Called To Be Inclusive
Acts 10:19-33
SS Lesson for 08/27/2017

Devotional Scripture: Ps 15:1-5

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Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary
Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

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The teaches that God used people to confirm His supernatural call in His Calling to Be Inclusive. The study’s aim is to understand that we can always respond to God’s call with confidence. The study's application is to be reminded of our duty to witness as we see individuals daily.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

**Key Verse:** Acts 10:28

*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.*

**Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary**

10:17-22. In marvelous timing and by the coordination of the sovereign God the three messengers and Peter met. The Holy Spirit, who told Peter about the arrival of the three men, may have been the One whose unidentified voice Peter heard earlier (vv. 13, 15). The men... from Cornelius spoke highly of him (cf. vv. 2, 4) and conveyed to Peter their purpose in coming.

10:23a. Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. Since Peter had been waiting for his noon meal (cf. v. 10), he undoubtedly now shared it with his visitors. Perhaps he was already beginning to discern the lesson of his vision!

10:23b. By the time Peter and his guests finished lunch it must have been too late to start back to Caesarea that day. The next day they began the almost-two-day trip. (Cornelius’ emissaries had left Caesarea after 3 P.M. one day [vv. 3, 8] and arrived at noon two days later [vv. 9, 19]. Cf. “four days ago” in v. 30.) Peter took with him some of the brothers from Joppa. The two-by-two motif is common in the Gospels and Acts; Christian workers often went out by twos. In this debatable situation at least six people accompanied Peter (11:12). So there would be seven witnesses to attest to what would transpire.

10:24. Cornelius was so confident that Peter would come and he was so expectant of Peter’s message that he called together his relatives and close friends.

10:25-26. When Peter arrived, Cornelius prostrated himself before the apostle in worship. The verb prosekynēsen means “he worshiped” and is here translated in reverence. Peter, refusing this kind of obeisance, urged Cornelius to stand up, for, he said, I am only a man myself.

10:27-29. Peter was well aware of the consequences of his fellowshipping with Gentiles in their homes (cf. 11:2-3), but he had learned the lesson of the vision well. The command to eat unclean animals meant he was not to call any man impure or unclean. So he came without protest.

10:30-33. After Cornelius recounted the circumstances that brought Peter to his house he said, Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us. What a divinely prepared audience!

10:34-35. These words of Peter were revolutionary. They swept away the prejudice and indoctrination of generations of Judaism. However, Gentile salvation certainly was a doctrine known in the Old Testament (cf. Jonah; Gen. 12:3). In the Old Testament the Jews were God’s Chosen People, the special recipients of His promises and revelation. Here Peter stated that God’s program was reaching out to the world through the church. There is considerable debate about Peter’s words that God accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right. This does not teach salvation by works because a person’s first responsibility before God is to fear Him, which is tantamount to trusting Him and reverencing Him. It is the New Testament parallel to Micah 6:8. Furthermore, God’s acceptance of such people refers to His welcoming them to a right relationship by faith in Christ (cf. Acts 11:14).

10:36-37. Peter then outlined the career of Christ (vv. 36-43), the sovereign Lord of all, through whom God sent... the good news of peace. Bible students have often observed how this parallels the Gospel of Mark almost perfectly. Mark began with John’s baptism and traced the ministry of the Lord Jesus from Galilee to Judea to Jerusalem and finally to the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and the Great Commission.

10:38. The word Messiah means “Anointed One”; so when Peter said, God anointed Jesus of Nazareth he was saying, “God declared Him the Messiah” (cf. Isa. 61:1-3; Luke 4:16-21; Acts 4:27). This declaration
called matters of the faith (with “the faith” referring to the body of doctrine to be believed; compare Titus 1:13). Peter had told Jews in Jerusalem, “You killed the Author of life” (3:15); to the rulers he said, “You crucified” Him (4:10); and to the Sanhedrin he replied, “You killed” Him “by hanging Him on a tree” (5:30). And Stephen too told the Sanhedrin, “You... have murdered Him” (7:52). On five occasions in Acts, the apostles said they were witnesses of the resurrected Christ (2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:41; 13:30-31). After Christ’s resurrection the disciples ate and drank with Him (cf. John 21:13). This was proof that the resurrected Lord Jesus was no bodiless phantom and it explains how Christ was seen (Acts 10:40).

