

14 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 10:14

LESSON
Common food

VERSE 14
*But Peter said,
Not so, Lord;
for I have never eaten any
thing that is
common or unclean.*

Peter could not believe he could now eat all those animals imprinted on the sheet in his vision. In the eyes of the Jews, these were “common” or “unclean” animals, and they had been taught from young to abstain from them.

The Jews observed many ceremonial laws and food restrictions. These laws were instituted to teach them obedience, ultimately pointing them to Christ. In God’s timing, these laws had served their purpose.

This also reminds us of the transiting role of the high priest in history. The Jews once observed the sacrificing of animals (in that their blood was shed as atonement for sin). However, with Christ’s death on the cross, His blood was shed for the atonement of all sin, for all time. When Jesus died, the veil in the Tabernacle rent from top to bottom signifying that the way into the Holies of Holies was henceforth open. It was a sign that there was no longer need for the high priest, to be the human intercessor for man through the blood of animal sacrifices. Jesus Himself is our great High Priest. He shed His blood for the sins of the world.

Whereas in the past, only Jews received the oracles of God, Peter was now to reach out to all. Jesus had bridged the racial divide. Thank God for His love in sending Jesus to die and shed His blood for us. There is hope for all, Jew or Gentile.

The apostles thus went out to preach the gospel to all. “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” [Colossians 1:28].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 10
MATTHEW 14

THOUGHT

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.
– Hebrews 9:12

15 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 10:15-16

LESSON
What I have cleansed,
call not thou common

VERSE 15
*And the voice spake unto him
again the second time,
What God hath cleansed,
that call not thou common.*

It is interesting that even Peter doubted God's Word conveyed to him in this clear picture message. This message could not be clearer because the vision was repeated thrice.

Often times we find it difficult to accept God's Word. We harbour doubts about some parts of it. We have our own ideas of what God's word and commandments mean, and we try to fit God into our own understanding.

May God forgive us for such thoughts. We are merely sinful humans with finite minds. God clearly states that He created Adam yet the majority of mankind believes that humans evolved from apes. The Bible divulged that the world is round [Isaiah 40:22] and that it hangs on nothing [Job 26:7] long before science discovered these truths. In fact, people believed the world was flat and that it was borne by a strong man or creature.

Why does man not believe what God says? A reason could be that by believing in His Word, man would have to be accountable to Him. Pride drives a man to believe in himself rather than God.

God rebuked Peter twice for his unbelief. God knows best. In the book of Numbers, Balaam did not believe that a donkey could speak until God opened his eyes to see who it was blocking the donkey's way [Numbers 22:31]. Doubting God's Word is sin. It would be akin to kicking against the pricks [Acts 9:5 and Acts 26:14]. Pray that we will be obedient servants of God to do His will. He revealed and recorded His Word for us. It is Truth. Take it as it is.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 11
MATTHEW 15

THOUGHT

Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

– 1 Timothy 6:5.

16 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 10:17-20

LESSON
Doubting
nothing

VERSE 17

Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 12
MATTHEW 16

THOUGHT

Such often are the workings of the Sovereign God in the affairs of His creatures. Our thoughts, wonderment, doubts, misgivings, apprehensions are all laid bare before divine omniscience. And He answers each in His own way, according to His perfect timing to achieve His higher purposes. Nothing that happens in the Christian's life is by accident.

Even as Peter was pondering the meaning of the vision he had seen, Cornelius's men arrived at the gate seeking him. Gentiles from Caesarea seeking the Jew in Joppa. The "unclean" had come seeking the "clean." Now things were happening and becoming clearer, as the Holy Spirit directed Peter to go with these men without reservation. God's vision served to confirm to Peter the end of the ceremonial law of clean and unclean things. The middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles had been removed and both peoples were henceforth unified by Christ's death and resurrection. The Old Covenant had given place to the New and better Covenant. Not only was Peter given the message, but now he was instructed to go forth in obedience and with confidence, the command in verse 20.

