

Joseph Carty / General

Acts / Cornelius; Conversion; Prayer; Circumcision; Unclean Meats / Acts 10–11

Peter had spent his life with the knowledge that uncircumcised gentiles were unclean and he was not allowed to enter their homes or eat with them. Now after decades of living this way God was trying to teach Peter and the Jew needed to change their approach to gentiles.

On December 11, 1998, NASA launched the Mars Climate Orbiter. It was a highly advanced piece of technology that cost \$327 million. The data it gathered would open new doors for planetary science. But instead, the orbiter exploded. It launched successfully, but as soon as it arrived in Martian orbit, radio contact was lost—permanently

NASA scientists eventually realized what had gone wrong. The Orbiter had been a sophisticated piece of technology, programmed with software in triplicate to avoid any chances of miscalculation or error. All of its components coordinated perfectly, except one. NASA had purchased a certain piece of software from a US aerospace company. This would not have been a problem except that NASA used the metric system for all its instruments and software, but this firm's technology did not.

Measures of acceleration that NASA's instruments were reading as newtons (metric) had been provided instead as pound force-seconds. The ensuing miscalculation forced the Orbiter to fly much closer to Mars than it should have. This miracle of space engineering ended up meeting its untimely demise in the planet's upper atmosphere. The great loss was caused by a very human error: a wrong assumption. The scientists at NASA designed the Orbiter to be based on the metric system and they assumed that all subcomponents would be as well.

- In the NT

- Christians made fatal error.
- And assumption...
 - God has done things this way...
 - Must continue to do so...
 - But God changed.
 - They weren't ready.

Visions

Acts 10:1-3 ESV

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius."

- Righteous gentile
 - Jewish by religion
 - loves God
 - is praying
- Angel talks to him

- He is terrified...
- It's funny.
 - we pray to God
 - pray for angels
- Then suddenly angel comes
 - talks to him.
 - he is scared.
- We would all do the same.

Acts 10:4-6 ESV

And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea."

- Angel says,
 - God has heard your prayers.
 - Call for Peter...

- What happens in this story
 - is completely God directed.
- Because
 - Good Jews
 - Good Gentiles
 - know the rules.
- Jews don't go to Gentiles homes!
- If God had not told him
 - to do this,
 - he wouldn't have!
- He obeys
 - sends 2 servants.

Acts 10:9–10 ESV

The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. And he became hungry

and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance

- Peter is a Good Jew,
 - God knows
 - Peter wouldn't go
 - in his house
 - unless directed by God.

God Changes Plans

- God had directed them

Acts 1:8 *ESV*

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- They should have known
 - God was going to
 - make some changes.

- Like humans are,
 - slow to accept changes of God.
 -

Being Stuck

Timothy Cipriani's one of the dumbest criminals had a simple idea. He would lower himself into the pizza restaurant from the ventilation duct, rob the cash register, and climb back out. The plan backfired. Either he had been eating too much pizza, or the ventilation duct was too narrow, because he got stuck. He dangled over a deep fryer, his legs hanging out of the ceiling, screaming for help. It took the police thirty minutes to free him. It's terrible to be stuck.

- God had to prepare
 - Peter to accept truth.
- Servant on the way
 - Peter goes into vision.
- What does he see?

More Visions

[Acts 10:11-16](#) (ESV)

and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him:

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“Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has made clean, do not call common.” This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

- Peter is a bit confused.
 - God is trying
 - to change something
 - Peter resistant to it.
- Something what was
 - considered unclean
 - now clean...
 - Peter struggles...
- What does this all mean???

[Acts 10:17-20](#) (ESV)

Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate and called out

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to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them."

- So God draws a connection
 - between the vision
 - and the men outside.
- He tells Peter to go with them.
- Peter believes
 - Gentiles are unclean
 - Can't go to their homes
 - Gospel is not for them.

- He would not witness
 - to gentiles because
 - they aren't part of kingdom.

- But they asked for
 - Peter to come teach.
 - He would have said no.
 - But God says go.
 - So he does.

Walking in the Light of God

Acts 10:21-24 **ESV**

And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." So he invited them in to be his guests.

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

- Notice he lets them
 - stay in their house first.
 - then goes to theirs.
- Cornelius knows that
 - God has sent Peter
 - to teach their family.
- So he invites his whole family!

Acts 10:25–27 ESV

When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.” And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered.

- Cornelius is overcome with
 - awe about man God sent.
 - Bows down.
- Peter is flabbergasted

- stand up!
- God in to house
 - sees all the people gathered.
- What is Peter's response?
 - will he teach them?
 - they are gentiles!

Acts 10:28-29 ESV

And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

- What was his conclusion
 - about the meaning
 - of the vision???
- Not teaching eat unclean food.
 - Gentiles are no longer

- “unclean” for Jews.
- They could fellowship
 - they could be taught!
 - They could be Christians!!!
- Cornelius explains vision
 - that he had to Peter...
- Peters understanding?

Acts 10:34–35 ESV

So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

- There is no longer
 - separation between
 - Jews and Gentiles!!!