10:42-43. Peter made it clear that Christ’s ministry results either in judgment (v. 42) or salvation (v. 43). The key phrase is, Everyone who believes in Him. This Greek construction consists of a present participle with an article, which is almost the equivalent of a noun (in this case “every believer in Him”). The key element in salvation is faith, belief in Christ. This message of forgiveness of sins (cf. 2:38; 5:31; 13:38; 26:18) through faith in the Messiah was spoken of by the prophets (e.g., Isa. 53:11; Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 36:25-26).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

We find in the meeting between the Apostle Peter and the Roman centurion Cornelius the guiding hand of God from beginning to end. Cornelius was a God-fearer, a Gentile who believed in the God of Israel but did not practice all the Jewish customs (Acts 10:2). God saw fit to speak to Cornelius, telling him to seek out Peter. At the same time, the Lord gave Peter a vision and told him of messengers who had been sent to him by Cornelius (Acts 10:7-20). When Peter arrived at the home of Cornelius in Caesarea, the centurion fell at Peter's feet. He saw Peter’s presence as the answer to his prayer, and he was no doubt in awe that the Lord’s disciple had come to him, a Gentile. Peter's response was to tell Cornelius to stand up because he himself was a mere man (Acts 10:26). Peter then came before the whole household of Cornelius and explained that his presence there was no coincidence. He declared that they all knew of the Jewish prohibition against keeping company with non-Jews, and yet here he was, a Jew in this Gentile home. Both Peter and Cornelius, as well as the others present, grasped the significance of this meeting. It went against Jewish teaching that made clear distinctions between clean and unclean; and Gentiles, especially because they did not observe Jewish dietary regulations, were clearly considered unclean. Peter explained, “God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.” Peter was initially perplexed by the vision of the animals in the sheet lowered from heaven and accompanied by the command to kill and eat these unclean animals. Now the meaning of that vision had become very clear. “The lesson had sunk in. Peter had a freedom he had never known before (cf. 15:7-9). He succumbed on a later occasion to the pressure of Jewish-Christian strictness (Gal. 2:11-12), but in principle he recognized that the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile had been broken down in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:14)” (Harrison, Interpreting Acts: The Expanding Church, Zondervan). No longer was there to be a distinction made between Jews and Gentiles. The response of faith and the conversion of Cornelius and his household confirmed God's plan for the gospel to go to all nations without distinction. Peter's actions were not popular with everyone. Many Jewish believers thought Gentiles must follow Jewish practices before they could follow Christ. This reminds us that our efforts to obey the Lord will not always be appreciated—even by fellow believers. We should not seek to offend anyone, but we should never let such reactions deter us from obeying God and His Word. It is also worth noting that God answered Cornelius's prayer by sending Peter to him. God could have saved Cornelius immediately, but the normal and stated plan of God is to use His people to reach others with the gospel. We need not wait for any special call. He has already called us to take the gospel to the world.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

What are the non-negotiables of your congregation, spoken or unspoken? A set order of service? A particular style of worship music? A certain Bible translation? A specific time for services? The mode of baptism? Home small groups? Type of clothing? Leadership qualifications? Non-negotiables that involve Bible doctrines we can call matters of the faith (with “the faith” referring to the body of doctrine to be believed; compare Titus
1:13; Jude 3). The things some may consider to be nonnegotiable but which have no basis in Scripture can be called matters of expediency. Typically, these are changeable methods of making ministry happen. The matters-of-the-faith list is, of course, the more important. As we ponder our lists, we should ask this question: When is "standing firm" valid and when it is merely lifeless legalism? Being steadfast in following God's will is one thing; stubbornly insisting on our own will, which we think to be God's will too, is another. Let's look at how Peter dealt with this dilemma.

