

Acts 10:1-26

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- [0 : 0 0] On May 25th, 1979, Dennis Watley was desperately trying to catch a flight from Chicago to LA. When he arrived at his gate, they had just closed the jetway.
- Dennis begged them to let him on the airplane. No luck. Out of breath and out of patience, he made his way back to the ticket counter to register a complaint and rebook his travel.
- While he was waiting in line, an announcement came over the airport intercom. American Airline Flight 191 to LA had crashed on takeoff. All 271 people on board were dead.
- At the time, it was the deadliest aviation accident in the United States history. That near-death experience had a life-altering impact on Dennis Watley. Had he been on time, it would have been the last day of his life.
- He took his paper ticket and put it in a visible place in his office. On difficult days, the days when he felt like throwing in the towel, all it took was one glance at the ticket to regain perspective.
- [0 : 5 9] That ticket was a constant reminder that every day is a gift. Coincidence? What did it matter if he remembered every day was a gift if he didn't get saved?
- Are all those type of coincidences or those type of events, is God's hand in that? It just happened to be that? After a night out with friends, David Brown, an Englishman, night out with friends, woke up with a series of random numbers on his mind.
- After much internal debate as to why they were there, he sent a text message to it. Asking, did I meet you last night? The recipient was a confused Michelle Kitson, who lived just 60 miles from him.
- They'd not met the night before, but over time, they would meet. In fact, five years afterwards, after that first text message, the two were married. She really is the girl of my dreams, Brown says.
- Is that the Lord's hand or just some really weird dude? Reading God's hand into circumstances can be an evasion of genuine commitment.
- [2 : 0 5] It can be an insidious alternative to giving him your heart, because it keeps your attention directed outward rather than inward, where his chisel bites. We have elevated coincidence to the status of miracle and the interpretation of coincidence to gospel.
- We can routinely ask God to intervene in our circumstances while hoping he'll keep his nose out of inner things like our spiritual indifference and pride.
- If you remember, last week we said the haphazard circumstances of life are only the footsteps of the Good Shepherd. If you're following the Good Shepherd, every coincidence in every situation isn't necessarily just because it worked out in some strange way, like this guy.
- Yes, God was merciful and gave him his life. But if he didn't come to know the Lord, he just put off the inevitable. And just because you coincidentally end up with some over a random text message doesn't mean it's the Lord.
- Why all that? Because as we're going to see tonight and continue to see, that God had his hand on Peter and on Cornelius.

- [3 : 18] God's timing is never just about me. Each cog in the clock sees only its own part and perspective. God sees the whole timepiece. That God's timepiece, he sees the whole thing where we only see just the part that we play.
- And we wonder, is there more than this? Is it all about me? Does it really matter? So, Acts chapter 10. By way of intro. We have come as far as...
- Oh, Peter had left Joppa. And he was going with the men to Caesarea to see Cornelius. Let's pray and then we'll dive into this.
- Lord, we thank you for your word. We thank you that, Lord, you're the master clockmaker. You keep the whole thing ticking, Lord. And Lord, so often I see just my part.
- It just goes click, click, click in the same routine. And I see the same cog next to me that I'm turning. And I don't see the end product, Lord. But you do, Lord.
- [4 : 30] And you know how every piece is working together. And as we're going to see tonight, Lord, you're arranging circumstances and plans behind the scenes in ways that these men had no idea.
- And Lord, I thank you that you're doing the same thing in our lives, Lord. And that, Lord, for us, because we're following the Good Shepherd, we can trust that every situation in our life, Lord, is just the leading of your hand, Lord.
- It's just you calling us after yourself. We don't have to question, was that a coincidence? Was that providence? Was that, what was that? We can trust you, Lord, that when we make our plans, you will direct our steps.
- We thank you and praise you. In Jesus' name, amen. Okay. So if you remember last time, we had our buddy Peter. He had come down through Lydah, or Lod, as it is today.
- Lydah into Joppa. He's healed the paralytic man. He healed Dorcas, raised her from the dead. So we had the paralyzed, we had the dead, and God is preparing Peter and just leading him through this process to get him ready for going to the Gentiles, a group of people that are paralyzed by sin and dead in sin.
- [5 : 48] Peter's left Joppa. He was staying with Simon the Tanner. He's come to Cornelius. Remember the Italian band? They had that big hit in the 60s, you know, that Roman romance song. And now he's in Caesarea with, or headed to Caesarea at this point, is where we've left him.
- So if you broke the chapter down, it's a broad brushstroke. You have the first section where Peter's in Joppa. You have the Jew, or I'm sorry, you have the first section of chapter 10, the Gentile with Cornelius.
- Then you have the Jew. Then you have the Gentiles in the Jews' house. And then we're going to have the Jews in the Gentiles' house. And then it's kind of broken up into two big chunks, kind of an overview, focusing on the first half as kind of like prayer and its effects, and how God is moving through that.
- And then the latter half is the gospel and their response to the gospel. I don't think we're going to get through the whole thing, so we'll just make our way through and see what the Lord has for us. There's one particular area that I think he's going to have us focus in on.
- So let's pick it up. We'll just start in verse 1 to read through to where we left off, which was about verse 8 or 9. There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian Band, a devout man and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always.
- [7 : 14] He saw in a vision, evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming into him and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid and said, What is it, Lord?

