

## 1942 - PETER at CAESAREA - Acts 10:23-43

PRELIMS. The Holy Spirit has been 'at work' in Peter's life and heart and in Cornelius' life and heart. God was revealing to His Church, that the Gentiles had to be brought into His kingdom. It wasn't a matter of race, colour, or past life, it was a matter of faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness. God was now to **open up the floodgates** of His grace to all classes of sinners!

We have the **ideal 'set-up'** for any minister today! A house full of **expectant listeners - hungry to hear the Word!** Peter has an **immediate problem!** A real breach of God's law confronts him! Cornelius falls down and **worships him!**(25) Should Peter's **first words** be a **rebuke?** **Tensions!!**

Peter's example of **gently/lovingly lifted him up saying 'Stand up; I too am a man'**, created a **warmth** which contrasted with the Phar's **professionalism** which put a distinction between them and the commoners! Remember Jesus had to warn His disciples against those who **desired** to sit in **Moses seat exercising authority** over others! *You are not to be called rabbi for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers...The **greatest** among you shall be your **servant** (Mat 23:8-12)!*

So what we have in this passage is Peter **rejecting two extremes** regarding human dignity! He has rejected the idea that mankind in any condition is unworthy of respect (*you should not call anyone common or **unclean** (28)*), and on the other hand, Peter has shown that man is not to be given the place of a **god!** We do not worship man as a Divine Being! Man is **neither a dog nor a god!** Fallen, **yes!** Sinful, **yes!** But man is still made in God's image and must never be **mistreated!**

Now *Cornelius...had called together his relatives and close friends* (24). That was **wonderful!** He must have had a **truly excellent relationship** with his relatives **and** community. Imagine - to be **able to ask** others to come and hear a Jew who did a **complete U-turn** and who was deemed a **rank heretic** by his own countrymen! I really **admire** Cornelius! **APP** what a **challenge** to us. How many of **us** here tonight have asked **our** neighbours and relatives to come to this church?

You see, Why do people today go to church at all? Why do people still have some **interest**, albeit in opposition, to religion? This: There is a **'God element'** built into mankind which the Bible calls 'made in God's image!' Deep down in man's heart there is a **conviction** that **justice/truth/righteousness** should prevail! That there is something missing in life! Man is actually **not neutral** re religion! He is naturally **opposed** to it! But by God's Spirit he can come to faith in Christ! What was now happening in Caesarea was **God's Holy Spirit** working in people's hearts and lives and they became **more interested/concerned** about reality! When God works it won't go away!

### **PETER'S ADDRESS**

Peter first explains why he, a Jew, is present among Gentiles! They, as we noted, knew some things about the Jewish faith. Eg, *how **unlawful** it is for a Jew to **associate with or to visit anyone of another nation** (28)!* So why was Peter present now with them? Peter replies that **God has shown me that I should **not call** any person **common or unclean** (28)** and also that he was invited by Cornelius to come and speak to them! \*\*\*Cornelius now takes over and tells of God's wonderful guidance to both himself and Peter. He is assured that Peter has something special to say to them.

So Peter is given a **'free hand'** to explain the whole gospel, and does so from the standpoint of his **own experience** *Truly, I understand...* It is always best to speak from our **own experience** of God's dealings with us. Always making clear of course that there **no two experiences** are identical.

\*\*Now note: **God** is the **subject** of Peter's **whole** address! **God shows no partiality...**(34) + (38, 40, 41, 42). Salvation is God's work! Whatever Peter felt or saw, Peter makes it plain that God was the Author! Peter has to be **humble** here as he explains how God **changed** his **understanding** of things. Peter is also **brave/courageous** for it is just **hours** after having done a **U-turn** on his understanding of God's plan! Peter, as we noticed last time, is being taught and is **learning**.

**APP** Sincere and **diligent** Xns are **always learning** - in fact, they are **trying to discover** more about the God that saved them! A Xn who is not learning **new things** from the Bible and from his experiences in life, is either **dull** or **uninterested** in **spiritual growth**! As Peter writes later, we must **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ** (2Pet 3:18) Those with the wisdom from above, **want to know more** about God and truth! *Let the wise hear and increase in learning* (Pro 1:5). *Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning* (Pro 9:9). Again Peter: **make every effort to supplement our faith** (2Pet 1:5) Paul to Col: **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God** (Col 1:10)

Now all these people in Cornelius's house appear to be 'God fearers' and interested in learning more. God was clearly working on their hearts and souls. God was leading them on to faith in Jesus Christ! Peter now says something that has caused a lot of **controversy**! He says *anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him* (35) which some say he taught that **salvation** is found in simply having a reverence for God and doing good works! But that would **run counter** to every other thing the Bible teaches about salvation - and what **Peter himself** said about salvation! Peter has already shouted loud and clear *there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved* (4:12) Peter here is **not** describing here **how** to be saved, but the **fruits** of those who are saved - and that fruit is the **same in every nation**!

What Peter is saying is that there is **no partiality** with God - it **doesn't matter what nation** you come from (you do not have to be a Jew), but if you truly **fear God** and **do what is right** (which of course can only be done by also believing in Jesus), then God **will accept** you. It is **not just Jews** that God accepts, but those who **believe in Jesus Christ** as he goes on to say in verse (43) **everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins**! Truly fearing God and doing what is right can **only** be done through **faith** in Jesus! The point Peter is making by this statement as Bruce Milne says, is that 'Jews and Gentiles are in the same playing field in the search for God'. **Anyone** who believes 'Jesus is Lord', no matter where they come from, will be saved!

Peter now explains that the privileges Israel enjoyed (ie, God revealing things to them which He didn't reveal to any other nation), He is now about to reveal to the whole world, to *every nation* (35) So Peter **reiterates** the 'whole story' of Jesus' and Israel! *As for the word that He sent to Israel preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) you yourselves know what happened....* (36) Peter describes all the significant incidents from John the Baptist to Christ's ascension, and then announces that **to us who have been chosen by God as witnesses...He commanded us to preach to the people that He is the One appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name!** (41-43)

Clearly Peter is pointing them all to Jesus Christ! He is the one **all the prophets** bear witness to! **Two final points:** (a) Peter, as far as we are concerned, is actually calling **FUTURE GENERATIONS** as readers of his message, to the **Holy Scriptures**, because **that** is where the witness of Jesus is really found! *All the prophets* are in the Scriptures and they **testify** to Jesus!

Have **you found** Jesus? He is there in our Bibles? Jesus had to **rebuke**, even His own disciples who could not find Him in the OT! **O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken..and beginning with Moses and all the prophets He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself** (L23:25) **everything written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled** (L23:44)! \*(b) Jesus is **appointed by God to be Judge** (42). So **our view** of Jesus is very, very **important**! *What do you think of Christ?*