Following the account of Saul's conversion, the focus of the book of Acts shifts back to Peter. Persecution had subsided, and Peter enjoyed freedom of movement (Acts 9:31, 32). He healed a bedridden man in Lydda, which resulted in mass conversion to Christianity (9:33-35). Called hurriedly to nearby Joppa, Peter encountered the grief of those whose friend Tabitha had died. Mass conversion resulted yet again, as God brought the dead woman back to life through Peter's ministry (9:36-42). A welcome reception resulted in his staying "for some time with a tanner named Simon" (9:43). The fact that Peter would stay there for any length of time is interesting given that tanners were regularly "unclean" because of contact with animal carcasses (Leviticus 11:26-28). Joppa is a coastal city of central Palestine, situated on a bluff overlooking a small natural harbor. It is about 35 miles northwest of Jerusalem. A well-traveled thoroughfare connected the two cities, for Joppa effectively had served as the Mediterranean port city for Jerusalem since the time of Solomon (see 2 Chronicles 2:16). About 30 miles north of Joppa was the newer city of Caesarea Maritima (Caesarea by the sea), rebuilt by Herod the Great and named for his patron and friend Caesar Augustus. Herod created Caesarea according to the pattern of grand Roman cities, with broad streets, landmark temples, an aqueduct water supply, and a spacious theater. These features made Caesarea Maritima (not to be confused with Caesarea Philippi [Mark 8:27]) the preferred residence for Roman officials stationed in Palestine. When compared with hot, dusty, and trouble-prone Jerusalem, we can see why! Centurions, one of whom Peter encountered in Caesarea, were professional, career soldiers. A centurion commanded a unit known as a century, which consisted of 100 soldiers and support personnel. There were six centuries in a band (or cohort), and 10 bands in a Roman battle legion. The centurion Peter encountered in today's lesson is said to have been part of "the Italian Regiment" (Acts 10:1). The designation Italian indicates that the unit's constituents were men primarily from Rome and its surrounding regions. The men were not provincial auxiliaries from allies or conquered territories. This was an elite group, as Roman as Roman could be. The word regiment may indicate that the troop strength in Caesarea was at least 600 soldiers.

Major Theme Analysis
(SCRIPTURAL TEXT FROM THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION; CROSS-REFERENCES FROM THE NIV)

Inclusive by Clarification of Mission (Acts 10:19-23)

19 While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you.
20 Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.
21 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?"
22 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."
23 Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him

Clarification through the Holy Spirit (19-20)

Holy Spirit clarifies by guiding into all truth (John 16:13)
13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

Holy Spirit clarifies by directing where to go (Acts 8:29)
29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."
Holy Spirit clarifies by direction who to use (Acts 13:2)

2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Holy Spirit clarifies by preventing desires not of God (Acts 16:6-7)

6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.

Holy Spirit clarifies by using others to persuade us (Acts 21:4)

4 Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

Clarification through listening (21-22)

Listen because God's wonders provide knowledge (Prov 18:15)

15 The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.

Listen because God's blesses those who listen (Matt 13:16)

16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.

Listen because God's words are true (Prov 8:4-9)

4 "To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. 5 You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding. 6 Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. 7 My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. 8 All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse. 9 To the discerning all of them are right; they are faultless to those who have knowledge.

Listen because understanding of God's wonders have been given to us (Matt 13:11-12)

11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

Listen because secrets have been revealed (Rom 16:25-26)

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—

Clarification through obedience (23)

Obedience to show faith (Gen 22:9-12)

9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."
**Obedience to witness (Acts 8:26-31)**

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road — the desert road — that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship. 28 And on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." 30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. 31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

**Obedience to follow Jesus (Matt 9:9)**

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

**Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)**

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

**Obedience that shows that we love God (2 John 6)**

6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

**Inclusive by Meeting Face to Face (Acts 10:24-27)**

24 And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.
25 As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.
26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man."
27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together.

**Gathering family and friends (24)**

**Gathering to involve all in the sphere of influence (Deut 16:11)**

11 And rejoice before the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name — you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, the Levites in your towns, and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows living among you.

**Gathering to get teaching (Mic 4:2)**

2 Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

**Gathering to seek God (Zech 8:21)**

21 and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the Lord and seek the Lord Almighty. I myself am going."

**Gathering to tell others about God and His blessings (Mark 5:18-20)**

18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."
Realizing all are equal (25-26)

*Equal but some can give interpretations for understanding (Dan 2:30)*

30 As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.

*Equal but some can bring good news (Acts 14:11-15)*

11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 15 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.

*Equal fellow servants (Rev 19:10)*

10 At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Be in unity of purpose (27)

*Unity of the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:3-6)*

3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

*Unity through the Church (Eph 4:11-13)*

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

*Unity through love (Col 3:14)*

14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

*Unity in Christ (Phil 2:1-4)*

2 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

**Inclusive by Applying God's Truths (Acts 10:28-29)**

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. 29 Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

**Accept God's truths (28)**

*Accept God's truths and His works (Ps 77:12)*

12 I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.
Accept God's truths and His ways (Ps 143:5)
5 I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.

Accept God's truths in worship (Ps 48:9)
9 Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.

Accept God's truths by thinking on them (Phil 4:8)
8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.

Obey God's truths (29)

Obey God's truths because God hates lying and dishonesty (Zech 8:16-17)
16 These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; 17 do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this," declares the Lord.

