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“Lessons from a Jew and a Gentile”

Acts 10:1-23

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Some people believe they are relatively good and don't really need God. Others believe they are too bad for God to forgive them. The truth is that it doesn't matter what we think about ourselves. What matters is what God thinks. And what God thinks is that everyone needs a Savior because no one is good enough to get to Heaven on their own or bad enough to be excluded. Jesus died for all, that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

1. [Acts 10:1-23](#) - *“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, ‘Cornelius!’ And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, ‘What is it, lord?’ So he said to him, ‘Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do.’ And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa. The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.’ And a voice spoke to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’ This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again. Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold,*

the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.' Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, 'Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?' And they said, 'Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.' Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him."

2. Jews and Gentiles

- a. In Biblical times, there were only two classes of people—Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews)
- b. God created the Jewish people through Abraham and his descendants, giving them a special role as the conduit through which He would reveal Himself to the world
 - i. Ultimately Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, would be revealed through the Jewish people
- c. God gave the Jews land, language, and laws to express who He is
 - i. This sometimes led to pride within the community
 - ii. Some Jews believed Gentiles existed to be fuel for the fires of hell
 - iii. God selected a specific group of people to reveal Himself, but He died for all and loves all

3. The first Gentile convert

- a. Cornelius was described as
 - i. *"Devout"*
 - ii. *"Feared God"*
 - iii. *"Gave generously"*
 - iv. *"Prayed to God always"*
- b. He was what some might consider "a good person"

4. Being "good" is not good enough; we all need a Savior—**JESUS**

- a. No one is good enough on his/her own
 - i. An individual who thinks that he/she is a "good person" is harder to convince of his/her need for a Savior
- b. The missing piece of Cornelius' life was Jesus
- c. God sent an angel to visit Cornelius telling him to send for Peter, and He instructed Peter to go as requested and tell Cornelius about Jesus

5. Whatever a person's tribe, tongue, race, or nation, Believers are one people under the Lordship of Jesus Christ

- a. Before Peter went to Cornelius, God had to teach him to be receptive to a Gentile being saved

- b. God gave Peter a vision of animals that were not kosher (against Jewish law to consume), and instructed him to *“take and eat”*
 - c. **Mark 7:18a-19** - *“Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him “unclean?” For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.’ (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods ‘clean’).”* (1984 NIV)
 - i. Why did God give dietary laws to begin with?
 - 1. There were regulations and rituals that God put into effect for a time to distinguish the Jews from the pagan nations around them and reveal who God is
 - d. Believers are to be known as belonging to Jesus rather than being known by what they eat, wear, or which holidays they celebrate
6. Rituals and regulations have been fulfilled in Christ and are no longer necessary to keep
- a. **Colossians 2:16-17** - *“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”* (1984 NIV)
 - b. Christ fulfilled the dietary and ceremonial aspects of the law
 - i. The moral code is still intact
 - c. Peter did not immediately understand this, as he took pride in the fact that he upheld the dietary laws
 - d. God showed Peter that the dietary laws were no longer binding, and the traditional views Jews held toward Gentiles were not appropriate
 - i. **Acts 10:15** - *“And a voice spoke to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’”*
 - ii. **Acts 10:15** - *“The voice spoke to him a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’”* (1984 NIV)
7. We do not worship people, pray to people, or get to God through people; Jesus is our direct access to God and HE alone is worthy of our worship
- a. **Hebrews 4:16** - *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*
 - b. When Peter arrived, Cornelius was starstruck and fell at his feet to worship him
 - i. Peter corrected him, saying, *“Stand up; I myself am also a man.”*
 - c. Peter told how God had changed his view that only Jews could be saved, and then he shared the Gospel
 - i. **Acts 10:27-28; 38-48** - *“And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. Then he said to them, ‘You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. ... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who*

were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.’ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”

- d. Jesus died for all
 - i. **Romans 10:12-13** - *“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”* (1984 NIV)

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Acts 10:1-23** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Why did God give the Jewish people specific land, language, and laws? (See #2c-iii above)
3. How do these verses describe Cornelius? (See #3 above)
4. Why is “being good” not good enough? What was missing in Cornelius’ life? (See #4 above)
5. Why was Peter hesitant to share the Gospel with Cornelius? What did God teach him about this attitude? (See #5a, #5b, and #5c above)
6. Read **Mark 7:18a-19**. Why did God give dietary restrictions to the Jewish people? (See #5c above)
7. Read **Colossians 2:16-17**. Why are Old Testament rituals and regulations no longer necessary? (See #6a and #6b above)

8. Read [Acts 10:15](#) in both the NKJV and the 1984 NIV. How did God annulling the dietary laws coincide with Him offering salvation to Gentiles? (See #6d above)
9. Read [Hebrews 4:16](#). What gives us direct access to God? How should this affect our approach to God? (See #7 and #7a above)
10. Read [Acts 10:27-28, 38-48](#). What is the significance of salvation that is available to all?
11. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)