God*. Note that he prayed *always*.

The point is this: Cornelius was totally unlike most of the Gentiles of his day. He was not worshipping false gods. The Scripture says he worshipped and "prayed to God" (*tou theou*). In Greek this means the true God, the only living and true God. Cornelius had done two things.

a. He had looked at nature and at the world around him and seen that there was bound to be one God who had created all things.

**"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).**

b. He had looked at Jewish religion (Judaism) and seen that it was head and shoulders above all other religions in...

- its worship of one God.
- its teachings of righteousness and justice and morality.
- its religious practices such as praying three times daily. (Note his praying at the Jewish ninth hour, which today is 3 p.m.)

But note: Cornelius did not become a Jewish worshipper. He was not circumcised (cp. Acts 11:3). He would never consent to becoming a Jewish convert. He could learn from them and their religion, but he would never become one of them. The prejudice existing within his own heart, existing between Gentile and Jew was too great to overcome. (We must always remember, prejudice is too great to overcome in the flesh of natural man.)

3. Cornelius was given a vision from God. Note five points.

a. Cornelius was in prayer when the vision came.

- b. The vision involved an angel bringing a message from God.
- c. Cornelius "looked on" (*atenisas* <sup>PWS: 2399</sup>), that is, fastened his eyes, gazed, focused his attention; he was startled, frightened.
- d. Cornelius realized the angel of God was a messenger from God (cp. Acts 9:30, "bright clothing"). He addressed him as "Lord."
- e. The message to Cornelius was twofold.
  - 1) His prayers and charity had come before God as a memorial (see Deeper Study #1—Acts 10:1-6 for discussion).
  - 2) He was to send men to Joppa to see Peter and ask him what to do. Now note a critical point: despite Cornelius' enormous reverence and faithful service for God...
    - he was still not doing enough.
    - something else was missing.
    - one thing was still lacking.

Note another fact as well: Cornelius was aware he still lacked something, very aware of the fact. *He had asked God what he still needed.* Despite all his reverence and good works, he still felt a lack, an emptiness; and he was begging God to fill that emptiness, to show him what he *still* had to do.

4. Cornelius was obedient to the heavenly vision and instructions. He sent two trusted household servants and his most trusted military orderly to find Simon Peter. Cornelius would seek the answer to his heart's need from a Jew.

**"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).**

**"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).**

**"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).**

**"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).**

2. (10:9-22) **Prejudice— Jew vs. Gentile:** the breakdown of prejudice in the Jew, Simon Peter. The servants from Cornelius had almost reached the city of Joppa where Peter was. They would be approaching Peter soon with the request to visit and help Cornelius. However, Peter was not ready...

- to welcome these men.
- to return with them to visit Cornelius.
- to stay and share in the home of Cornelius.

Why? Cornelius was a Gentile and Peter was a Jew. There was deep-seated racial discrimination between the two. Welcoming and visiting and sharing in the homes of each other was out of the question. And on top of that, there was a religious difference, a difference that was even more deeply seated in Peter's mind than the racial difference. Peter was just not ready for these Gentile men to approach him with the request to visit Cornelius the Gentile, not yet.

But God was ready. And it is God who makes the difference. God can break down prejudice. God can reconcile the Jew to the Gentile and the Gentile to the Jew. God can reconcile man to man; He can bring peace to men and between men. Note these facts.

1. Peter prayed often every day. This is seen in the fact that he was praying about the sixth hour (12 noon Jewish time). This was one of the three prayer hours practiced by Jews. Peter got alone and prayed at least three times daily.

Peter was such a man of prayer that God could intervene in his life and direct him, give him specific instructions. It was while he was praying that God spoke to Peter.

2. Peter was a mere man, very human. Despite his being the leader of Jesus' apostles—the great apostle to the Jews, a man of great spiritual maturity and depth, a great servant of the Lord, a minister highly esteemed—Peter was still just a man, a man who hungered and thirsted, ached and hurt, was weak and frail, prejudiced and too often wrong just like the rest of us.

