

July 23

Scriptures: Read Acts 10 & 11

Key Verse: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever hear Him and works righteousness in accepted by Him.” (Acts 10:34b, 35)

Overview

The first major social controversy in the early church concerned the equal distribution of assistance to both Greek—and Hebrew-speaking windows (ch.6). The first major leadership controversy dealt with the acceptance of Saul of Tarsus as a fellow preacher. The first major theological controversy was, perhaps, the first crisis of magnitude.

The issue, simply stated, related to the preaching of a Jewish gospel, by Jewish preachers, of a Jewish Messiah, to Gentiles. What was the point? Weren’t the unwashed Gentiles beyond the reach of Grace?

Complicating the issue was a long tradition of separation. The Hebrews were steeped in cleanliness laws (just read Leviticus!) and keenly tuned to the clean/unclean division o\in the world. Some, of course, were more “kosher” than others, but it went without saying that a Jew never ate with a Gentile. Preaching to Gentiles would entail fellowship and communion—sharing the table. Top them this was repugnant!

That’s why the Lord had to drop that sheet of unclean animals into Peter’s vision (10:9-23). There was no way Peter ever would have gone to Cornelius’ house otherwise. The Jerusalem Council’s view of the parameters of the Gospel message had to be stretched, and who better to be the spark than Peter himself. After this event, even Saul of Tarsus looked a bit better—part of the suspicion surrounding him had been his untoward openness to preaching to Gentiles.

Nevertheless, Peter had a lot of explaining to do (see Ch.11), but in the end, the apostles accepted the revealed message: God accepts people from every nation. All who call on the Name of the Lord will be saved.

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for Cornelius, the Gentile who prayed to You and gave generously. Thank You that just as his prayers and giving came up before our throne, so do ours. You responded by sending Peter to tell them of Jesus Your Son. Cornelius’ entire family and his neighbors were saved. We humbly ask You for the salvation of all our family and our neighbors. For Jesus’ sake, Amen.