



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## Prayer and His Word: God's Keys to Gentile Access

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David Andersen / PO Box 2020, Chesterfield, VA 23832 / David.Andersen@capitolcom.org

**Acts 10:9-20** *“But on the next day, as they were traveling and drawing near to the city, Peter went up onto the roof to pray, about noon. 10) And he became hungry and was wishing to eat. But while they prepared, there came on him a trance. 11) And he was beholding the heaven being opened and a certain vessel coming down like a great, fine linen sheet, four dominions being let down upon the earth, 12) in which lived all the four footed beasts and reptiles and birds of heaven. 13) And to him there came a voice, ‘Rise up, Peter, slay and eat.’ 14) But Peter said, ‘Certainly not, Lord, because I have never eaten anything common and unclean.’ 15) And a voice came to him again a second time, ‘What things God has cleansed, you yourself do not continue to defile.’ 16) And this happened on three occasions and immediately the vessel was taken up into heaven. 17) Now as Peter was greatly perplexed in himself what the vision should be which he saw, behold, the men having been sent by Cornelius, having inquired through to the house of Simon, stood on the porch, 18) And calling, they inquired if Simon surnamed Peter was being lodged there. 19) But to Peter, while pondering to himself about the vision, the Spirit said, ‘Behold, three men are seeking you, 20) But rise up, go down and go with them, evaluating nothing carefully, because I Myself have sent them.”*

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“THE FACT THAT PETER WAS PRAYING MEANS THAT HE WAS IN A CONDITION TO RECEIVE A DIVINE MESSAGE; LUKE OFTEN EMPHASIZES HOW GOD SPEAKS TO PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE AT PRAYER.”

HOWARD MARSHALL

Why does God use prayer to lead His people though His Word? How is God's sovereignty abundantly evident in all these events? Is authority pictured here before he goes to one in authority? Will Peter be in a major capital again the third time he exercises “*the keys of the kingdom of heaven*”? Who are the other two people Peter has commanded to “*rise up*”? Is Peter talking back to Jesus? Are all three Members of the Trinity present here? Is Peter finally being told to be quiet?

### FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES & EVENTS:

- > JUNE 24-26: ACTS 10:21-33 **PRAYING LEADERS CROSS ALL BARRIERS TO WIN OTHER LEADERS**
- > AUGUST 28: **LIFT - LEGISLATIVE INVITATIONAL FISHING TOURNAMENT, DELTAVILLE, VA**

Throughout their history, the Jews were willing to include the seeking Gentile or “God-fearer” if they were willing to become a proselyte through marriage if female (Rahab and Ruth) or circumcision if male (men of Shechem, Gen. 34). The Gentile proselyte would also have to be baptized, embrace the Jewish people, customs, rituals, feasts, worship of God, etc. prescribed in the Scriptures and by the rabbis. Cornelius, the Roman centurion, wanted to worship the true God of the Bible and had given charitably to the poorer Jews and prayed faithfully but was not a proselyte to Judaism. So when the God of the Jews had sent His angel to commend Cornelius and gave him the opportunity to hear of a means of access by Peter, he sent his representatives immediately.

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“YOU WILL BE BROUGHT BEFORE RULERS AND KINGS FOR MY SAKE, FOR A TESTIMONY TOTHEM. AND THE GOSPEL MUST FIRST BE PREACHED TO ALL THE NATIONS.”

MARK 13:9-10

### I. THE TRANCE IN PRAYER

### ACTS 10:9-12

Peter evidently had a greater commitment to prayer than the most pious Jews because their standard prayer times

### BIBLE STUDIES

WEDNESDAY @ 7:30AM – FREDERICKSBURG – BOB EVANS ON RT. 3 AND 11:30AM – WOODBRIDGE – BOB EVANS, 14490 SMOKETOWN ROAD

THURSDAY @ 7:00AM– CHESTER – SHONEY’S AT RT. 10 (IRON BRIDGE ROAD) & 301(12531 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY)

FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM– NORFOLK – GOLDEN CORRAL, 6103 N. MILITARY HWY, NEAR THE NORFOLK AIRPORT

# Virginia

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were morning and evening, but Peter is praying at noon also on the top of Simon the tanner's house in Joppa. To reveal an even greater commitment to prayer, he is hungry and longing just to taste the food being prepared below as the aroma envelops him. Suddenly, his prayer is interrupted by a trance in which he sees the heaven open and a mammoth linen sheet descends, full of every animal in Noah's ark. The word connected with four always means rulers, principalities or dominions in the plural as found here. So Peter would have associated the animals in some way with the kingdoms of the earth and the centurion certainly represented the current Roman authority throughout the empire.

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"BEFORE CORNELIUS COULD BE WELCOMED INTO THE CHURCH, PETER HAD TO LEARN A LESSON. THE STRICT JEW BELIEVED THAT GOD HAD NO USE FOR THE GENTILES, THAT GOD'S FAVOR EXTENDED TO THE JEWS AND THE JEWS ALONE." WILLIAM BARCLAY

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### II. THE TRIO OF PROMINENCE ACTS 10:13-16

A voice that must have been so familiar to hungry Peter that he seems to recognize it, commands him personally to "*Rise up, slay and eat.*" But Peter, being obedient to Scripture (Lev. 11, 20:22-26; Deut. 14:2-21) and realizing that whatever even touched the unclean animals was defiled and became unclean, rejected all the animals and said, "*Certainly not, Lord, because I have never eaten anything common or unclean.*" Peter was steadfast in his obedience of the Law and would have considered such a command to be a test, like Daniel and his three friends experienced in Babylon (Dan. 1:5-16). He certainly would have not taken lightly the most powerful words of Christ in Scripture about the authority of the Word of God in Matthew 5:17-18 and would have considered every part of God's Word to be applicable and requiring obedience down to the smallest letter and even the smallest part of a letter. So he would not dare touch these animals all

mingling together, the clean with the unclean, so that they would all be defiled. But then, to his great surprise, the voice of the Lord came again in response to his obedience saying, "*What things God has cleansed, you yourself do not continue to defile.*" Peter must have been astounded! How could he be the one making those which God had cleansed, unclean or defiled? Then he heard again the Lord say from heaven, "*Rise up, slay and eat.*" Again Peter responded Biblically to the test, and again the same response from the Lord, and a third time and then the vessel returned right back up into heaven. Was he to give the unclean animals the same prominence as the clean animals? If Peter was to consider all the regulations of access to God and Temple changed, wouldn't Jesus have said something about it earlier in their training?

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"THERE IS NOTHING OUTSIDE THE MAN WHICH GOING INTO HIM CAN DEFILE HIM; BUT THE THINGS WHICH PROCEED OUT OF THE MAN ARE WHAT DEFILE THE MAN ... DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND THAT WHATEVER GOES INTO THE MAN FROM THE OUTSIDE CANNOT DEFILE HIM; BECAUSE IT DOES NOT GO INTO HIS HEART, BUT INTO HIS STOMACH, AND IS ELIMINATED?' (THUS HE DECLARED ALL FOODS CLEAN.)" MARK 7:15, 18-19

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### III. THE TRAINING OF PETER ACTS 10:17-20

Peter is so perplexed about his vision that he seems not to even hear the men below at the front door continually inquiring about him. Then, as he continues to ponder the meaning of the vision, from within the Holy Spirit said, "*Behold, three men are seeking you; but rise up, go down and go with them, evaluating nothing carefully, because I Myself have sent them.*" Finally, it dawns on Peter as he obeys the inward voice of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus Christ, who had given him the keys to the kingdom of heaven, had commanded him to open the door to all the Gentiles.

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#### Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Is your leadership characterized by prayer like Peter and Cornelius?
- 2) Are you unwilling to give others equal prominence as yourself, or even greater prominence (Rom. 12:10)?
- 3) Does your treatment of people from other races reflect the equality that God has clearly taught Peter in this passage?