Obey God's truths because it's the only way to be in fellowship with God (Ps 15:1-2)
15 Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? 2 He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart

Obey God's truths because we are members of one body in Christ (Eph 4:25)
25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Obey God's truths because in truth there is freedom (John 8:32)
32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Obey God's truths because it brings peace with God (Phil 4:7-9)
7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Inclusive by Prayer and Guidance (Acts 10:30-33)
30 So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.' 33 So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

Consistently pray (30-31)

Pray about everything (Phil 4:6-7)
6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17)
17 pray continually;
Pray while suffering (James 5:13)

13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

Pray for others (Rom 12:9-13)

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Pray in the Spirit (Eph 6:17-18)

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Listen and follow God’s guidance (32-33)

Guidance into obedience through imitation (Eph 5:1-2)

5 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Guidance into obedience through suffering (1 Peter 2:21)

21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

Guidance into truth (John 16:13-15)

13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

Guidance by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:18)

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Guidance into insight (Ps 119:99-100)

99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Cornelius’ Messengers Arrive From Caesarea Acts 10:17-23

You can imagine Peter’s bewilderment as a result of his noontime vision. What did it mean? What was he supposed to do about it? Just then the messengers from Cornelius arrived at the door of Simon the tanner’s home. These men had been told to go to Joppa and find a man named Simon Peter, who was staying at the home of a tanner named Simon, whose house was by the sea. This was not the same as being given an address, which meant that the messengers had to stop and ask for directions (something men are not found doing very often). I believe this detail is supplied because it indicates that these Gentile messengers did not arrive secretly. They must have asked directions on more than one occasion, drawing attention to themselves and to their arrival. Add to this the fact that they stood outside Simon’s house, calling out to ask if this was where Simon Peter was staying. This had to attract a good deal of attention and arouse considerable curiosity.

It was at this moment that the Spirit gave Peter some very clear instruction. He informed Peter that three men were looking for him and told him to go downstairs and accompany them without hesitation, because He had sent them. So far as we are told, the Spirit did not mention that these three men were Gentiles, though this would become apparent all too soon. Peter went downstairs and identified himself and then asked the reason for
their coming. They told Peter about Cornelius and then repeated the story of how the angel had instructed Cornelius to send for him because he had a message for them.

Peter invited these men into the house where they spent the night (and no doubt were also fed). I cannot help but think that it was a whole lot easier for Peter to invite these men into Simon’s home in Joppa than it would have been to invite these Gentiles into a Jewish home in Jerusalem. The fact that Peter was able to stay with a tanner, an occupation that may well have rendered him unclean, may have indicated that Peter had already become less meticulous about some of the Jewish distinctions between clean and unclean.

**Peter Gets the Message Acts 10:24-35**

When the centurion pled with Jesus to heal his servant (Luke 7:1-10), Jesus set out on his way to this man’s home. When Jesus was not far from his house, the centurion sent some of his servants to persuade Jesus not to come any further, but simply to heal his servant from a distance. Now why would anyone not want Jesus to be a guest in their home? The centurion knew all too well that Jews did not defile themselves by entering a Gentile home (compare John 18:28), so he made it easy for Jesus not to come any further. And in so doing, he demonstrated his great faith. He believed that Jesus could heal from a distance, because of His great authority.

Cornelius was well aware of this matter of defilement as well, but he had been divinely instructed to invite Peter to his home. It was thus with a great sense of expectation that Cornelius waited for Peter’s arrival, along with those friends and relatives he had summoned as well. When Peter arrived, Cornelius prostrated himself at the feet of Peter. Most translations indicate that Cornelius “worshipped” Peter. I am inclined to agree with the NIV, which says that he “fell at his feet in reverence.” I don’t believe that Cornelius worshipped Peter as though he were God. I think he showed reverence for Peter as God’s spokesman, as an apostle.

I do find Peter’s response to this reverential response most informative. Peter refuses to receive worship, and rightly so. When Paul healed the lame man at Lystra, the people attempted to worship him, along with Barnabas. These two apostles fervently sought to put an end to such worship (see Acts 14:8-18). Herod received worship and seemed to enjoy it, and he died a terrible death as a result (Acts 12:20-23). Peter made it clear to Cornelius that he was but a mere man, and as such, Cornelius’ act of reverence was not only uncalled for, but inappropriate. Those who would give men too much glory and reverence should listen carefully to the words of Peter.