And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. He lodges with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside.

He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. So there's a revelation kind of into this man's heart that he'd been desiring. What has he been praying? His prayers and alms have come before God.

What was he praying? God, show me what to do. What do I need to do to draw near to you, to please you? And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually.

We'll pick it up right there. And so we see his heart of belief revealed because he acts on what he believes, that the angel has come to him and he believes it. And so he's acted upon it.

[8 : 22] The word there, I was thinking of this, where it says he had these men. Again, so Peter in his life of threes, right? We have these three men. Cornelius is praying at 3 p.m.

There's three men that are being sent from Cornelius. And the word there that says that a devout soldier that waited on him continually, it means steadfastly or to continue. It's the same word that's used in Acts, where it says in chapter 2, verse 42 and 46, that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread and of prayer, that steadfastness.

And that's been speaking a lot to me lately, just as we've been doing this church, that we've been getting together. Because I don't know if you've heard it said that it's the three-legged stool, right?

The continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship and prayer. They kind of lump fellowship and breaking of bread together. But it's not. It's not together. So I don't think it's a three-legged stool.

Because there's the doctrine, the apostles' doctrine, there's fellowship, and the breaking of bread would be communion. And then there's prayer. I think it's like a four-legged table.

[9 : 32] That when the table's set, everything works. When you set the table, the Lord sets this table for his church, you knock out one of those legs, and it's going to go, you know. So it still works, the analogy.

But it's not a three-legged stool. There's four things there. And I think we do ourself a disservice if we kick out one of them, right? Man, I can't wait for our next fellowship meal. I got ideas. You know, I want to do communion, like there, instead of just here.

Kind of like how, not that we all pass around a cup. You know, we'll have our own cups. We can pass around the matzah and break off of it. We each have our own cups. But part of that. And then I think it'd be good to, like, have a discussion as part of it.

Come with a topic like, hey, let's all talk about, you know, as the evening winds down, we prayed. But to look at, like, let's talk about this topic. What do we all think about that? What do we all think about, you know, whatever, in the ministry, or as we grow in it as a church?

What do we think about people coming in that maybe need to be cleaned up and they don't know the Lord? What do we think about, you know, a very confused individual coming in who's struggling with their gender or whatever?

[10 : 39] You know, what are we going to do with that? What do we think of children's ministry? Not that we're shifting to congregational voting or anything, but, like, what's our heart as a family? And just to be able to do that. And that's that four parts.

I don't want to throw out one of them because it's, well, it's not as convenient. Anyway, that was a little tangent about that. That's not what this guy's doing. He's just a man that proves Cornelius, it proved credibility, that Cornelius had quite a bit of credibility with this man, that he had this guy who waited on him steadfastly, continuing.

And it's interesting, Cornelius is not allowed to go. God says to Cornelius, you send men. He didn't tell him, go to Joppa, go find Peter. He's like, no, you send men. So Cornelius is waiting there.

Well, why? Well, we're going to see later. We're not going to get there tonight. He's going to gather everybody, his friends and his family. If he went alone to Peter, well, he might have gotten saved. Probably would have.

But the Lord had a much bigger work that he wanted to do through this man. But he had to wait. He had to wait for Peter. And so he had declared all these things unto them and he sent them to Joppa.

[11 : 47] He trusted them. And on the morrow, as they went on their journey and drew near to the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray about the sixth hour. And so obedience does not need to rush.

That's what I wrote and I had written in my Bible before. It says on the morrow, he wasn't like, guys, the angel said, get to Peter, pack your bags and get moving. And they're like, well, but it's like, you know, five o'clock in the afternoon.

Hike through the night. I don't care. Verse 30 tells us later on that Cornelius, when he's relating this to Peter, his incident with the angel, he said, four days ago, I was fasting until this hour.

It gives us this timestamp that it is an overnight journey from Caesarea to Joppa. And so these men, it takes them about two days there and roughly two days back.

And so they didn't rush. Obedience doesn't need to rush. And as they drew near, Peter, he went up onto the housetop to pray about the sixth hour.

[12 : 49] And so here he is going up to pray about lunchtime, right? And I was thinking of Peter and Cornelius and just kind of thinking through their heart, their attitude towards prayer.

And in Matthew 6, 6, it says that Jesus instructs the disciples. He says, but when you pray, enter into your closet. And when you've shut the door, pray to your father, which is in secret.

And your father, which is in secret, shall reward you openly. And so Peter goes up alone to pray. He didn't get a bunch of people. And it's at a specific time. It seems like he's done this before. This isn't his first time.

And he became very hungry, and he would have eaten, but while they made ready, he fell into a trance. I think that's a nice way that Luke's kind of like writing this, being like, good old Peter, every time he goes to pray, he falls asleep.

