

“GET UP, PETER. KILL AND EAT.”

Acts 9:32-11:18 (10:13)

Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”

In today's passage we will see how beautifully Peter co-worked with the Lord, first among the Jews and then (for the first time) among the gentiles. Now when it came to serving the Jews, Peter shared the Lord's heart. He willingly and passionately served his Jewish brothers and sisters. However, at first, when it came to the gentiles the same cannot be said about Peter. Peter had a passive and wrong attitude. He had no hope nor any heart for the gentiles. So the Lord challenged Peter in a vision, saying: Get up Peter. Kill and eat. **Like Peter, we too often have a passive and wrong attitude towards certain people. Yet the Lord wants us to serve them with His love, just as we serve others. But may the Lord today challenge and correct our attitudes with His word: Get Up. Kill and Eat. Amen**

It was a time when the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria..... enjoyed a time of peace. (9:31) During this time, Peter travelled about the country (32a). Look at verse 32. On one occasion, he went to visit the Lord's people who lived in Lydda. (32b) There he found a man named Aeneas. Sadly, Aeneas was paralyzed and bedridden for eight years (33) But Peter remembered how Jesus once healed a man..... who was also lame, just like Aeneas! (John 5:8) In Jesus, Peter found hope for Aeneas. Look at verse 34. Peter said to him: “Aeneas,” Jesus Christ heals you. “Get up and roll up your mat.” Immediately Aeneas got up. Though Peter was speaking, the Lord was the one who healed Aeneas. And caused all those who lived in Lydda and Sharon to see him and turn to the Lord. (35)

A few days later, something similar happened in Joppa. Look at verses 36-37. (Read) Indeed, Tabitha's death was most tragic! But instead of mourning for her, the disciples sent two men to urge Peter, “Please come at once!” (38) Why do you think they so urgently sent for Peter? To officiate the funeral? No!! They believed Jesus could raise their sister from the dead...through Peter! Such was the faith and spirit of the believers in those days!!! Look at verse 39. Peter went with them. When he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying. But Peter remembered how Jesus once raised Jairus' little daughter from the dead. In Jesus, Peter again found hope for the crying widows. Look at verse 40. Peter sent all the widows out of the room. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, Peter said, “Tabitha, get up.” What happened? She opened her eyes, like one who awoke from a deep sleep. Then seeing Peter she sat up. This sounds like a scene from a Hollywood movie, right! But it really happened! For not only did Jesus raise Tabitha from the dead, but He used her resurrection to bring many people in Joppa, to believe in the Lord. (42)

Here we cannot but marvel at the beautiful co-working between Peter and the Lord. Every time Peter came across an impossible situation, he found hope in Jesus. And in this hope, Peter could beautifully serve the most hopeless of people with the love of Jesus. Then, though Peter was the one physically present..... the Lord was the one who worked mightily through Peter; to strengthen and grow His church. In this we can see how the Lord works among us, even today. Take shepherd Jacob and Rebekah for example. Last week we heard their testimonies of how the Lord worked in so many ways through them to establish, grow and strengthen the WITS ministry. In this we see just how precious their co-working was with the Lord. For without the Lord, they would never have been able to establish this ministry. At the same time, without missionary Jacob and Rebekah, the Lord would not have been able to work in our hearts to believe in Him and join this ministry. Here the saying “it takes two to tango” rings true. We need the Lord to work in and among us. Also, the Lord needs you and me to find hope in Him and physically serve others, just like Peter did in Lydda and Joppa.

But what happens when we are not on the same page as the Lord? Let's find out through Peter. Look at verse 43. (Read) As we have seen so far, the Lord worked powerfully through Peter to

strengthen and grow His church. But then, as Peter stayed in Joppa for some time, it seems he took a bit of a breather. (9:43) Does this mean the Lord also took a breather? Absolutely not!

Look at 10:1 (Read) While Peter took things easy in Joppa, the Lord went ahead of him to Caesarea, to set up a meeting for Peter with a man called Cornelius. But why did the Lord want Peter to meet with a man like Cornelius? For Cornelius was a hardened Roman soldier. An enemy of the Jews. And an oppressor of the Jewish people. Again we might ask; what did the Lord want with Cornelius? Yes, the Lord wanted to save him from his sin and adopt him as his precious son. Moreover, the Lord wanted Cornelius to not only be the first gentile believer..... but also the gateway for the gospel to extend to all the gentile nations.

In fact, by now, the Lord had already worked wonderfully in Cornelius' heart. Look at verse 2. As a Roman, one would expect Cornelius to have been an idol worshipper.....or atheist at worst. Right? Yet he and all his family were devout and God-fearing men and women! Also, one would have thought that Cornelius was a heartless man who cared absolutely nothing for the Jews. But instead, Cornelius cared so much about the Jews that he gave generously to those in need.....He even prayed to God regularly for them. This sounds strange; right?! How is it that a Roman Gentile.....a so-called pagan.....and hardened Roman soldier.... behaved in such a Godlike manner? **Yes, it was the Lord who began a good work in Cornelius.** To prepare him to be the first gentile to hear and accept the gospel of Jesus. How wonderful was God's grace on Cornelius!! How warm was His love on this gentile sinner - to draw Cornelius unto Himself. (I cannot but see myself in Cornelius.....and praise God for His grace and love on a gentile sinner like me!)