The point is this: being saved and spiritually mature and called to serve God did not make Peter perfect. It did not free him from need and lack, nor from sin. Peter as a mere man was subject to hunger just as all men, and subject to the prejudices of his environment just as all men—subject to the prejudices until God changed him. And praise God, He was about to change Peter's prejudice against us, the Gentiles! If God had not changed him and his prejudices, we would still be lost and without Christ in this world.

3. Peter experienced a trance. The Greek says that "a trance [an ecstasy] came upon him"; that is, he was transported out of himself (*egeneto ep' ekstasis* <sup>PWS: 1467</sup>). His mind was so concentrated, so focused that Peter lost all sense of the world around him. He was swallowed up in the thoughts of God, transported mentally out of this world. It is something like a daydream, but a daydream so concentrated and focused that all contact with one's surroundings is completely lost. It is a time of ecstasy in the presence of the Lord, receiving His Word, whatever He has to say to one's heart.
  - a. The trance (ecstasy) was of heaven. Peter saw heaven open. Peter's prejudice was encrusted and hardened. He had never known anything but prejudice within his environment except what Christ had demonstrated. *Peter did not think or know that he was prejudiced. He thought he was only standing against the unrighteousness and injustices of men, that he was to ignore and have nothing to do with ungodly and unjust men.* If Peter was to change and begin to reach out to the heathen, the ungodly and unjust, he had to know that the instructions were from heaven, from God Himself.
  - b. The vessel or platter (plate) upon which a meal was served was huge.
    - ⇒ It was a large receptacle, so large it looked like a large sheet (*othonen*), which in the Greek means linen cloth. This probably means it was white.
    - ⇒ The huge vessel or platter had four corners that were knit, that is, that were held by four ropes and let down from heaven, descending to earth and being sat before Peter.
    - ⇒ The vessel or platter contained all manner of animals.
  - c. The instruction to Peter was, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat."
  - d. Peter refused, for the animals were common and unclean according to the laws of Jewish religion (see [Deeper Study #3—Acts 10:11-16](#) for discussion). Note the enormous spiritual struggle Peter was going through.
  - e. Peter was clearly corrected: "What God has cleansed, that call not unclean."
  - f. Peter experienced the event three times and then the trance ended with the platter being received up into heaven.

- g. Peter was perplexed. While Peter was thinking about the trance and wondering what it meant, the men arrived downstairs and asked for him.
- h. Peter's sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leadership is clearly seen from this point on. Note: it was the Holy Spirit who...
- told him the men were downstairs.
  - told him to go "with them" (Peter did not yet know they were Gentiles).
  - told him to "doubt nothing": do not waver, wonder, hesitate, question the thing to be done.
  - told him that He, the Holy Spirit, had sent the men after him.

Note: Peter did not yet know the men were Gentiles. But the Holy Spirit had just told Peter exactly what to do. Peter could not question this fact. Peter was now ready to have his prejudice against Gentiles erased. Note also: Peter did not yet know the meaning of the trance. This would be made clear later.

- i. Peter received the Gentile servants. He obeyed the Holy Spirit, did exactly what the Spirit said. Peter even *lodged* them, an unheard of thing. (As a point of humor, imagine the kosher food they had that evening.)

**"But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (Matthew 13:16).**

**"Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day" (Psalm 25:5).**

**"Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path" (Psalm 27:11).**

**"Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalm 143:10).**

### **DEEPER STUDY #3 (10:11-16) Jews, Dietary Laws**

**3. (10:23-33) Lessons:**the confrontation and lessons learned by the Jew and the Gentile, the prejudiced of the world.

1. The preparation by Peter. He took six Jewish believers, orthodox Jews, with him (Acts 10:45; Acts 11:12). Peter knew he was treading troubled waters by associating with Gentiles; he sensed he would need witnesses to what he was doing. Therefore, he was preparing himself against attack (cp. Acts 11:1f).
2. The preparation by Cornelius. Note...
  - He was expectant, excited, eagerly waiting for their arrival.
  - He had "called together his kinsmen and close friends." There were many present.

Note also the faith of Cornelius. He *knew* Peter would be coming, that God would fulfill His Word (Acts 10:6) and do what He had promised.