But the scripture's so kind to him here. And it's like, why? Well, we're on this side of the cross and this side of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And we see where Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12, 8-9, he talks about his weaknesses and how God, that his grace is sufficient for him, for his strength is made perfect in weaknesses.

[14 : 04] And he says, well, most gladly, therefore, glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ would rest upon me. And so God uses Peter's weakness. Yeah, Peter fell asleep. But God's like, that's all right.

I've got a plan. I'm going to use this. And that's very comforting for me because, I'll tell you, prayer is a weak point. Like, prayer is we're going to see what these men do with it. You know, I love to pray.

I love to pray for people. I'm talking with the Lord all day. But prayer is a specific time of day that I'm going to keep that appointment is definitely a weak point for me.

But God doesn't chastise Peter in his weakness. He uses it in spite of him. And so we're going to look at, kind of like, break this down into three parts. We're going to see Peter and Cornelius, their actions in prayer, their attitudes in prayer, and what they've accomplished in prayer.

And so first is their actions in prayer. And so both Peter and Cornelius, they had these actions in prayer. They're practiced, punctual, and they were present. They're practiced in prayer.

[15 : 06] Prayer was a part of their lives. It was who they were. It wasn't just something they just did off the cuff. Peter, we know when he went with John, they went up to the temple to the hour of prayer.

They met the lame man who was there. Cornelius, it seems like he had the same type of thing, that he was following the Jews' cyclical times of prayer.

You look back at Daniel, he prayed morning, noon, and evening. Luke 11, 1, they find Jesus, and it came to a certain, and it came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place, Jesus, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

I get the idea there that Jesus was praying, the disciples were like, well, where'd he go, where'd he go? And they kind of come around the bend like, oh, he's praying, he's praying, quiet. And they just wait. Jesus said, if you remember, to Peter, James, and John, could you not watch with me one hour?

So they're probably like, I wonder how long he's been praying. I wonder how long he's going to keep praying. So when he finished, they said, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his. So it seems like Peter got it, and this has become a part of who Peter was.

[16 : 17] We see it's a part of who Cornelius was. The difference between the two? Cornelius is not born again, and yet, the Lord comes to him with the angel and says, hey, your prayers have been heard before God.

And so he's been seeking after him, and all those who seek him will find him. They were punctual in prayer. They maintained set times of prayer. So it wasn't just something that they, they just happened to do, that they kept going in their lives, that they practiced in their lives.

Oh, we need to pray. And I think I'm there. I could say, well, prayer is a practice in my life, for sure. For sure. But a set time of prayer, being punctual, to make sure that at a time of prayer, I'm there with, in the morning, I'm up, and I got my Bible.

And they, Lord bless me, you know, in the word, speak to me in your word, open your word to me. But I don't, I don't think I'm there yet with prayer. Being punctual, James tells, James 4, 8 tells us, draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.

They believe that, and they acted on that. They were punctual. They had that set time, because they said, you know what? If I draw near to him, he's going to draw near to me. And they were present. Prayer was active in their lives.

[17 : 30] They had a set time for it, but they showed up. There was an author who wrote a book that I had read when I was younger, and he was a pretty young kid when he wrote it.

He was a homeschooler, and it's a pretty thick book, and it's pretty good. And they had interviewed him and said, how did you write that? You know, well, man, how did you sit down to write this book that had just come to you?

And he said, every night, I was at my computer and in my chair for at least a half hour. He said, sometimes I got a sentence. He said, sometimes I got chapters, and I was there for hours.

He said, but every night, I showed up, and I sat in that chair before my computer to write for a half hour, whether anything came or not. I find that when I, that's me with prayer, that I'll go, and I'll sit with the Lord.

Sometimes it's like, and it's like striving and straining, like if I could bring down the heavens, oh Lord, just, just can't break through, it feels like. And I could get discouraged and walk away and be like, forget this.

[18 : 31] But I don't see that here with Peter. Peter fell asleep, right? Cornelius had been praying and praying, and he wasn't even a believer. And he continued to persist. Ooh, another P word. He continued to persist in this.

And I like what Romans tells us about how the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities. In Romans 8, 26 and 27, it says, the Spirit helps our infirmities, for we don't know what we should pray. But the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And he that searches the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. So if I show up, sometimes I'll make headway.

Sometimes I might not. But I know that the Lord's just speaking this to me, that this needs to be something that's much more punctual in my life, that is there, and that I'm there.

So the actions in prayer, they're a practice, they're punctual, and they're present. They made it part of their life. They made sure to be there. And they didn't pass this off as just an extra. Next is their attitudes in prayer.

[19 : 35] When they got to prayer, what was their attitude? They're persistent. They're purposed. They were patient. How so? Persistent in prayer.

They were not discouraged by their own weaknesses or by unapparent answers. That one gets me. It's like, Lord, you didn't answer. Well, that's not true. He always answers.

So it's just unapparent to me. That cog in the wheel of the clock, click, click, click. I can't see what's happening here. This doesn't make any sense. And the, you know, the bird's going all, cuckoo, cuckoo.

And it's like, I hear that noise. I don't even know what it means every hour. But I can't see it. Right? Well, God's at work. Mark 11, 23 says, For verily I say unto you that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he says shall come to pass.