But as we know, for Cornelius to be saved, he needed to hear about Jesus. This meant that someone had to go and share the gospel message with him. This someone was Peter! Look at verses 3-6. (Read). The Lord told Cornelius exactly where to find Peter. He then instructed Cornelius that once his men located Peter, they were to bring Peter back to his home. Then Peter would share a message through which Cornelius and all his household would be saved! (11:14) Look at verses 7-8. Cornelius excitedly sent three men to Joppa to immediately find and bring Peter back with them..... just as the Lord commanded.

Now at the time, Peter was blissfully unaware of the meeting that the Lord set up between him and Cornelius. But then, a day later, the Lord appeared to Peter in a vision. Look at verses 10:9-16. (Read) What a strange vision, right! Like Peter, we too wonder what the meaning of this vision is. However, when we consider this vision within the context of Christ and the Lord's desire for Peter to share the gospel with Cornelius, it all makes perfect sense. Initially, God gave the Israelites dietary laws to separate them from their Gentile, pagan neighbors, who did not worship or obey Him. In this way, the Lord wanted His people to grow as a Holy Nation. However, in Christ, not only did these dietary laws fall away but also the need for the Jews to separate themselves from the Gentiles.....fell away. For in Christ..... God has made a new way with the blood of Jesus to clean all people from their dirty sins. And so establish both Jews and Gentiles as one holy nation and universal church.

The problem was that Peter did not share the Lord's heart towards the gentiles. Instead, he was still stuck in the old dispensation of the law. Therefore, despite being a disciple of the Lord.....and despite shepherding his fellow Jews with the heart and power of the Lord, his attitude towards gentiles (people like Cornelius) was completely passive. Unlike with Aeneas and Tabitha, Peter had no hope for the Gentiles. In fact, he did not consider it his responsibility to serve the gentiles with the words of Jesus. Instead, his heart was ONLY with his Jewish brothers and sisters..... But let's look again at verse 13. Can we please read today's key verse together? Then a voice told him. "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat. With this word..... God challenged Peter's passive and wrong attitude towards the gentiles! To take action!!! To Get Up! Kill! And Eat!!In the vision the Lord told Peter to Get Up. Kill and eat the previously unclean and impure animals. Likewise, the Lord wanted Peter to get up spiritually, and actively serve the previously despised gentiles..... people like Cornelius.....with the same hope and passion.....as he served Aeneas and Tabitha. Surely, the Lord could have sent someone else to share the gospel with Cornelius. But the Lord loved Peter!

And wanted to work with Peter to bring the gospel for the first time to the gentiles. (For they were a team; right?! ☺) So God challenged him saying; “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”

Look at verses 17-20. While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the three men Cornelius sent arrived outside the house. Then the Spirit said to Peter; “Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them. At this Peter not only understood the vision but repented of his passive and wrong way of thinking about the gentiles. He immediately jumped to action by doing the previously unthinkable. First he invited the three gentile men into the house to be his guests. Then he went with them to Caesarea where he entered Cornelius’ gentile home. (23-25) How wonderful to see the beautiful work of the Lord.....first in Cornelius.....and then in Peter.....to bring two men..... from completely different worlds..... together under one roof.....to gather in the presence of God (10:33) so they could talk about the gospel of Jesus!

Oh!!! And how eager was Cornelius to listen to the gospel message. Before Peter arrived he even called together his relatives and close friends. (24) So when Peter went inside Cornelius’ house he found a large gathering of people. (27) Ready to listen to everything Peter was about to tell them about Jesus. (33) It was then that Peter realized that in Jesus, God does not distinguish between Jews and gentiles. With this Peter eagerly shared the good news of peace through Christ..... with Cornelius and his family....his relatives and friends. (37-43) He told them how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. (38) He also told them how the religious leaders with the help of the Romans killed Jesus by hanging him on a cross. (39a) He then explained how God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. (40) And that God appointed Jesus as judge of the living and the dead. (42) **Then, finally** Peter invited them to receive forgiveness of their sins by believing in Jesus. At this the Lord did something amazing. Look at verse 44. While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. Then Peter ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. (48)

In context of the Lord's salvation history, this was a hugely significant moment and event in time. For with this, it was the first time that the gentiles accepted the gospel and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Also, with this the church of God began to extend to the ends of the earth. Just as Jesus said it would. (1:8) All because of the wonderful working of the Lord, first in Cornelius and then in Peter! And also, because of Peter’s beautiful co-working with the Lord.

In conclusion. In this passage we saw how powerfully the Lord worked, first among the Jews and then for the first time among the gentiles. In this we could feel the Lord's desire....his passion.....to save as many and all kinds of people, no matter their background, their race or culture. But then, to do this the Lord needed effective coworkers, like Peter. Men and women who share the Lord’s heart for people, and have a desire to save them through the gospel message. **Sadly, however,** like Peter we become too comfortable in serving only those who we are comfortable with, or who we like, or who we understand. So, even though the Lord has set up meetings for us with people who are eager to hear the gospel of the Lord, we are passive in reaching out to them or serve them. Just like Peter was with Cornelius.

This does not mean that the Lord has given up on us. Instead, like Peter the Lord is telling us to **Get up. Kill and eat!** With this word the Lord challenge our passive attitude to actively get up, and share the gospel with those the Lord has allocate to us. For surely, the Lord's desire to advance His gospel among all nations are the same today as it was in those days. So even though it is cold and we have stage four load shedding.....and even though we are tired after the exams or busy at work.....let's hear the word of Jesus today. Get Up. Kill and Eat. Amen!