

# Emancipation, Equality and the Evangel

*Freedom is only possible where truth is exalted*

## Study 12a: BODY MORE THAN A MOUTH (9:32-43)

9:32-35 What *witness* won Lydda and Sharon? (Heb. 2:3,4)

9:36-43 What ministry did Tabitha have? (1 Cor. 12:28)

At the conclusion of the Corinthian chapter when the apostle was dealing with the subject of gifts, enumerating them ... he referred to "helps." That gift is illustrated in the case of Dorcas ... it means gifts of relief. When Dorcas was using her deft fingers to make garments, she was doing it in the power of that gift which the Holy Spirit had bestowed; just as surely as Peter raised Dorcas and healed Aeneas, as the result of gifts bestowed by the Spirit. Much of the force of Christian testimony is lost in the world because we forget that such a gift as this is also of the Holy Spirit. -- **G. C. Morgan**,

*Acts* p.202... one of the very real evidences of a truly converted person! She was deeply interested in doing good to others ... many professing believers

## Whom has history vindicated?

Abraham Lincoln, in the *Emancipation Proclamation* (1862), declared that all slaves in all American states would be free as of January 1863, "then, thenceforward, and forever free". At the conclusion of the Proclamation Lincoln invoked "the gracious favor of Almighty God". But some states (above) had a differing notion of God's sovereign will. Whom has history vindicated?



are so terribly self-centred. They seem to be looking constantly for some new religious thrill or new spiritual experience. They are always looking inside and always seeking blessing for themselves, ... The ideal Christian is one who is resting in Christ for his soul's salvation and now his great concern is not his own salvation but that of others ... [Tabitha] had a consecrated needle and used it for the blessing of other people ... the Spirit of God has preserved this record that we might learn from it and never forget it...Anyone constantly occupied with his own spiritual experience and never concerned about blessing other people will never have an experience worth being occupied with. - **H Ironside**, *Acts* pp.236-238

The description of the miracle closely resembles that of the raising of Jairus' daughter, but unlike his Lord Peter first *kneels and prays*. He also takes Tabitha's hand after she has returned to life; to have done so before would have made him unclean ... To gather up the fruits of the work demanded a prolonged stay in Joppa. The lodging S. Peter chose -- the house of *Simon a tanner* -- is a sign of the breaking down of Jewish prejudices, and a fit preparation for the following history. For the trade of tanning involving continual contact with the skins of unclean animals, was inevitably held unclean by the Jews. -- **R.B Rackham**, *Acts* pp.145,146

## Study 12b: DIVINE OR HUMAN DIRECTION? (10:1-33)

10:1 How had the Caesarea "ground" been prepared for sowing of the gospel among the Gentiles? (vv.36-38; 8:40)

The centurions who make their appearance in the NT record all make a favourable impression. It is to be noted that the first Gentile with who Jesus had dealings during His public ministry (so far as we are informed) was a Roman centurion, and that it was with reference to this man's faith that He said, "many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" ... These words now begin to find their fulfilment in another centurion. -- **F.F. Bruce**, *Acts* p.215

10:1-4 Do men have to hear the gospel in order to be judged by God? (17:22-28, esp. v.27; John 1:1-9, esp. vv.4,9)

This man Cornelius stands out ... He is an evidence of the truth to which John draws attention [John 1:9] ... that there is a "light that lighteth every man." He is an illustration by contrast of the truth to which Paul draws attention [Romans 1] ... when he charges the Gentiles with this peculiar sin, that they held down the truth in unrighteousness; that is, that they had not obeyed the light they had; that whereas in the creation they might verily see the Divinity and the wisdom of God, instead of following that light and worshipping God, they worshipped the creature more than the Creator ... here was a man standing in contrast to that description, one who had been true to the light that was within him ... Just as Jesus said: "Ye must be born anew," not to a man vile and contemptible and notorious in vulgar sin; but to Nicodemus, the highest product of Judaism, the man who, sincere and true and devout and enquiring, was seeking the teaching of every messenger from heaven; so also here the first Gentile admitted into the recognized fellowship of the Christian Church was a Gentile who had come as far as he could, apart from the evangel. -- **G. C. Morgan**, *op.cit.*, pp.208,209

**10:5-16 In Caesarea Philip prepares the ground, God prepares a heart; Peter (also prepared) carries “many days” at Joppa. Which much maligned truth is proclaimed boldly by these “chance” circumstances? (17:26,28)**

What was a Christian Jew to do? Was he still cut off from intercourse with Gentiles by this law of uncleanness? This question must have been pressed upon Peter by his visit to Joppa with its shipping and busy Gentile population. Joppa also must have made him think of Jonah, the prophet who had been entrusted with a message to the Gentiles and had fled to Joppa to escape from it. Was he a second Jonah shrinking from the solution of this question? -- **R.B. Rackham**, *op.cit.*, p.150