He shall have whatever he says. So not being discouraged, not doubting when we don't see an apparent answer. Cornelius, man, look at how long he persisted. How long was this guy praying?

[20 : 42] When Jesus was walking the seas of Galilee and up in the northern part of Israel, what was Cornelius doing there in Caesarea? Was he stationed there yet? Was he in Rome?

You know, when did his heart turn towards the Lord? How long has he been praying and persisting in this? They were purposed in prayer. There were men who sought the Lord and not results.

Obviously, for Cornelius, he wanted the Lord. He wanted him. He said, Lord, show me what to do. And then the angel comes and says, hey, I've heard your prayer. There's a guy who's going to come tell you what to do.

Peter, he sought the Lord. Peter had tried seeking other things and failed miserably. And now he just kind of almost has this lackadaisical chill attitude. Peter, who was cutting off ears and like, I'll go with you and die.

Now he's just kind of like, I'm just going to go down to Joppa. I'm going to go down to Lida. I'm going to go to Caesarea with these guys. Whatever. I'm up on the housetop to pray. And he falls asleep. We all know Jeremiah 29 11.

[21 : 46] I know the plans that I have for you. Plans of peace and not of evil to give you an expected end. Well, Jeremiah 29 13 says, and you shall seek me and find me when you shall search for me with all your heart.

And these, Cornelius was definitely searching for the Lord. He was persistent. He was purposed. He was patient. They awaited God's timing, not their own.

God's timing, not theirs. Jeremiah 29 14 says, and I will be found of you, those that seek him, says the Lord, and I will turn away your captivity and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places whether I have driven you, saith the Lord, and I'll bring you again into the place once I caused you to be carried away captive.

How long between 29 13, and you shall seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart, and 29 14, and I will be found of you, saith the Lord.

How long is that space? How long until the Lord turns away captivity? How long do we seek him? You know, seek and keep on seeking, knock and keep on knocking, ask and keep on asking.

[22 : 52] So they were patient to await God's timing when God was going to move in their life. What did Jesus say when his brethren came to him and they're like, go up to the feast. If you want everybody to know who you are, go up and show yourself.

He's like, your time is always now. He's like, but it's not my time yet. And that's what, my time's always now. I'm always ready now. Like, Lord, I didn't realize this need five minutes ago, but now that I do, I want you to fix it now.

You know, but like five minutes ago, I was okay. A month ago, I was fine. But as soon as I realized the need, all of a sudden, it's like, God's slow. God's not working. So their attitudes in prayer, they were persistent, they were purposed, and they were patient when they approached the Lord.

They had these times where they would set aside, they would meet with the Lord, but they would persist in it. And then, what was the result? Accomplishments in prayer.

They were powerful. So their prayer resulted in powerful performance and pleasing. Well, what does all that mean? Their prayers led to real world changing results.

[24 : 03] They weren't just to make themselves feel good. They weren't just because they were religious. And that's, I so often get stuck there. You know, I'll pray for someone to be healed because I kind of know they're going to get better.

You know, I expect that. If someone's sick or whatever, it's like, Lord, heal them. I prayed for one person once that, at COVID, you know, a friend and I, we went and prayed for them.

And, it was like, the only time I've ever really like, whoa, kind of like, felt something. I'm like, Lord, you know, we're here at your word. If you want to heal this man, you know, and it wasn't like he jumped up.

It was just when I prayed, it was like such a stark assurance that God had heard that prayer. And he didn't like, jump up right then. It was like, I'm healed. Yeah, he got better. But I think sometimes I pray with the expectation that what I'm praying is already going to happen.

When Peter prayed for Tabitha, you know, he put everyone out and he knelt down and prayed and said, oh Lord, raise her up. It wasn't because he knew, well, even if I don't pray, she's going to come back to life.

[25 : 08] That's what people do. No, he knew that unless the Lord intervened. In Acts 4.31, and when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Real world changing results. Like, God, we need boldness. He gave it to them. He shook their world and with signs and wonders, they went out. And then, their prayer was a performing prayer.

God was moving in their lives. God performed on their behalf what he said he would do. Matthew 18.18 says, Verily I say unto you, whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.

Whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. There was an expectation that God would come through along the lines of what they prayed. Cornelius continued to pray.

Was it because he wanted to be in good with the Jews? No. Because he wanted to know God. Peter, why did he go up at that hour of prayer? You know, is it just an excuse to get off and take a nap?

[26 : 12] No. Not at all. He wanted to be alone with the Lord. And lastly, their prayer was pleasing. Their prayers were pleasing to God. Obviously, God gives witness to that.

Psalms 141.2 says, Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Then we know in Revelation 5.8, and when he had taken the book the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints.

So it's a pleasing aroma unto the Lord, these prayers. So their accomplishments in prayer, they're powerful, they're performing prayers, and they're pleasing prayers.

But I think the one that really got me was the punctual one. That's the one that stands out to me. That they had set times. And I base too often my prayer life off of my experience of it.

