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Introduction:

The Bible recognizes that being a soldier is an honorable profession. The world is filled with evil and violent men and nations, and soldiers and police are necessary to protect the weak from the bullies who would steal and destroy.

There was in Caesarea a good and righteous man called Cornelius, a Roman soldier, who commanded a hundred soldiers. He feared God with all his house and gave alms to the people and prayed to God always.

One day he was praying and he saw an angel of God coming in to him, saying, "Cornelius."

He looked and was afraid and said, "What is it, Lord?"

The angel said, "Your prayers and your good deeds are come up for a memorial before God. Now, send men to Joppa, and call for a man named Simon, whose surname is Peter. He stays with Simon a tanner in a house by the seaside. He shall tell you what you ought to do."

When the angel had gone, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier of his personal

guard and informed them of what had happened, and then sent them to Joppa.

- A. Walls are good thing. We are to pray for the walls of Jerusalem. Elders are given keys to lock and unlock the doors to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus has the keys of death and hell
- B. Jesus gathers his sheep into folds to protect them from thieves and robbers and from wolves. In the OT. Israel was the fold, but Jesus took his sheep out of there, joined his sheep from Gentile folds where they had been preserved by civil government until the time appointed; so both Gentile and Jewish remnants makeup and still make up the church.
- C. For Israel, there were walls that separated them from all other people; walls of diet, walls of marriage, walls of dress, walls of ceremonies, In Christ those wall would come tumbling down like the walls of Jericho, but it would take a while for the church to understand, which walls were to come down and which were not to come down.
- D. The Ten Commandments are walls to protect the sheep from wolves, hirelings and thieves and robbers. The state is to enforce these laws with intelligence and grace.

I. Divine Instruction to Peter, the Apostle

As they went on the next day, Peter went upon the housetop to pray. He became very hungry and would have eaten, but while the food was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven open and descending to him was a container like a sheet fastened at the corners.

Inside the sheet were all kinds of four footed beasts of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, fowls of the air. A voice said, "Peter, rise, kill, and eat. Peter had never eaten such things, for

they were forbidden by the law. He said, “Not so, Lord. I have never eaten anything common or unclean.” And the voice said again, “What God has cleansed, do not call it common or unclean. This was done three times and then the container was received up into heaven again.

While Peter was doubting what the vision meant, the men from Cornelius stood before Simon’s house and called out, asking whether Simon Peter was there. Even while Peter thought on the visions the Spirit said to him, “Three men are seeking you. Get up and go down and go with them and do not doubt, for I have sent them.”

Peter got the message from Cornelius, lodged the messengers for the night, and then went with them the next day to Caesarea, taking some of the brethren from Joppa with him.

- A. The Jewish laws of uncleanness were to be removed. But we must be careful here. There were three kinds of cleanness under the law and in the Bible.
1. Physical uncleanness. Ways washing pots and pans, person hygiene, etc. were prescribed under the law. Proverbs talks about the crib being clean where there are no oxen. Jesus washed the disciples feet. Now you kids can’t use Peter’s vision as an excuse not to put on clean clothes or take a bath, when your mother tells you to. Physical cleanness is a good thing. Comb you hair and wash you face. You ought not to shrink from getting your hands dirty if the need requires it, as every mother knows, but it is ok to wash your hands afterward. My uncles were hard working men during the depression, everything from orchard work

to cutting wood. Their hands bore the marks of honest toil and I doubt if they ever could be soft and clean enough for fancy dining, but this is not the subject today. It is ok to be clean in body as well as in soul.

2. Ceremonial clean. To the Jew this meant circumcision and keeping the laws of purification. There were many of them, and offerings prescribed to emphasize them. Animals were divided into clean and unclean, and these were known at least as far back as Noah, and probably Adam as God instructed him on the proper sacrifices, for unclean animals were not to be eaten or sacrificed. Even certain insects falling into the vessel made the vessel unclean, not only physically but also ceremonially. Special waters of purification were prepared with the ashes of a red heifer and certain woods to use in ceremonial purification. “if 13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? This ceremonial cleansing includes households and children and infants of the godly. 1Co 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.
3. This leads us to the third class of purification: that of the inner man and the conscience before God. The guilty conscience must be purged from dead works. Jesus spoke to this subject concerning meats, when he was condemned for not washing his hands at his meal. Ignored the ceremonial laws imposed by the Pharisees. It is not that

which enters into the man that can defile the man, but that which comes out. Well, what goes in cannot purify the man either, except in a physical healthy sense

II. Peter's Sermon to Cornelius and Friends.

Cornelius was waiting for them and called together his kinsmen and close friends. As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. Peter took him up and said, "Stand up; I myself am a man like you."

As they talked, Peter went in and found the many that were gathered together. He said to them, "You know that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God has showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent you have sent for me?"

Cornelius then recounted his prayer and the angel that came and told him to send for Peter. "Now you have come," Cornelius said, "and we all are here present before God to hear all things that God commanded you."

Then Peter spoke to them, "Truly, I perceive that God is no respecter of person, but in every nation he that fears him and works righteousness is accepted with him.

"God's word of peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, was preached to the children of Israel throughout all Judea, beginning in Galilee with the baptism which John

preached. That word told how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

“We are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they killed and hanged on a tree. God raised him up the third day, and showed him openly. He did not show him to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

“He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. All the prophets give witness to him, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

- A. Peter didn't moralize. He didn't philosophize: he preached the Gospel.
- B. Cornelius didn't argue, he wanted to hear the word of God. He submitted to hear the word from the mouth of the one that God had appointed to preach to him.
- C. Last week, I said that we do not get to choose the river to wash in. Well, neither do we get to choose the one whom God has order to tell us the truth. Jehoshaphat asked Ahab, isn't there a prophet of the Lord here. Yep, said Ahab but I hate him for he never says anything good about me. Beware of stifling

conscience just because you didn't get to choose the instrument.

- D. Certainly Cornelius, just like Peter, had been prepared by God for this day, for he had been a worshipper of the God of Israel and certainly was familiar with the Old Testament. See 10:1,2
- E. What a simple, beautiful presentation of the Gospel is preached here by Peter. READ AGAIN. 34-43

III. The Holy Ghost and Baptism

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. Those of the circumcision who were believers and came with Peter were astonished because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. They heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then Peter said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

- A. Why the Holy Ghost? See Acts 15:8, 9. That is, as far as ceremonies are concerned. If the Gentiles had not received the Holy Spirit, then they would have always been second class in the church. Jerusalem, Samaria, Gentiles. Peter opened the door of the Gospel and was God's special agent.
- B. Fulfillment of the prophecies of the OT that the Gentiles would come; and prophecy of John that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost, but this would not take place until His resurrection from the dead.
- C. It is the Holy Spirit that brings peace to the heart and the fulfillment of the third type of purification. I Peter 1: 22
Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through

the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

Conclusion and Application.

There are no second class membership in the church of Jesus Christ. Not Jew, not Greek, not men, not women Hence, the door of the church is open to all the ceremonially clean, represented by baptism; such are under the authority of Christ, are privileged to be taught by Him and His officers.

Ro 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Ga 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Col 3:11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

There are certainly differences of ability, of office, of spiritual gifts, of intelligence, of physical strength, etc., but everyone who believes has access to the mercy of God and the power of Christ to cleanse the conscience and to serve the true God. Amen and Amen.