It is well and fitting for us to ponder the things which God has planted in our minds and hearts. But when the Spirit speaks and bids, let us not be doubtful or tardy in responding to God's call. Beware, lest by our prevarication we quench the Spirit within and fail in our obedience. Be resolute in faith and doubt not God's leading. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.

Christians need never fear that they are too late in seeking God's help. God's answer will meet us at our point of need. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isaiah 65:24)

17 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 10:21-22

LESSON
Wherefore
ye are come?

VERSE 21

*Then Peter went down to the
men which were sent unto him
from Cornelius; and said,
Behold, I am he whom ye seek:
what is the cause
wherefore ye are come?*

Often, it is in our time of meeting and speaking in prayer communion with God that He communicates with us. As Peter prayed in the middle of the waking day (noon), he was given a vision from God.

Many questions would weigh on Peter's mind that afternoon after this surreal encounter. What was its meaning? Why three times repeated? Why the unexpected appearance of strangers looking for him by name? What of the clear prompting of the Holy Spirit to him to go down to these men? "For what reason have you come?" was all that a mystified Peter could muster.

Is not this often the same with us when situations arise in our lives? When in response to our supplications and petitions, things seemingly happen. Strangers come into our lives, unforeseen and unexpected events transpire, doors open and doors close in response to our prayers. And we ask questions as Peter did, "Why are you here? Why has this happened? How did you know? What does this mean?"

Christian! Know and trust that God is at work in our lives and in all our situations. The keener our fellowship and the more intimate our relationship with our Lord and God, the more will we be sensitive to His voice speaking to us and be able to perceive His hand of grace and love operating in our lives, undertaking for us so as to work all things together for our good, fulfilling His sovereign purpose, for His transcendent glory. This is the unmatched blessedness and prerogative of the believer in Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 13
MATTHEW 17

ASSURANCE

The Christian's Warranty - Romans 8:26-28

18 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 10:23-24

LESSON
Called together
his kinsmen and friends

VERSE 24

*And the morrow after they
entered into Caesarea.
And Cornelius waited for
them, and had called together
his kinsmen and near friends.*

There was a palpable sense of expectation in Cornelius' household as the master summoned all his relatives and close friends to his house to meet this mysterious stranger who had been the subject of his vision and hear what he had to say. Clearly, this Simon Peter was a man with divine sanction, a spokesman from God with a vital message for this Gentile follower of Jehovah. Such a divine message was to be heard and shared. And thus we have here recorded for eternity, the first Gentile convert to Christianity, a Roman centurion.

Now if Cornelius was particularly blessed to receive from Peter only the singular message of salvation in Christ, consider how infinitely more blessed we are today who possess God's message to mankind in its entirety. The complete canon of Holy Scripture in our hands, yet what is our attitude towards it? Do we love, know and treasure it? Or do its wonders evade us by our ignorance and disinterest, and our Bible sits on its cover all week long? Are we excited and eager like Cornelius to hear and share? Or have we become through familiarity so complacent that the wondrous message of God, His salvation, everlasting life and heaven has lost its thrill for our jaded hearts?

If it is the latter, let us repent and seek God's help to rekindle the fire we once had when we first accepted Christ as our Saviour, freed from sin's bondage, and granted the glorious assurance of eternal life, and share this good news with many, as Cornelius did.

Perhaps thereby, some souls will likewise receive the blessing.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 14
MATTHEW 18

THOUGHT

Familiarity breeds contempt and complacency. Beware the Laodicean malady: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." (Revelation 3:16)

19 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 10:25-26

LESSON
I also am a man

VERSE 25

*And as Peter was coming
in, Cornelius met him, and
fell down at his feet, and
worshipped him.*

Humankind has been created and endowed with an innate desire and propensity to worship. From the earliest of times, down through the ages in every civilisation, man craves and seeks an object of worship, be it the invisible Creator God or some unseen deities of human imagination, the celestial bodies, the palpable things of nature, the ideas of their intelligent mind, and even the perceived divine potential within themselves. Man at heart worships and craves to be worshipped.