Oh, wow, that was a great time in prayer. Or, well, I don't know what that accomplished. Instead of basing it off of that God has heard my prayers and He's answering. You know, this morning I was laying in bed.

[27 : 24] Before I got up, I was just praying about the whole house thing. I'm like, Lord, just let today be the day. Answer today. Make a way today. Show us the way forward. Give us a house. Got up and I read this scripture and it was, pretty much was saying that, he said, stand fast.

It was Moses and he speaks to Moses. He says, stand fast for today you shall see the salvation of the Lord. And there's a little devotion attached to it by Spurgeon. At the end he said that very soon we'll hear God's voice saying move on.

And I was like, yes. But I mean, I don't have anything I can show you. Like God gave me a house. But it's like, you know what? God answered my prayer. I might not be aware of that answer right now, but he answered.

So I'm going to stand on that. That praise God he's provided a house. I can't wait to see it. He knows what it is and he knows where it is and he told me today it's done. He did it. So, all right. Praise the Lord.

And so these men, they found that God was faithful to respond to their prayers. And so here's Peter up there. He's gone up at this set time to pray.

[28 : 31] Whatever he was expecting to do, it definitely turned out different this time. And I think that's another thing. I would always think of that with the punctual part about the scripture where we talk about when they were all together, the place was shaken.

And I would think, oh, I don't want to miss a time when the church gathers because I'd hate to be Thomas and come back and they'd be like, Jesus is risen and he was here. I wasn't, so I don't believe it.

You know, I'd hate to be that guy. I'd hate to miss when the Holy Spirit, you know, 120 gathered in the upper room. There probably was 122, but those guys went out to get something to eat or whatever and they come back and they're like, what happened?

What are you doing? I didn't want to miss it. And so Peter, whatever he thought he was going to do at this time, boy, God had something totally different for him at this moment, the way he intervenes.

And verse 10, and he became very hungry and would have eaten, but while they made ready, he fell into a trance. Trance there means altered state of mind, but it was not self-induced.

[29 : 32] If God alters your state of mind, cool. Otherwise, don't alter your own state of mind. And so Peter finds himself in this trance and he saw heaven opened and a certain vessel descending unto him as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners and let down to the earth.

And so here, Peter goes into this trance. He's awake. He's asleep. He doesn't know. It's just heaven opens. And that word for heaven means heaven. It can mean the vault of the sky. It can mean the heaven of heavens.

It can mean the celestial heavens. So either way, he saw what looked like the sky opening and this thing coming down. Are there animals in heaven?

Well, you know what? The sheet got taken back up full of animals. I'm just saying. They came from heaven and they went to heaven. So, and so he sees this thing coming down to earth wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air.

All the things we've seen created in Genesis. They're all in there. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter. Kill and eat. And he recognized that voice because he said, Not so, Lord, for I've never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

[30 : 54] I don't usually get weighed into political things or hot topics. This is probably the closest I'll ever get to it. Food. Genesis 9-3, after the flood, God gives this command to Noah.

He says to him, Every moving thing that lives shall be meat for you. Even as the green herb have I given you all things. You know, we are about to get to the fall in Genesis. The only things that exist through the fall are work, marriage, food, but there's no attempt to replicate the garden all through Scripture.

You never see that. We have something even better in Christ, something new, but there's no attempt to go back. We never get an admonition from the Lord to his people, Go back to Eden. Go back to the garden.

Try and live like that. You'll find people today that will encourage you to try and live a lifestyle like they had in Eden. Timothy tells us in chapter 4, 1 Timothy, verse 1, and then verse 3-4, he says, Now the Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

For every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving. The word there for every creature of God does not include plant life. It literally means the things that were created, the animals.

[32 : 28] It's always used every other time in the New Testament for that. So what am I saying? I'm not trying to wade into like should you or shouldn't you eat meat or plants. What I'm saying is be careful that you don't take something that someone in the world has said is a good idea and it ends up going against what scripture clearly lays out and says.

God looks at food and says it's good. In the garden he said it's good. He's given it to us. We looked at that Sunday what food is for. It's a good thing. The food he's given us today, he's given us meat and he's given us the animals and it's good and he looks at it as good.

There's a doctrine out there that says it is evil to eat animals. Well that is a doctrine of devils. Now you can say well one is more healthy I'm not going into that whole thing what's healthy and what's not.

But be careful because the world today is using health as a platform to get a whole lot of junk in our lives that comes from the pit of hell to try and pull us in a direction. So all I'm saying is what God has made that's good and clearly good the enemy in the world wants to turn it on its head and make it into something it was never meant to be.

Food is not supposed to divide. It's supposed to be something that brings us together. It's supposed to be something that provides fellowship. So Peter here is having this conundrum and it's not about if he's a vegetarian or if he's not a vegetarian.

[33 : 49] Oh and then the last verse was so nobody gets mad at me he says if thou put them the brethren in remembrance of these things thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ. So I had to do that to be a good minister.

And then Romans 14 14 finishing this out Paul says I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus there is nothing unclean of itself but to him that esteems anything to be unclean to him it is unclean.

And then we know where Jesus tells us that there's nothing that goes into a man's body that defiles him but that which comes out for out of his heart comes all evil adultery and murders and thefts.

