

~ACTS~

Lesson 32- Salvation to the Gentiles (pt 2): Freedom in Christ

We are continuing our study in chapter 10, and last week we ended at verse 28, which becomes a major pivotal point in redemptive history as we see the barrier between Jew and Gentile come crashing down. And this is such a big deal for us as Christians because not only is this chapter about the revelation of the Gentiles coming into Salvation, but it also reveals **the freedom that all believers have in Christ Jesus**. That's what I want to focus on today. The freedom that God has granted to us through His Son.

And revelation of this freedom is being told through the story of the first Gentile convert recorded in the New Testament, that is Cornelius, a Roman centurion. But this freedom is not just for Cornelius, there is an amazing freedom being revealed to Peter as well, and not just for Peter and Cornelius, but all those who would believe in Jesus Christ for Salvation. We left off last week in verse 28 as Peter is standing in the midst of a Gentile house, surrounded by Gentile people and he says,

28) 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."

This is a major deal. The fact that Peter is surrounded by Gentiles in a Gentile house and he is about to preach the Gospel unto Salvation to them. This would have been unthinkable just a couple of days earlier, but you remember how God gave Peter a vision in Joppa that began breaking down these barriers, **Acts 10:10-13**. And it is through this vision the Holy Spirit gives Peter two revelations that go hand in hand: 1) that the dietary ordinances of the Law have been fulfilled and are no longer needed; and 2) through this the Spirit reveals the deeper meaning that he is to call no man common or unclean. That all men of all nations are clean, that there is no longer a separation between Jew and Gentile because Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world and all who call upon Him will be saved. And those who turn away from sin through repentance and turn upon Jesus by grace through faith, they are purified by faith and brought together as one body in Christ Jesus. So Peter is standing in this Gentile house by faith in obedience to God's Word ready to preach the Gospel, and this revelation to Peter has such huge implications to our Christian doctrine, so much that we're going to spend the remainder of the lesson understanding the significance of what this means to us and the plan of redemption.

The story of Cornelius and Peter in Acts chapter 10 is the enactment of the same revelation that God first gave Paul when he was in Arabia and Damascus for three years. Paul received this revelation before Peter, but God needed Peter as His witness to the Salvation of the Gentiles so as to not create a schism in the body of Christ. So God is working with both Paul and Peter concerning the revelation of the New Covenant. But I think it is fascinating to see how God dealt with these two men differently with the same revelation. With Peter, God gave him a vision and told him, don't argue with it, just do what I say, "**What I have cleansed you must not call common,**" Acts 10:15. And He told Peter that three times. But with Paul, God gave him a systematic theology of the doctrine of our New Covenant in Christ, and Paul wrote it down and taught all the churches. Which is how we know about our New Covenant in Christ, because we have it written in His Word. So now we have the best of both worlds. We have Peter's hands on experience on this revelation in Acts 10, and then when we overlay it with Paul's doctrine in his epistles...it is a powerful understanding of God's New Covenant. So this is what I want to do today. We are at verse 28, a critical point in redemptive history when Peter says, don't you know how unlawful it is for me to be standing here with you... **But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean**. So today we are going to understand the significance of this statement by overlaying Paul's writings with the vision God gave Peter on the rooftop in Joppa.

In this vision to Peter, He first removed the dietary restrictions of the Law showing that all animals were now clean to eat, which immediately had a much deeper significance in that God was showing Peter that