**10:17-33 When revelation is difficult to understand, how can we know its interpretation? (1 Cor. 12-14; Mark 7:19)**

**NOTE: Was Cornelius a righteous or tactless Gentile? (v.33, NWT)**

The mouth of Jewish exclusiveness and prejudice could find no word to utter against Cornelius. Even bigotry must be dumb. The gospel was for the foulest heathen, as well as for the fairest. But the time for the vile was not yet ripe. The Lord did not tax his people too heavily when he offered them the first alien for their suffrage. -- **J.M. Stiffler**, *Acts* p.84

### **Study 12c: THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL (10:34-48)**

**10:34-36 What does Peter consider to be the essence of his preaching? (Luke 1:79; 2:14; Acts 2:36)**

... had a person like Cornelius said, “My good deeds are sufficient to win me favour with God, and I have no need of the gospel” (which is essentially what the Pharisee said in Lk. 18:11), then it would have become clear that he was not accepted by God; a good life is acceptable in God’s sight only when it leads to recognition of its own inadequacy and to acceptance of the gospel (or when it would have done so, had opportunity of hearing the gospel been provided). -- **I.H. Marshall**, *Acts* pp.189,190

... C.H. Dodd is no doubt right in suggesting “that the speech before Cornelius represents the form of *kerygma* used by the primitive Church in its earliest approaches to a wider preaching ... The scope of the *kerygma*, as attested by this address of Peter’s is almost exactly the scope of Mark’s gospel, beginning with John’s baptism, and going on to tell of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee, Judaea and Jerusalem, of His crucifixion and resurrection, followed by the insistence on personal **witness** and on the coming judgment, with the offer of forgiveness through faith in Him here and now. -- **F.F. Bruce**, *Acts* pp.225,226 (bold emphasis added)

**10:37-43 Why could only the apostles be witnesses of the gospel?**

The resurrection appearances were not made to the people at large. The reason appears to have been that those who saw Jesus were constituted to act as **witnesses** to the many people who could not see him, and this

obligation was not laid on people who were unfit for it but only on those who had been prepared by lengthy association with Jesus and by sharing in his work of mission. -- **I.H. Marshall**, *op.cit.*, p.193 (bold added)

The sermon falls into two parts: 1. the response to the particular circumstances (34-5), 2. the sermon or *word* itself (36-43), which is the same gospel as heretofore, only so presented as to appeal more particularly to the Gentiles. Hence there are new points. (1) In the Christology, (a) Jesus Christ is not only the ‘Lord and Christ’ of the Jews as in 2:36, he is now ‘the *Lord of all men*.’ (b) The fulfilment of national Messianic expectations would not be understood by the Gentiles, so he is presented not as the Christ but as *the Judge* of all men. (2) Corresponding to this in practical religion we have laid down (a) the catholic relation of God to the righteous in every nation alike, then at the end (b) a deeper view of faith on which this depends. S. Peter had spoken of faith from the beginning (3:16), but it does not seem wholly accidental that here he uses that phrase which more correctly would be translated ‘*believing into Christ*,’ and so expresses the true character of faith’ ... But their witness extended to a further point, viz. his *ordination by God to be Judge*. This was an office which would belong to the Messiah as king, but it rested on deeper grounds. S. John tells us that the Lord received authority to execute judgement because he is the Son of Man. This office then rested on his humanity, and it involved a universal relation to all men alike, Jew and Gentile. To the Jews this doctrine had been hinted at in 2:39, 3:25-6. Now to the Gentiles S. Peter (as S. Paul in 17:31) declares it explicitly ... -- **R.B. Rackham**, *op.cit.*, pp.154-158

**10:44-48 What may Peter have learned as a result of the Holy Spirit’s (tactless?) interruption?**

Yet enough had been said for the Spirit to *make saving use of it* --Christ being held up the anointed, crucified, risen Saviour, witnessed to by prophets, testified to by believers; and the essence of the whole gospel having been compressed and expressed in one brief sentence: “Through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” ... while Peter yet spake the words of salvation, the Spirit of God, as with a divine impatience, set aside both messenger and message ... -- **A.T. Pierson**, *op.cit.*, p.86

... the value of this story ... is that it is for evermore revealing the fact that “The wind bloweth where it will.” The Spirit interrupted the apostle in his discourse, falling upon the listening men and women when they had heard enough of the message to believe into the Christ ... We so constantly imagine that it is necessary for us not to preach Christ only, but to defend Christ, and vindicate Christ, and explain Christ. -- **G. Campbell Morgan**, *op.cit.*, pp.216,220