It's not what goes in that defiles. And Peter's response to this is no Lord because I've never eaten anything that was common or unclean.

So Peter is still living under not the law and that he's looking to the law to make him righteous but he's still living under the cultural law of the Jews.

[34 : 53] He's still living by that by how he eats by how he associates with people. It's interesting that didn't hinder his relationship with the Lord did it? It wasn't like the Lord was like well Peter until you get this right.

You know there's things in our lives that the Lord will eventually work out. Peter had division with people. He wouldn't have gone to the Gentiles if it wasn't for this process by which the Lord is bringing him. Paul and Barnabas are going to have a division.

There's times in your life where there's things you can't overcome and you can't fix and the Lord won't hold you accountable. But he'll hold you accountable for your part. But when you've done your part and you've left it with him the Lord doesn't penalize us because there's problems.

He says continue to seek me. He's the place we go when there's problems. We can't turn away until we get things fixed. And so this was done three times. Another three experience for Peter.

And the vessel was received up again into heaven. There's nothing uncommon or unclean. Galatians tells us and Peter's going to find this out in Galatians 3 verse 28.

[35 : 52] There's neither Jew nor Greek. There's neither bond nor free. There's neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ. And we are now no longer common or unclean.

We've been cleansed. Great. And beyond that we are now a chosen generation. A royal priesthood. A holy nation. A peculiar people. We are not common, guys.

We are seated in the heavenlies currently with Jesus. We're sitting in this little room. Nobody in Mount Holly cares. Nobody knows we're here. And yet the Lord is here.

The creator. And he's here with us and he's looking on and he's like, yes! He's writing in a book. It says he writes down every time that he hears anybody talking together about him. And he's listening and he's writing down and he's going, oh, I wouldn't have said that.

Oh, no, no, no, no. Quick, cover that one over. He's wading into food? Why? But we are a chosen generation. A royal priesthood.

[36 : 48] We are no longer common. We are set apart. So for Peter, this was done three times and we know Paul tells us 2 Corinthians 13, this is the third time that I'm coming to you as he rises to the Corinthian church.

He's like, I gotta come three times, guys. Your problems are so... We won't get into that right now. But in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. And that is in Deuteronomy 19.15 where that is first laid down as part of the law that the Lord gives Israel that no one shall be judged based on one person's word.

And so the Lord is confirming this to Peter and he's saying, Peter, what I have called clean you cannot call unclean. Now we're going to apply this to the Gentiles, right? And Peter's going to say that later. He's going to say, I realize this is what the Lord's shown me.

Is it just all an analogy? Well, maybe it doesn't have really to do with food. Well, it does because otherwise it all breaks down for the Gentiles too. If this isn't actually God saying, no, do not call the things that I have called clean unclean.

This food, these animals, every creature down to the smallest one is not unclean. If it's just an analogy, then as soon as you apply it to the Gentiles, it falls apart.

[38 : 03] Well, the Gentiles aren't really clean then. It's just kind of an analogy. Are they all clean? No, God's saying, Peter, these things are actually clean just like the Gentiles.

There's nothing to be pushed out and left separate any longer. And then it's taken back up into heaven and all of these animals are in heaven. So there's animals in heaven.

This was done three times and received into heaven. And 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 inquiry for Simon's house and stood before the gate.

Click, click, click, click, click, click goes the cog, right? Peter's up on the house. You think of the Lord's timing in all of this. It seems haphazard. But you know, his timing was exact.

When he had Peter go down there when he was, it's like, oh, he went to heal that guy, Aeneas, you know, and then he went to heal Tabitha. And it's like, yeah, that was great. It's like, well, that was great.

[39 : 06] It was great for them. It was an awesome witness. It's also a stall tactic. The Lord had to hold him up here. And the Lord had to hold him up over here because the Lord had this perfect timing in which he was going to contact Cornelius and he was going to send these men and they were going to come at the exact moment that Peter's up there praying.

And then God is letting down this sheet, giving him this vision and they go and knock on the door. And Peter is doubting what it should mean.

And they called at the gate. They'd asked if Peter lodged there. And while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, behold, three men seek you. So before Peter, it was a voice from heaven and he said, not so, Lord.

He recognized. This is the Lord speaking to him. Now it's the Spirit. He knew the voice of the Holy Spirit. He knew the influence of the Holy Spirit. And while he thought on the vision, he's like, what is this?

What could this mean? And he's still doubting. Hebrews 12, 25 says, See that you refuse not him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaks from heaven.

[40 : 18] Peter knows he's got to deal with this. He can't ignore this. He's not trying to, I don't think. He just can't reconcile it with everything that he's been brought up, believing the way he's lived his life.

And all of a sudden, what he thought was righteous and pleasing to God, God says, and takes this right-hand turn and says, No, I'm opening up a whole new avenue for you of ministry.

And so he's doubting and thinking of this. Does the Holy Spirit leave him there for very long? Nope. Verse 20, Arise, therefore, and get thee down and go with them doubting nothing for I have sent them.