- He teaches him all
 - about Jesus
 - Messiah
 - and the Gospel.
- Long sermon
 - Peter preaching
 - Holy Spirit working
 - people accepting
 - converted!

The Spirit

[Acts 10:44–48](#) (ESV)

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.

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For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have

received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

- The gentiles receive
 - outpouring of Spirit.
- Just like disciples
 - during Pentecost.
- So surprised that,
 - God would save
 - uncircumcised.
- Concludes
 - God wants them baptized.
 - they get baptized.
- Now,
 - it would be nice
 - that was end of story

- everyone happy
 - “happily ever after...”
- Unfortunately,
 - many people unhappy.

Angry Christians

Acts 11:1-3 ESV

Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

- Retells story from chapter 10:
 - In Joppa
 - praying
 - vision
 - people knock at door
 - God says go
 - Peter and others go

- Cornelius' vision
 - enter house
 - teaching
 - outpouring of Spirit
 - baptism
- Finishes with:

Acts 11:16 ESV

And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

- People listen
 - they are convicted truth.

Acts 11:18 ESV

When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

- They accepted
 - God's change of plans!

Lifting the Rock

One day a father decided to take his son to play at the local park. The boy quickly gravitated to the sandbox and found himself mesmerized by the colors and textures surrounding him. After a short time, he began digging around to see what treasures might reveal themselves to him.

As his hands plunged under the sand he discovered something rather large, and having pushed enough of the sand away, realized it was a large rock. Instantly he knew he needed to move that rock, no matter how big it was. This rock was the obstacle to his dreams of a sandbox clear of all extraneous matter.

So the boy tried as hard as he could to move the rock. He pushed and pushed and pushed, and finally he was able to get it to the edge of the sandbox. But the next step would be the hardest. How could he get it over the edge? Again the boy pushed and pushed until his energy was completely fried. The rock's stuckness matched the boy's feelings of the situation. Eventually he started to sob.

The boy's father watched all this, and just when the meltdown began, the father went over to his son and began to comfort his overtaxed, dejected son.

"Why didn't you use all the strength available to you to move the rock?" the father asked.

The boy was confused, "I did daddy, it's just too heavy."

"No son," you didn't. You didn't ask me to help." And at that, the father lifted the rock with a single hand and tossed it out of the sandbox.

- It would be nice
 - "happily ever after."

- Other Jewish Christians
 - not there that day.
 - not happy!!
- Huge debate
- Huge argument
- Paul takes sides
- Peter backslides...
- Save that for another day.
- What can we learn?

Lessons

1. Don't be too sure you know it all.

- If we
 - “have it all figured out”

- leaves little room
 - for Spirit to lead
 - different ways.

- Adventists Have
 - Beautiful Truth
 - DON'T THINK
 - ALL TRUTH!

2. Be willing to let Spirit Lead.

- If in agreement with Bible
 - God may lead
 - unique and unexpected ways.

- Can't become too rigid,
 - to the point,
 - not letting Spirit lead.

3. Once God has made His plan clear, follow it passionately.

- As we will see,
 - Peter was later
 - lead astray to follow
 - “circumcision party”
- Stopped fellowshiping with Gentiles.
- Stopped going to their homes.
- Stopped teaching them.
- Stopped evangelizing them.
- How?
 - God had made it clear!
 - Sent vision
 - Sent another vision
 - God spoke to him.
 - supernatural miracle

- speaking in tongues
- baptism...
 - Forgets all of that??????
- It's too easy to
 - follow the crowd.
- Follow God.
- Not Christians.

The next time Robert McKenna III celebrates a recent victorious court case in front of coworkers, he'd be wise to prevent anyone from filming his exultation. That's because McKenna was part of a defense team that successfully fended off a wrongful death suit for a local gastroenterologist.

He was recorded on video at a company function describing the situation as "a guy who was probably negligently killed, but we kind of made it look like other people did it. ... We actually had a death certificate that said he died the very way the plaintiff said he died, and we had to say, 'No, you really shouldn't believe what that death certificate says, or the coroner.'"

As a result, the judge who presided over the case vacated the verdict, ordering all parties involved to return to court. At a hearing for the new trial Superior Court Judge James Crandall said, "I think I have to protect the system and say plaintiffs deserve a new trial."

When asked for his reasoning, the judge elaborated. "When he says on video a

‘guy was probably negligently killed,’ probably is more likely than not. Then he goes on to say, ‘But we kind of made it look like other people did it.’ That seems like an admission of negligence. Seems like an admission the plaintiff should have prevailed.”

The judge went on to call McKenna “an excellent lawyer,” with a reputation for “honesty and integrity. ... But good men make mistakes.”

We shouldn't get so caught up in boasting of our own accomplishments that we lose sight of our own fallibility and the truth.

4. God does change plans.

- Able
- Seth
- Noah
- Shem
- Abraham
- Covenant with Israel
- Covenant ended
- Circumcision

- Jonah - Ninevites
- God promised covenant “FOREVER”
- Why does God change plans?
 - because we ruin them.
 - He must adapt.

Appeal

- Allow God to Lead Your Life.
- Proceed In the Light Given You.