

Approaching God

Read this portion of Psalm 19 and make this your opening prayer

The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight for living. They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb. They are a warning to your servant, a great reward for those who obey them. How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

(Psalm 19:9-14)

Acts 10:1-23

Passage Introduction:

As the last chapter showed, a great shift is taking place in the book of Acts. The gospel is moving toward the Gentiles. Some argue that this shift represents a turn from the Jews. Styling the narrative in this way, however, is inadequate. The shift is not a turn from the Jews but a turn to include the Gentiles. This turn begins with Peter's vision and the conversion of a Roman soldier.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

Who was Cornelius?

As Rome took over conquered peoples, it also took over their armies and soldiers. But some soldiers were true Italians and had been officers from the beginning. Those officers were in the inner circle. Given his distinctly Roman name, this was the case with Cornelius. He was at the very heart of the Roman military establishment, and a man who occupied a high station in life. Centurians were military officers overseeing 100 men

Acts 10:1-23 - **1** At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. **2** He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. **3** 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!" **4** 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. **5** Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. **6** He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea." **7** 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. **8** He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

9 About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. **10** He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal

Note on vs 13-15

Besides pork, there was a whole range of meat which Jews were forbidden to eat (Lev. 11). These food laws served to mark out the Jewish people from their non-Jewish neighbors, a rule reinforced by the prohibition on Jews eating with non-Jews. All of this we must keep in mind as we join Peter on the roof and watch this great sail descending from heaven with unclean food in it.

was being prepared, he fell into a trance. **11** He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. **12** It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. **13** Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." **14** "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." **15** The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." **16** This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

17 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. **18** They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. **19** While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. **20** So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." **21** Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?" **22** 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 ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." **23** So he invited them in to be his guests.

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- How would summarize the message of Cornelius' vision?
- If you were Peter what kind of emotions would you be experiencing during the vision?
- Since food restrictions are no longer one of the boundary markers between God's people and everyone else, what (if any) are the boundary markers today, do you think?

Key Takeaway:

Choose the verse or truth that is most striking and/or helpful to you today. Paraphrase the thought or verse in your own words.

Close in Prayer:

Take a minute to pray through Isaiah 52:7-10