**"The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate" (Psalm 34:22).**

**"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5).**

**"Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:4).**

**Thought 1.** Cornelius was already witnessing by bringing people to hear the messenger from God.

3. The confrontation of the Jew and the Gentile, two men humbled by God.

- a. Cornelius had been humbled by the vision from God. He had been mulling over the experience for four days now, being humbled and prepared more and more to receive the Jewish messenger. When he confronted Peter, he was so humbled he prostrated himself before Peter in an act of deep reverence.
- b. Peter demonstrated humility as well. It was the custom to bow before men of high honor, showing reverence and respect for them. But God had humbled Peter too. Peter forbade the act, disallowed it. No man is to be idolized or revered in the sense of being held in awe. Peter rebuked Cornelius: "I myself also am a man."

**Thought 1.** Jesus accepted such reverence and worship (cp. Matthew 2:11; Matthew 8:2; Matthew 9:18; Matthew 14:33; Matthew 15:25; Matthew 20:20; Matthew 28:9, 17; Luke 5:8), and He accepted it from Peter himself (Matthew 8:2; Luke 5:8). But Peter says no man is to bow or reverence another man, no matter who they are. We are all mere men, each one saved by God's wonderful grace.

**"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4).**

**"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).**

**"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:3-4).**

**"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).**

4. The lesson learned by Peter. (See Deeper Study #4—Acts 10:28-29 for more discussion.) Peter now knew that no man was common or unclean. He now knew...

- that Christ had abolished the distinction between Jew and Gentile.
- that Christ had abolished the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile (see Deeper Study #1, Temple—John 2:14).
- that Christ had abolished *all* distinctions between men, whether racial, social, or some caste system.

No man was to treat any other man with anything but love and care, mercy and forgiveness, concern and compassion. Peter's prejudice was wiped out, erased, and overcome. It had been overcome by God. The door of salvation was about to be thrown open to the Gentiles forever.

Note Peter's reference to how it was unlawful for a Jew to associate with a Gentile (Acts 10:28). This law was not in the Scripture. It came from the Scribal law (see Deeper Study #1—Luke 6:2).

- "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).
- "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Romans 10:12).
- "But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me" (Galatians 2:6).
- "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" (Galatians 3:27-28).
- "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him" (Ephes. 6:9).

5. The lesson learned by Cornelius was threefold.

- a. The man who truly seeks God moves God. Cornelius declared that God answered his prayer.
- b. The man who seeks God must listen to God and obey God. Cornelius declared that he listened and did exactly what God said, and that he did it immediately (Acts 10:33).
- c. The man who seeks God must be receptive to the Word of God.

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thes. 2:13).

#### **DEEPER STUDY #4 (10:28-29) Religious Traditions— Church, Prejudice— Gentiles Vs. Jews**

##### **DEEPER STUDY #1**

(10:1-6) **Seeking God— Lost— Salvation**: Cornelius was not saved. Scripture says so (Acts 11:14). He was a man who...

- was good and very devout.
- worshipped the true God.
- feared and revered God.
- did good, giving "much" to charity.
- prayed "always"—not just daily, not just often, but *always*.

However, as wonderful as these things are, they are not what saves a person. Note a critical point often overlooked. Cornelius was *genuine* in his seeking after God. His prayers and charity ascended to God as a

memorial (*eis mnēmosunon*<sup>PWS: 2560</sup>). The word means that the sincerity of Cornelius' heart caught God's eye. Cornelius was *seeking* God, desiring to please God, to know God and to do God's will. Therefore, God could not miss him. He had to see to it that Cornelius heard the message of salvation.

It is the person who seeks God whom God saves. God will do anything, do whatever is needed, so that the message of salvation is sent to the person who truly seeks Him. The person who seeks Him will find Him even if that person is in the deepest jungle on earth, completely isolated in the uttermost part of the earth. This is the promise of God.

**"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).**

**"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8).**

Scripture describes people such as Cornelius, people who look at nature and at the world around them and see the true God: they seek God, yet they have never had the privilege of hearing the truth of the glorious gospel. (What an indictment against believers! Century after century has passed and the world has not yet been reached!)