For Cornelius, what reason more compelling than to prostrate in worship before this divine messenger. But note the apostle's gentle rebuke, "Stand up, I myself am also a man."

God incontrovertibly forbids the worship of anything or anyone, angels and apostles alike, other than the one true living God of Holy Scripture. Paul and Barnabas were dismayed and upbraided the people of Lystra when they venerated them as Roman gods [Acts 14:14-15]. No lesser person than the aged apostle John himself was rebuked when awestruck, he attempted to worship, not once but twice, the mighty message-bearing angel [Revelation 19:10; 22:9], and the prohibition was swift and sharp. Neither angels nor saints, much less anything created, whether by God or man, or concocted even in well-meaning human minds, be they objects, icons or ideas, are to be venerated or worshipped. Nothing, then and now, must take the place of God in our hearts or it is idolatry.

The eternal, immutable God who in time past commanded His covenant people "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me" still reigns and commands our allegiance today.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOEL 1
MATTHEW 19

THOUGHT

Beware the wickedness and depravity of our hearts.
Read Romans 1:20-25.

20 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 10:27-28

LESSON
I should not call any man
common or unclean

VERSE 28

*And he said unto them,
Ye know how 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 hath shewed
me that I should not call
any man common or unclean.*

The Law of Moses prohibited intermarriage between Israelites and Gentiles (non-Jews). It also drew an inviolable line between the faith worship of the Israelites, given by God's direct revelation to them, and the idol-worshipping religions of the heathen nations around them. This was God's commandment so that heathen beliefs, their carnal social and cultural practices and idol worship would not contaminate and lead God's chosen people astray. In time, Jewish religious leaders added to these laws their customs and traditions so that any social intercourse and contact with Gentiles came to be regarded as unholy (common), defiling and unclean. The Gentiles knew this [John 4:9], as did the Jews under the religious dictates of the Pharisees and scribes. The pressure to conform, on even the apostle Peter and Barnabas, was very great [Galatians 2:12-13].

But Christ had come into the world for the sins of all. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him..." [John 3:16].

The good news of salvation is offered to anyone who believes. It does not discriminate and is not prejudiced, whether by ethnicity, education, economics, nationality, gender or age. And God had to demonstrate this to Peter in no uncertain terms, so that His great salvation plan for humanity and Christ's final mandate before He returned to heaven would be fulfilled [Acts 1:8-9], and the gospel would have free course from the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea, to Gentiles in Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth. Great is the mercy and grace of God toward mankind.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOEL 2
MATTHEW 20

THOUGHT

Guard against prejudice in our lives and especially in our ministry. "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." (Galatians 3:28)

21 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 10:29

LESSON
Come
without gainsaying

VERSE 29

*Therefore came I unto you
without gainsaying, as soon as
I was sent for: I ask therefore
for what intent
ye have sent for me?*

In the divine vision that was given to the apostle Peter [Acts 10:11-14], the Spirit of God commanded Peter to “go with them (the three men) doubting nothing: for I have sent them... to hear words of thee” [Acts 10:20b, 22b].

By divine revelation, Peter now understood that it was wrong and sinful for Jews like himself to harbour strong prejudice against Gentiles. Christ had abolished the distinctions between Jews and Gentiles. The gospel and the grace of Christ was not reserved solely for the Jews but was also for the Gentiles and nations of the world at large. The Gentile dying world needed the Word of Life urgently and Peter was commanded to go without doubting or hesitation but willingly. It was his duty to preach the Gospel first to the household of Cornelius the centurion and from thence the Gospel gate would be opened to the Gentile world.

In faith and obedience to God’s call, Peter went. He said to Cornelius, “Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for”. Peter remembered his Saviour and Lord’s Great Commission for him before He ascended to heaven [Matthew 28:18-20].

This commission is given also to all believers and the church. When our God and Saviour calls us to do the same, will we be faithful like Peter to obey without doubt, hesitation, prejudice or fear of man, to preach the Gospel whenever or wherever God appoints? May the Lord help us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOEL 3
MATTHEW 21

THOUGHT

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. – Isaiah 6:8