all people are now clean. Because these dietary ordinances were only established for one purpose, to separate the Jews from the rest of the world as God's holy people, elected for the service of ushering in the Messiah to the world. And this was all for the purpose so that Jesus could fulfill the Law and redeem mankind from their sins, [Lev 20:25-26](#). This is why God chose the Jews. He didn't elect them for Salvation. Jews are not saved just because they are Jews, [Rom 2:28-29](#); [9:6-9](#), but rather they were elected for the service of bringing Salvation to the whole world through Jesus Christ, [Gal 3:8](#); [Rom 3:1-2](#); [9:11-24](#). And it is God's desire that all Jews would believe in Jesus as the Messiah and come into the family of God through Christ, [Eph 2:14-18](#). So the original purpose of the Jew is complete. Their call to service has been finished in Christ, but that doesn't mean God doesn't have a need for the Jews any longer, [rom 11:1](#). Israel is the covenant nation of God, and there are still many promises to the nation of Israel that must take place. So God is not finished with the Jews, only their call to service to usher in Jesus is completed. And this certainly does not mean that the Church has taken the place of the Jews. This is a false doctrine called "replacement theology." The teaching that says all the promises to Israel are now promised to the Church instead because the Jews rejected Jesus. This is absolutely false! God knew the nation of Israel as a whole would reject His Son. That wasn't a surprise to God. In fact, God used their rejection to bring Life to the entire world, but God still has huge plans for the nation of Israel. The Prophets are full of end times prophecies and promises to the Jews, so understanding God's plan of Israel will also help us in understanding God's plan of redemption as a whole. And Acts chapter 10 is a pivotal point in this plan of redemption. So this is where we can start overlaying the revelation given to Paul with the vision given to Peter.

The first place to start is [Ephesians 3:1-7](#). This new covenant revelation was a mystery hidden before the foundation of the world. That Gentiles would be fellow heirs of the promise of Eternal Life in Christ Jesus in one body, [Eph 2:11-18](#). Again, this is not replacement theology, it is a oneness where we both are growing up together in Christ as one body in Him. One thing we must understand is that Christianity grew out from Jewish roots. Paul continues in [Eph 2:19-20](#). The house of God is built on the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief Cornerstone. Our foundation is Jewish, the Apostles and Prophets were Jews who were commissioned by God to lay the foundation of Christianity, [Acts 26:22-23](#). The Law and the Prophets laid the foundation for Christ to be the fulfillment and bring Salvation to the world. Our Christian origin is Jewish, in fact Jesus is a Jew and He is coming back as a Jew and when He does, He is going to plant His feet on the Mount of Olives, [Zech 14:4](#), and He is going to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords from Jerusalem, [Zech 12:10](#); [14:8-9](#), from the throne of David, [Luke 1:32](#). And that is just the beginning of what God has promised for Israel, so it is very clear that the Jewish nation has a huge role to play in the future of the Kingdom of God. So, the intention of God is not to replace the Jews, but rather because of Jesus, we all grow up together in Him, Jew and Gentile alike into one body in Christ Jesus.

But something else we must add, this does not mean that Gentiles need to become Jews to be saved either, [Acts 15:1-11](#), [24-29](#). This is the whole point of what Acts 10 reveals. That we are saved by grace through faith apart from the works of the Law, [Eph 2:8-9](#). Gentiles don't need to become proselytes to be saved. We don't need to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses to be a Christian. Christianity is strictly by grace through faith apart from the works of the Law, putting your entire trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior: Jew and Gentile alike. This was the major discussion at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

In Romans 11, Paul gives the analogy of Jesus as an Olive Tree and we as Christians are attached to Him, as branches. Therefore, believing Jews are attached to the rich sap of the Olive Tree as natural branches, and we as Gentiles are grafted in as wild branches, adopted into His family by faith in Jesus.

So whether you're a natural branch or a wild branch, all branches are connected to Him through faith. This is explained so well in [Romans 11:11-15](#), [17](#). Christianity is both Jew and Gentile growing up

together into one new man by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Remember how Paul described this barrier being broken down in Ephesians 2:15, *“having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances...”* This goes back to the vision that God gave Peter. The dietary ordinances were the first to come down because these restrictions were set in place to separate the Jews from the rest of the nations. But even more, this vision signifies a greater barrier... the barrier of the bondage of Legalism and the traditions of men. And this barrier was torn down by Jesus on the cross.