**"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).**

**"When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:14-15).**

**"If the uncircumcision [Gentile] keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:26-29).**

### DEEPER STUDY #3

(10:11-16) **Jews, Dietary Laws:** the Jews had all kinds of dietary laws (cp. Leviticus 11; Leviticus 20:25-26; Deut. 14:3-21). There were certain foods they could and could not eat. The words "common and unclean" (*koinon kai akatharton*<sup>PWS: 661</sup>) refer to being religiously or ceremonially unclean. The unclean animals were unhallowed, profaned. It was felt that eating them would not please God. Note two points.

1. The Jews were very strict, scrupulous in keeping the dietary laws. The laws were taught from earliest childhood, and a true Jew *never* ate an unclean animal. This can be clearly seen from Peter's experience.
  - ⇒ He told the Lord emphatically, "No." And he said "no" three times right in the midst of a trance.
  - ⇒ He told the Lord, "I have *never* eaten anything that is common or unclean."

Peter had never tasted an unclean food. Therefore, the Lord's command to eat such food caused an enormous struggle for him. Jews were strict in observing the rules and regulations governing what they could and could not eat. They would *never* touch a food that was unclean.

2. Eating unclean foods was one of the major reasons the Jews considered the Gentiles *unclean* and unacceptable to God. It was one of the major reasons they refused to have anything to do with the Gentiles. If a Jew had associated with a Gentile, the consequences would have been easily seen. The Jew would soon be influenced to try some Gentile food, and by so doing he...

- would become *unclean* religiously and ceremonially.
- would be breaking God's law.
- would lose his distinctiveness as being one of God's chosen people, one who follows and obeys God.
- would be eating meat that may have come from an animal sacrificed to an idol god. Once an animal had been sacrificed to an idol, the priests often sold the meat to merchants who made the meat available to the public. To eat meat offered to idols was considered idolatry, one of the worst offences in the minds of a Jew.

Note: what God was saying to Peter is not contradicting God's Word to Israel. God had given Israel many laws...

- to make Israel distinctive, the people who followed and obeyed God's law.
- to keep Israel separated from the ungodly and unjust behavior of other people, and from intermarriage.
- to give Israel guidance in taking care and protecting themselves both as a nation and as individuals. (Dietary laws protected their bodies and health.)

Israel was the custodian of God's Word to man. But when Christ came, God took another step, moved to another stage of His plan. Jesus Christ and His followers are now the custodians of God's revelation. It is no longer just Israel, just Jews who are...

- to receive,
- to know,
- to be responsible

...for God's revelation. It is both Jew and Gentile, all men everywhere. All men are now to rally around Jesus Christ and take the responsibility for proclaiming God's revelation (His Word, His law). It is no longer just Jews. It is all men of all nations—all who will follow Christ and take on the responsibility for making Him known.

#### DEEPER STUDY #4

**(10:28-29) Religious Traditions— Church, Prejudice— Gentiles Vs. Jews:** Jews were forbidden to eat certain animals because they were said to be unclean. This was a symbolic vision. God was teaching Peter that Gentiles (represented by the unclean animals) were acceptable to Him and were to be as much a part of His church as were Jews (Acts 10:28). This is of extreme importance, for God was revealing that this had been His eternal plan for the church from the beginning. It was the revelation made to the "holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephes. 3:5). Note that "apostles" and "prophets" are plural. Paul was not the only apostle to whom the revelation was given. Peter later shared this experience with the Gentiles at Caesarea (Acts 10:24-29) and with the Jews at Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-11). Peter says very plainly in Acts 15:7-14 that God was calling out both Gentiles and Jews to make up the church.

This move on God's part stirred one of the most revolutionary movements in human history. Both Jews and Gentiles were gripped with the deepest prejudice against one another (cp. Luke 10:25-37. See outlines—' Luke 7:4-5; notes—' Luke 7:4-5; Deeper Study #1—Mark 7:27; note—' Ephes. 2:11-12; cp. Galatians 2:4;

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Ephes. 2:13-18; Ephes. 2:19-22. See outlines—· Romans 9:1-11:36 and Deeper Study #1—Romans 9:1-11:36. See notes—· Mark 11:15; note—· Ephes. 2:14-15 on the structure of the Jewish temple.)

Note the open invitation among the Gentiles: "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded...of God" (Acts 10:33). The door for Gentile evangelism was thrown wide open!

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Acts.