



JULY 11, 2021 | PASTOR WOOHYUN JUNG

“The Transformation of Peter” (Acts 10)

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ²He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”

⁴ Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked.

The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. ⁵Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.”

⁷When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. ⁸He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

⁹About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹²It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. ¹³Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”

¹⁴“Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”

¹⁵The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

¹⁶This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

¹⁷While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate. ¹⁸They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

¹⁹While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you. ²⁰So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.”

²¹Peter went down and said to the men, “I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?”

²²The men replied, “We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.” ²³Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.



ACTS 10 (cont'd)

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. ²⁴ The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. ²⁶ But Peter made him get up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.”

²⁷ While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. ²⁸ He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile, but God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. ²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?”

³⁰ Cornelius answered: “Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me ³¹ and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. ³² Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’ ³³ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. ³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

³⁹ “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” ⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Core Idea: For the advancement of the Gospel, God continually transforms our minds, hearts, and lives.



INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon church. Hope you're all doing well. If you have your Bibles, please turn to Acts 10. The story we're about to read serves as a major turning point for the church as the Gospel now goes to the gentiles. After this event, the church was never going to be the same again. So, let me read this story. It's a little long – so, let me give you a tip. It's a narrative – use your imagination. Imagine this story with me – and I pray that the Holy Spirit will minister to us through the Word that brings life.

[read Acts 10]

The story begins with a man named Cornelius, a centurion in the Italian Regiment, but the emphasis is not on what he does, but rather on his character. Verse 2 tells us that he was devout and God-fearing – someone who sought after God, which is why he prayed regularly. He gave generously – someone you would consider a good man, but he didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. How do we know? Listen to the reason that the angel gives as to why Cornelius needed to bring Peter to his place – Acts 11:14 says, *"He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved."* Cornelius needed this message so that he will receive salvation. So, at first glance, it may seem like this story is going to be about Cornelius – how God uses Peter to share the Gospel to bring Cornelius and his family to salvation – signaling the beginning of mission to the gentiles. This certainly does happen, but I believe that the main point of this passage is actually not about the conversion of Cornelius but the transformation of Peter.

Before we dig further into this story, it would help us to understand the context. Here, we have two main characters: Cornelius and Peter – one is a *gentile*, and the other is a *Jew*. This is significant because it describes the social tension that existed between the two. Historically, the Jews despised gentiles and developed traditions that kept them apart. They were isolated from each other, and in worst cases, there were even hostility and violence. Over time, they learned to coexist but never to interact. The racial pride and hatred that existed in the Jewish community made it difficult for these two communities to come together – and this was how things were even inside the church. The Jewish Christians, including Peter, bound up their faith and belief with their culture so that they became the same thing. This is why the Jewish Christians wanted the gentile Christians to get circumcised and convert to their custom and tradition, but Jesus wanted His church to be different from the rest of the world and God was about to break the barriers down and show that His plan of salvation was far bigger than one particular people group – and this would begin with Peter's transformation. Three ways Peter was transformed:

- **Peter's Mind Was Transformed by the Truth (V. 9-20)**
- **Peter's Heart Was Transformed by Life Experience (V. 21-35)**
- **Peter's Life Was Transformed by the Truth Experienced (V. 44-48)**

1) Peter's Mind Was Transformed by the Truth

Let's turn to verse 9. Just before Cornelius' men arrived at the place where Peter was staying, Peter was on the rooftop, praying, when he saw a vision. A large sheet was being let down by its four corners, and it contained all kinds of "unclean" animals. Peter then heard a loud voice from heaven, *"Get up, Peter. Kill and eat it."* Peter answered with shock, *"Surely not, Lord! I've never eaten anything impure or unclean."* He said this because as a Jew, some of the animals that came down on this sheet were ritualistically forbidden to eat – his dietary laws didn't permit him to do so. He was essentially saying this: "That's not what my people do. My people don't behave like that. We don't eat that kind of thing." For him, to eat these "unclean" animals was not only breaking of rule but actually betraying his people, denying who he was. So, you could see the weight of his words, but the voice responded in verse 15, *"Don't call anything impure that God has made clean."* This happened three times, and then it was all taken up to heaven again.



What was happening? Peter was getting new information – or more precisely, was being reminded of the truth that he heard when he did life with Jesus. In Mark 7, when the Pharisees were criticizing Jesus' disciples for eating food with their unwashed hands, Jesus responded: *“Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body. What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come”* – and Mark adds his own commentary in verse 19, *“In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.”* As Peter reflected on the vision, he was beginning to realize something: that if these animals are clean, then that must mean that the people eat them are also clean. While Peter was still pondering the meaning of this vision, three men from Cornelius arrived. The fact that this vision took place three times and that there were three gentiles was no accident. The message was clear: the people that he had regarded as impure and unclean, and separated from his fellowship, are not to be viewed that way anymore – which is why he went with them without hesitation. Through this vision, God was showing that these dietary laws have somehow become the focus of their identity, which was then used to create a division between peoples. These walls needed to come down for the Gospel to reach them and God started this process by reminding Peter that nothing created by God was unclean. **God transformed Peter's mind with the truth of God so that there was a new way of thinking.**