We see the same phrasing in Acts 8.26 with Philip. The Lord says to Philip, Arise and go down to the road that leads to Ethiopia. And as we said then, God's acting upon God's word always starts with that.

We have to arise up out of one place to go into the place God is calling us. And so with Peter, the Holy Spirit met Peter's doubts with a word of direction and action. He didn't leave him sitting there.

[41 : 21] He said, The best thing for you, Peter, is to get up and go do something. I have a word of direction for you and I have action for you that will lead you out of your doubts. James 1.6 says, But let him ask in faith nothing wavering, for he that wavers, he that doubts, is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

So the Holy Spirit, he had a direction for Peter, he had action for Peter to get him out of his own thoughts, out of his own mind, and out of his doubts. And very often, when we doubt, the Lord will give us something where we can walk it out to kind of walk ourselves out of those doubts.

It's walking by faith and seeing that he has a plan behind what I don't understand. And he said unto him, Get thee down and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.

Peter was given enough info to take the next step of faith and that was it. He didn't tell them why they were there. He just said, Go with them, Peter. Don't doubt. I've sent them. God will reveal more when he's ready.

But at this point, Peter just needed to know. He needed to go with them. So now the Jew brings the men into his house. Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius and said, Behold, I am he whom you seek.

[42 : 42] What is the cause whereof you are come? And Peter is wise. Proverbs 29, 11 says, A fool utters all his mind, but a wise man keeps it in until afterwards.

You know, shh, it's a secret. Peter doesn't say, Well, I had this weird thing happen to me. He just says, Yes, I'm whom you are seeking. Why have you come?

What is the next step that God has for me? Peter was prepared to receive their answer and God was using man now to reveal his plan. Where God had stepped in miraculously with Peter, with the sheet coming down from heaven, Peter is like, Okay, the Holy Spirit's saying, Go with these men.

And now God is just leading through these three guys that Peter's never met. They're Gentiles. But Peter's alright with that because Peter's walked with the Lord enough to know that, Oh, this is just another cog that the Lord is using to turn this wheel.

And they said, they had rehearsed this, Cornelius, a centurion, and just man, and one that fears God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews was warned from God by a holy angel to send for you into his house and to hear words of you.

[43 : 54] Then called he in them and lodged them. So they rehearsed this. And so what is the characteristics they put forth of Cornelius? A just man fears God. He was of good report.

He was warned of God, which meant he was someone who heard God's voice and he had obeyed God because he had sent for Peter. Small steps will lead to larger ones.

The first thing Peter did with these Gentile men is he brought them into his house. The whole entire tribe of Cornelius' home didn't show up at his doorstep. It was these three men. God had said, go with them, don't doubt anything.

He said, call nothing unclean that I have called clean. So this is a big step for Peter, bringing these guys into his house. I don't know what Simon the Tanner must have thought and how Jewish he was. You know, he's like, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, what are you doing?

Who are these guys? He's like, I'll tell you later. I had this dream and yeah. What verse were we in? 22. Yes, that God, where it says, and he was warned from God.

[44 : 54] The idea is, the word warned doesn't mean like warned, like look out for danger. It's more that he was spoken to by God, like an oracle, like a vision. It was something that was kind of a miraculous event in the way God spoke to him.

That God spoke to him in a way that was out of the ordinary. But God noticed him. In Psalm 91, 14, the Lord is saying that because the psalmist has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.

I will set him on high because he's known my name. He shall call upon me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him. God notices. God noticed Cornelius.

He took note of him and then he responded. And then this warned of him is stepping into his life, pushing into his life and saying, Cornelius, I know and I'm going to respond.

Verse 23. Then called he and them and lodged them and on the morrow Peter went away with them and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after, so here they had to spend the night then somewhere, they entered into Caesarea and Cornelius waited for them and called together his kinsmen and near friends.

[46 : 05] And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. So in Cornelius' mind, Peter's greater than the angels because the angel came to him and wouldn't give him and wouldn't give him the message that Peter was.

He says, hey, this guy's going to come and give you a message. He's going to tell you what you ought to do. And so for Cornelius, he's probably thinking that this must be like the God I'm supposed to be worshipping.

But Peter took him up saying, stand up. I myself am a man. All men are on the same footing. Jew, Gentile, whatever, as we see that. Peter didn't have any heirs.

So what was Cornelius' response to the gospel? How did the Gentiles respond to the gospel? They were ready for it.

They were there. They were waiting. They had Cornelius and all his friends and relatives. They were there. They received it. They didn't reject what Peter had to say. They didn't go, a Jew?

[47 : 05] Eh. We go down into Jerusalem to like, during the feast days to like, quell the uprisings. And they, eventually, they'll rejoice in it. And lastly, they'll, well, that's next time.

We'll stop here. How do we receive the gospel? 1 Corinthians 15, 1. Moreover, brethren, I declared unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received and wherein you stand.

We received it. We believed it. And we stand in it. And Cornelius is about to have the best day of his life. And Peter is about to have a very confusing day.

But in the end, it will open the door to the Gentiles. But interestingly, it'll be, could be as much as five to ten years later before they, before Paul actually goes to the Gentiles.

