

038 - Conversion of Cornelius - Part 2 - Acts 11:1-18
GRBC 2012-09-16

Call to Worship: 1 Chronicles 16:23-24
Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 16:19-21
Sermon: Conversion of Cornelius - Part 2 Acts 11:1-18
Benediction: Galatians 3:13-14

Have you heard what Peter has done!? He went down to Caesarea, and entered the house of a gentile! And it was a Roman centurion! What's more, there was a whole crowd of uncircumcised men in the house, and Peter ate with them! He did this for days and days, before finally coming back up here to Jerusalem. I can't believe how he has broken God's laws and broken the traditions of the elders!

This is what was heard in the church in Jerusalem in the days when Cornelius was converted to faith in Christ. Last week we, being gentiles, rejoiced together over the salvation of Cornelius and all his household, when Peter preached the good news of Jesus Christ to them. But when the Jews in Jerusalem heard about it, they did not, at first rejoice.

Read the text:

I. See the Church's Reaction to Hearing Something that They Hadn't Heard Before

A. Peter

1. He heard that he should eat freely of food that he had always considered unclean v. 7
2. His reaction was to say, "Not so, Lord!" v. 8
 - a. Peter---when will you learn not to argue with the Lord!?
 - b. Doesn't it occur to Peter that if you are addressing the Lord Jesus Himself, you should not be saying, "No"?
 - c. APPLICATION: Let it never be with us that when we hear a command of the Lord Jesus Christ, our answer is, "Not so, Lord."
3. What was happening there?
 - a. Peter's understanding was correct, it was indeed from the scriptures
 - i. God's people, Israel, were not to eat certain foods, considering them unclean or common
 - ii. This was all part of God's plan to have the Israelites constantly reminded of their holiness, their separation from the rest of the world unto Him, as His special people
 - b. But this was part of the Old Covenant, the old arrangement, and had passed away with the coming of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ
 - c. In this New Covenant, God's people are no longer to make any distinction between clean and unclean foods
 - d. Likewise, there is to be no distinction between Jew and Gentile; in Jesus Christ, God has broken down the wall separating them, and is making of the two one new man in Christ
4. APPLICATION: So, there is a danger for us, of learning something that belongs in the Old Covenant, then hearing an apparent contradiction in the New Covenant, and trying to hold onto the Old

B. Those of the circumcision in Jerusalem

1. They heard that Peter had gone into the house of gentiles and eaten with them

2. Their reaction was to contend with Peter, saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"
3. What was happening there?
 - a. the Jewish brothers' understanding was flawed; it was wrong
 - i. God's law commanded the Jews not to be corrupted by the gentiles' idolatry and other sins
 - ii. but it never said they could not enter a gentile house or eat with the gentiles
 - iii. these were man-made rules, religious and cultural traditions
 - b. so they were applying a strict rule to Peter that was only a man-made religious and cultural tradition
4. APPLICATION: So there is a danger here for us, that we take the actual commands of God in the bible, then manufacture on top of them extra rules for people to follow
 - a. use of media
 - b. method of education
 - c. dressing modestly
 - d. evangelism
 - e. trusting in Christ
 - f. worship

II. See the Proofs Given to the Church to Prove the Validity of What Was Done

- A. The proofs given to the Jerusalem church by Peter
 1. a vision given to an apostle v. 5-6
 2. the words of Christ given through an apostle v. 7, 9
 3. the words of the Holy Spirit given through an apostle v.12
 4. a message from an angel v. 13
 5. the manifestation of the Holy Spirit v. 15
 6. right application of the words of the Lord Jesus v. 16
 7. valid logical reasoning v. 17
- B. The convincing nature of this set of proofs
- C. Compare that with proofs typically given to the church today
 1. "The Lord told me"
 2. "I had a dream" or "I had a vision"
 3. "See what good results are being produced"
 4. "I have a passion for this"
 5. "We have to be relevant to the culture"
- D. The unconvincing nature of these kinds of proofs
- E. To be convincing it must be from the scriptures, not from modern visions
- F. Let us put our own ideas back where they belong
 1. not too low
 2. not too high

III. See the Reaction to the Proofs

- A. as to their contention, they became silent v. 18a
- B. they glorified God for His sovereign grace v. 18b
- C. Oh, let us react this way to real proofs of real truth!

The main purpose of the food laws was to keep a separation between Jews and gentiles.

Is there any, "You ate with them!" still remaining in you?

Is there any, "Not so, Lord!" still remaining in you?

This party of the circumcision was powerfully influential.

Even the Jewish apostles who had been convinced of the truth of this matter had difficulty maintaining the right ideas at this point.

Galatians 2:11-13 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; (12) for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. (13) And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

Today, if someone tries to prove a novel point by appealing to his supposed dreams or visions, do not believe it. What we should appeal to in proving our ideas, is the dreams and visions of the apostles, as recorded in the New Testament.