I often hear people say something like this: “I learned a lot about the Bible, but it was all head knowledge, not heart knowledge. It wasn't until all that head knowledge moved down to my heart that my life began to change.” I understand what they're saying – it's true that knowing the truth can be dangerous if it's not obeyed and lived out because it can lead to pride, but this could also be misunderstood as if head knowledge was the enemy and heart knowledge was the friend of our spiritual life. This simply is not true. **It's absolutely crucial that we know and understand the truth in depth, with accuracy and precision, because knowing the truth of God will give us the foundation, motivation, and direction to live a life driven by the Gospel.** How important is it then for us to know the truth accurately! This is why we must be in the Word. We must allow the Word to teach us new truths, challenge our thoughts, correct our misunderstandings, and expand our understanding about God, ourselves, and the world. Then is the truth of God teaching you, challenging you, correcting and expanding your views today?

Now, you may ask, “How is knowing the truth accurately related to the advancement of the Gospel?” In every way. If you don't clearly understand the Gospel, you could lead someone to false conversion. You won't evangelize if you believe that the Gospel is not good news. You won't evangelize if you think that God is going to do all the work of saving people. You won't evangelize if you think that only the pastors are called to share the news. You may pick and choose who you share the Gospel with if you don't believe that everyone is created in the image of God and is worthy to receive His grace. You'll be quickly discouraged if you think that one's conversion depends on how you present the Gospel. In other words, what you know matters. Then when was the last time you carved out time to slow down from your busy lives to read the Word? When was the last time you wrestled with the Word? When was the last time you invited the Spirit to search you, speak to you through the Word? Brothers and sisters, turn to the Word today because this is *that* important not only for us as believers but also for the sake of the lost. Our minds must be transformed by the truth.

2) Peter's Heart Was Transformed by Life Experience

Let's go back to the beginning. An angel comes to Cornelius to tell him that he needs to get Peter from Joppa so that he could hear what Peter had to say. Now, why was it necessary for Peter to share the Gospel to Cornelius? Why couldn't the angel just preach the Gospel? Think with me: three men had to travel to Joppa; they had to spend a day to rest; they took another day to travel back to Caesarea – which could've all been avoided, and Cornelius could've received the Gospel sooner, if the angel had just proclaimed the Gospel. Then why did Peter have to come to Cornelius? Or more importantly, why didn't the angel command Cornelius himself to go to Peter? Because it was about Peter's transformation.



Let me explain. If Cornelius went to Peter, Peter could've had some kind of control over the situation – meet outside the house, prepare the right meal, offer another table for Cornelius to eat from – there were things that Peter could've done to avoid from engaging, but by going to Cornelius, Peter had to make himself vulnerable, but in this vulnerable situation, God was about to do something amazing.

After arriving at Cornelius' house, he saw a large assembly of gentiles waiting to hear the Gospel, hungry for the Gospel and at that moment, light dawned on Peter, and everything made sense. Listen to his words in verse 28, *"You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a gentile."* In other words, he was saying, "I've never done this before. All of my life as a Jew, it has been drilled into me that I shouldn't walk into a gentile's house, eat with them because they're considered unclean." *"But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean"* – referring to the vision that changed the way of his thinking and verse 34, *"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right."* The expression *"I now realize"* means the truth came alive. He was saying, "How can I show favoritism if God doesn't?" You see, even though Peter was an Apostle, he still wasn't living out the Gospel – he wasn't seeing the implication of the salvation by grace: that you're not saved by your race, ethnicity, history, customs, accomplishments, education, bank account, but only by His generous love for you. So, *God* put Peter in this situation to help him experience this truth personally and what used to be just an abstract principle has now become a life-changing reality because it has gone from his head down to his heart.

In the same way, God may put us in life situations so that we may experience the truth of God and be shaped by it in our hearts. This could be true for you right now – whatever you're going through is ordained by God because He wants you to experience this particular truth in your life. Let me give you an example to help your understanding. One of my favorite passages is Proverbs 3:5-6, *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight."* I'm pretty sure many of us have reflected on this, desired this, and even prayed through this, but the power of this truth cannot be felt unless you're placed in a situation to wrestle with this truth. Maybe it's a loss of your job; there's a falling out with a friend; someone you love gets sick; you experience a huge setback; or any other circumstances in life that tempts you to take control. You want to do everything in your power to change the situation and figure out why this is happening, but God is calling you not to lean on your own understanding and trust Him with all your heart. He is inviting you to submit to Him because He's going to make your path straight – because His ways, though possibly different from what we desire, will always bring glory to His name and only in hindsight, you'll realize that this situation was instrumental in producing perseverance and character in you – causing you to become stronger in your faith. You see, it's one thing to know the truth; but when you experience the power of the truth in life, it will change you and when we experience the power of truth in life more and more, and more truths become real in our lives, it will better prepare and equip us to advance the Gospel better. Our hearts must be transformed by wrestling with and experiencing truths in life.