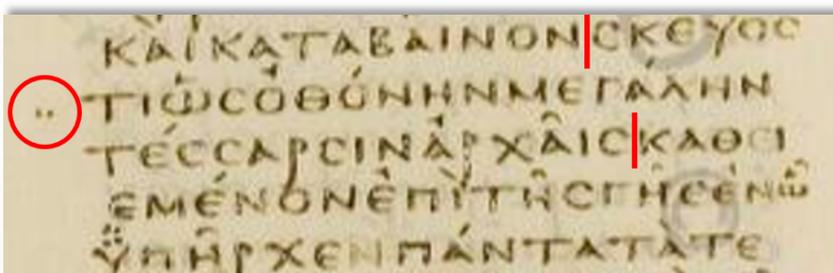
Remember in the vision to Peter, the great sheet was “bound.” I believe there is a great revelation to know here. This word “bound,” δεδεμένον, is always used in the sense of being bound in chains and imprisoned. God is showing Peter that this great vessel is somehow bound as it is coming down from heaven. I believe this is symbolizing the bondage of Legalism and the traditions of men. The traditions of men had to be broken down in order for the body of Christ to flourish and the Word of God to spread to the whole world, **Romans 11:9**. Their table is their self-Righteous traditions. Their place of safety was their confidence is their own traditions and it became a snare to them. They were bound in the trap, and they stumbled over Jesus. Jesus had some harsh words concerning this in **Mark 7:2-9, 13**. These traditions of men are so ensnaring that they make the Word of God of no effect. I believe God was showing Peter in this vision that His vessel was bound by these traditions, and they had to be broken down.

Notice what Peter says in verse 28. God is removing this barrier of tradition...

28) “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.”

This word unlawful is ἀθέμιτος means prohibited or forbidden. It was not forbidden by God’s Righteous Law, but rather prohibited by the traditions of men. There was no Mosaic Law that restricted keeping company with Gentiles. There were laws against intermarrying Gentiles and warnings to not be seduced into their false religions, Deut 7:3-4; Ex 34:15-16; 1 Kings 11:2; Num 25:1-3; Ezra 9:1-14; 10:10-11, but keeping company with and eating with Gentiles was a tradition established by men. These oral traditions were known as the Talmud, the oral tradition of the Law. These were Rabbinical teachings of the Law established to be a fence to safeguard the Law so they wouldn’t accidentally break the Law of Moses. But then these oral traditions of men became just as important in Judaism as God’s actual commandments. But God is tearing all that down because in Acts chapter 10 Cornelius is being saved, not by the works of the Law, but by grace through faith. And this is displayed perfectly in Paul’s epistles, Romans 8:2; 10:4; 3:28; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9.

This was the revelation of the New Covenant that God gave Paul, and it aligns perfectly with the revelation that God gave Peter. That we are no longer in bondage to the works of the Law but are saved by grace through faith. Nine years later we see Peter still refer back to this event with Cornelius at the Jerusalem Council meeting. And in that meeting, Peter makes a shocking statement to the Jews in **Acts 15:11**, saying we Jews, can be saved just as the Gentiles are: by grace through faith apart from the works of the Law.



Codex Vaticanus- Acts 10:11
deleting δεδεμένον **“having been bound”**

Something else I want to mention about this “bound vessel” is that this word δεδεμένον, “having been bound” was removed by the Gnostics and doesn’t even exist in most modern translations, and yet I think this is a major part of the vision for Peter. Any time I see these places where the enemy has removed these portions of Scripture,

it makes me dig deeper in those places because I want to see why the enemy wants to hide this from us. And again, it just so happens that in the Codex Vaticanus, the manuscript that pro-Alexandrian scholars say is the best example of the NT. Within this manuscript we see these same scribal indicators next to Acts 10:11 as well, proving that the word δεδεμένον, “having been bound” was in the original text.

Legalism and the traditions of self-Righteousness will bind us and stifle the work of the Spirit, making the Word of God of no effect. The only remedy to this bondage is the Truth. Jesus said, “*The Truth will set you free... whom the Son sets free, is free indeed...*” John 8:31-36.

In Acts chapter 10, Cornelius and his household is being set free from the bondage of sin and death, but Peter is being set free as well. He is being set free from the bondage of tradition and the works of the Law, set free from the bondage of race, and free from the bondage of partiality. There is an immense bondage to being under the Law, Galatians 3:1-4; 4:9-11; 5:1-6, and Peter is finally being made free from all of that. So next week we will continue in chapter 10 and see how this plays out.