He is in the regions of Syria and Cilicia. Yeah. It could be as much as ten years from 35 to 46 AD. And so then here's Peter. He's going down, meeting in Caesarea with the Gentiles, opening the door to the Gentiles.

[48 : 13] But it's not like right on the heels of that Paul comes in. It's much later that that happens. But anyway, so they've received the gospel. And so we have this picture, one man outside of Christ, one man in Christ, both needing their perspectives changed.

Cornelius needed to know who the God he was praying to was. Peter needed to know that the God that he thought he knew was a little bit bigger, was a whole lot bigger than what he had expected.

And yet, what did they both have in common? They continued to persist in prayer, to be present in prayer. And the result was they had powerful performances of God in their life.

And God gave witness that their lives were pleasing to him. I like this verse I wanted to end with, where Jesus, again, talking about when he would go off and pray.

Mark 1.35, And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed. Why did the Lord pray? Did he need a vision?

[49 : 16] Did he need to see an oracle from God? Did he have to go into a trance? Did he need to find out who God was, discover more of him? Hmm, definitely not.

So what was it? I think it was that one part that they were purposed in their attitude, that they were after the Lord, not results. They were purposed that they were going to go after the Lord and they wanted to know him.

That led to all the rest of this. Peter wasn't like, well, I'm an apostle, so I need to make sure I got a lot to do. I got to heal some guys. I got to raise them up. I got to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

I better go up on the roof and nap. I got to, no, he was just pursuing the Lord and in his pursuit of the Lord, these are the things that resulted. The foundation was his response to the gospel and his prayer life.

That led to all of this. We're going to see later with the Gentiles that leads to a harvest. And so Jesus, if Jesus needed to go off and pray, if Jesus needed to be in a solitary place, that when you pray, go into your closet and close the door and your Father, who sees in secret, will answer you openly.

[50 : 27] Yes, it's good when we pray as a group, but God desires us to have a very punctual and practiced and persistent prayer life that he can then build something more on.

So let's pray. Lord, thank you for the example you've put before us. Thank you for the example of your own life. Lord, it was so evident that your life was based in prayer that the apostles would say to you, teach us to pray.

How do you do this? What do you, this connection you have? And I picture them trying it. You know, during that three-year ministry, going off by themselves, maybe one of them, and just like, oh, I can't shut my mind off.

And this doesn't seem to be working. And Lord, I think after the Holy Spirit was given, after Pentecost, Lord, how different the prayers of these people were.

The room was shaken. Lives were changed. Jerusalem was turned upside down. The gospel went to the four corners of the world. And Lord, Peter, just in an afternoon when he's hungry, he's tired, he still was there to pray.

[51 : 39] And you used the weakness, Lord, of this man to display your strength. So Lord, let us not ever hold back from persisting in something that we know we need, Lord, in our lives.

Because I don't know how. I don't know, Lord, what it's supposed to look like. And so often, when I sit alone with you to pray, I get up, you know, 20 minutes later and think, I don't know.

Sometimes I connect and sometimes it seems I don't. But Lord, that doesn't hold you back. I thank you for that, Lord. I thank you, Lord, that we are now set apart.

We're no longer common, Lord. That, Lord, the world can look down on us or say whatever they want, Lord. But in heaven, Lord, our name is written. In heaven we are known. We are a common name on your lips.

And that's crazy, Lord. Thank you, Lord, for bringing us before the throne. Thank you for interceding on our behalf that your prayers are always answered, Lord, in a powerful way.

[52 : 41] Thank you for the Holy Spirit that so effectively interprets our prayers and groanings. And thank you, Lord, for answering every prayer, Lord. Help us not to grow discouraged when we don't see the manifestation of that answer.

But, Lord, let us continue to pursue you. And, Lord, I pray, if we are doubting, if we've come doubting, Lord, Lord, I have doubts, that, Lord, you would give us a direction and an action that we can take, Lord, that we can get our minds off the doubts, Lord, that we can get out of our discouragement, we can continue to walk forward with you in your strength and in your purpose and your plan.

I just thank you, Lord, for my brothers and sisters here tonight. I pray you'd pour out your spirit upon them, Lord. I pray you'd be real in their lives, that you'd work effectually in their lives, Lord. That it wouldn't just be, well, I expect this to happen anyway and I'm going to pray about it.

But, Lord, we pray about things we would not expect to happen except that we prayed and we expect you to come in and do something, Lord. That, Lord, our expectation would be in you to do the impossible, to do the things that nobody else can do and would never happen in our lives or the lives of those people around us.

And so, Lord, I pray for Mount Holly, Lord. I pray for this church that you would do what nobody else can do. We tried, Lord. We've invited people. We've handed out flyers. Lord, that you would build this church.

[54 : 01] Thank you, Lord, that you're doing that. It's not about numbers, Lord. But, Lord, we want to reach people. We want others, Lord, to know, to be part of the harvest because you are worthy, Lord, because you have died for every single soul.

And so, Lord, help our prayers to be effective and help us to expect great things from you. And in Jesus' name, Amen.