Going inside the house, Peter discovered that many had gathered in anticipation of his arrival. Peter began by explaining how it was that he was divinely directed to enter this Gentile home, in spite of his predisposition not to do so. Peter’s words are both interesting and significant:

> 28 He said to them, “You know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile, yet God has shown me that I should call no person defiled or ritually unclean. 29 Therefore when you sent for me, I came without any objection. Now may I ask why you sent for me?” (Acts 10:28-29)

I find it interesting that Peter believes it is unlawful for him to associate with or visit a Gentile (verse 28). As I read these words, I asked myself this question: “Just where does it say in the Old Testament Law that a Jew cannot associate with a Gentile by entering his home?” I then came upon this statement by A. T. Robertson: But there is no O.T. regulation forbidding such social contact with Gentiles, though the rabbis had added it and had made it binding by custom. There is nothing more binding on the average person than social custom.

I am therefore inclined to say that having social contact with a Gentile was not contrary to Old Testament law, but rather was a violation of Jewish tradition. One might be defiled by eating foods that were unclean, but we must remember that our Lord Jesus nullified these food laws:

> 14 Then he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand. 15 There is nothing outside of a person that can defile him by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles him.” 17 Now when Jesus had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 He said to them, “Are you so foolish? Don’t you understand that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him? 19 For it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and then goes out into the sewer.” (This means all foods are clean.) 20 He said, “What comes out of a person defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the human heart, come evil ideas, sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, evil, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, and folly. 23 All these evils come from within and defile a person” (Mark 7:14-23, emphasis mine).

Another thing that fascinates me is that Peter is now somehow able to grasp not only the principle, but also its application. I am reminded of the “old Peter” we find in Matthew. In chapter 14, Jesus feeds the 5,000, even
though the disciples didn’t see how it was possible. In chapter 15, the disciples (which surely included Peter) could not seem to figure out how God could feed the 4,000, even after the feeding of the 5,000. In chapter 16, Jesus warned of the “leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6), and all the disciples could think about was literal bread. Only the Canaanite woman understood that bread was a symbol, and she grasped the spiritual meaning of Jesus’ words (Matthew 15:21-28).

Now, Peter seems able to leap beyond the literal message conveyed in his dream (don’t call food unclean that God has made clean) to the deeper meaning – don’t call people unclean whom God has made clean:

He said to them, “You know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile, yet God has shown me that I should call no person defiled or ritually unclean” (Acts 10:28).

But it went even beyond this. Peter was just now beginning to understand that God does not show partiality among those whom He saves:

34 Then Peter started speaking: “I now truly understand that God does not show favoritism in dealing with people, 35 but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is welcomed before him (Acts 10:34-35).

God broke down the old barriers that separated Jews and Gentiles, making one new man, one new entity, the church, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. This was accomplished through the saving work of Jesus on the cross of Calvary (Ephesians 2:11-22).

This truth was a mystery, revealed but not understood by Old Testament saints; it was a mystery God chose to unveil through the ministry of Paul and others (Ephesians 3:1-12).

Peter now asks why Cornelius has sent for him. Cornelius repeats the story of how he received instructions from an angel to summon Peter. He tells Peter that they now eagerly await the word which he was commanded to bring to them. Peter begins his message by telling them what God has just taught him: God does not show partiality, but He saves both Jews and Gentiles by grace, through faith in the shed blood of Jesus on the cross of Calvary.

(Adapted from URL:https://bible.org/seriespage/perfecting-peter-acts-932-1048)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The spokesperson in an insurance company commercial offers an excellent deal to a customer. The grateful response is, “You’d do that just for me?” The spokesperson replies, “Just for you … and everyone else.” A turning point in history occurred when God revealed to Peter that Jesus was just for him … and everyone else. The Christian faith is intended to be universal. The church Jesus established is to stand apart from the ethnic or national ties that characterize so many other religions, whether in the first century or in the twenty-first. The church is not just for those who dress as we do or share our taste in worship music. The church has no second-class citizens. The church is not just for those of a “targeted demographic.” Jesus expects us to invite everyone from everywhere. See Matthew 28:19, 20.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. When we seek the Lord, He will put the right people in our paths (Acts 10:19-22)
2. We should show hospitality to those who seek the Lord (vs. 23)
3. We must never take God’s glory for ourselves (vss. 24-26)
4. We do not have the right to decide who is worthy of the gospel of Christ (vss. 27-28)
5. We should respond without hesitation when God calls us (vs. 29)
6. We must share the gospel whenever we have the opportunity (vss. 30-33)