3) Peter's Life Was Transformed by the Truth Experienced

Peter was not the same person by the end of the story. How do we know this? Look at verse 48. After Peter preached and baptized them, Peter could've gone home, but *"they [Cornelius and his family] asked Peter to stay with them for a few days"* – and the implication is that he *did* because he's accused of entering the house of uncircumcised and eating with them in chapter 11. For a few days, he received hospitality from the ones he once thought were unclean. Then considering the tension that existed between the Jews and the gentiles, this was an unbelievable transformation. Peter stayed and dined with them. Now, if you haven't noticed, this story is intertwined with **food**. Peter gets hungry during prayer. Peter's vision is about eating these "unclean" animals and it ends by implying that Peter ate and drank with Cornelius' family. Why do you think that is? Maybe this will help: What happens at the table?



Beyond sharing a meal together, it represents intimacy. We share meals with our family and friends, those who we appreciate and value, those who we want to cultivate deeper relationship, those who we love. Using food as a metaphor, then, God was teaching Peter that this is fundamentally about who he will dine with – who he will have that intimacy with.

Then, my question to you is this: who sits at your table? Who do you eat with? More importantly, who sits at the table of your life? Who is doing life with you? Who are you inviting to do life with you? Who is not allowed to do life with you? Who is speaking into your life? Who is influencing your perspectives? Peter has taken his custom, tradition, laws, and history to put a barrier from others so that he would not dine with them – what about us? What has been used to create a wall that prevented us to share the Gospel and share life with – race, gender, personality, history, social status, or their political positions? Well, let me share just two passages that will hopefully break these divisive walls down. Genesis 1:27 says, “*So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them.*” Galatians 3:28 says, “*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” Brothers and sisters, do you believe this? Have you wrestled with this truth? If you did, you cannot leave anyone out of your table.

Let’s be honest: how do we possibly do this when, left to ourselves, our natural, sinful, broken tendency is to divide, discriminate, and judge according to superficial things? No matter how strong our will power may be, it’s impossible to change permanently. Then how can anyone experience truly a *life* transformation to do this? Look at verse 36. As a part of his sermon, Peter shares, “*You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.*” What’s the good news of *peace*? Peter explains in verse 38 that it centers around Jesus who lived a perfect life of love, but instead of earning blessings, Jesus received a curse by being killed on the cross. Now, why did He go through this? **Because He was taking on the curse for us.** You see, before this holy God, all of us have been cut off from Him because of our sins. We were destined to be cursed. Yet, in His great love, God sent His one and only Son Jesus Christ who *joyfully* took our curse upon Himself so that His blessings can be ours. Peace between God and us was accomplished by what Christ has done. Now, how do we know Jesus did this *joyfully* for us? Look with me to verse 41, “*He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen – by us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.*” The first thing He did after resurrection wasn’t to blame His disciples for His death – **He dined with them.** He shared in intimacy. He celebrated. He rejoiced. He desired even deeper relationship with them and that’s what He wants to do with us. He wants to share His table with us. Brothers and sisters, it’s been awhile since we shared the Lord’s Supper together, but this is a representation of God saying to us, “Come and sit at my table. You’re welcomed here.” It reminds us that we who were despised and hell-bound because of our sins are now welcomed, loved, and embraced as His children, enjoying this intimate relationship with our heavenly Father. I can’t wait until we take communion together once again. Now, if this is what He has done for us, if His love for us is not just something we know but something that we experienced down to our core through many life circumstances, if it’s something that we tasted, how can we not be transformed as individuals and as a community that breaks down the walls to bring the good news to those who must hear it? This isn’t just good news of peace between God and us; it also brings peace between one another.

GOSPEL

If you’re not yet a follower of Christ, I invite you to join Him at His table today. Now, let me tell you what this doesn’t mean. It doesn’t mean that you try harder to be good on your own. Let’s go back to the beginning of this story. When the angel came to Cornelius, he shares that God saw who Cornelius was – that he prayed, was generous, and desperately was seeking for God, but notice that the angel didn’t say, “You’re doing a good job! You’re almost there! If you continue, you’ll be on your way to heaven!” No, he says, “God heard you. Now, send for Peter so that you may *hear* what he has to say.”



Friends, I pray that you heard the good news today – that Jesus lived a perfect life on behalf of us; that He died the death that you and I deserved; that He rose from the dead so that you and I can receive life and life to the full. All you need to do is ask for forgiveness and trust Him to be the Lord and Savior of your soul. He will save you, meet you, and dine with you.

If you're a follower of Christ, we must make ourselves vulnerable to love, serve, and faithfully proclaim the Gospel – this is how God is going to advance this good news of peace to the world.

CONCLUSION

The Gospel will move out. Nothing will stop the advancement of the Gospel because God is not done saving His people and for that reason, He will continue to transform us – He will transform our **minds** with the truth, our **hearts** with the truth experienced in life, and our **lives** as the truth now shapes us in every way. Let us humble ourselves and allow the Spirit to work in us so that this life-giving, life-transforming message will go out from us to the world.

Let's pray.