

Do Not Call Anyone Common or Unclean  
(Acts 10:24-28)

Introduction:

1. As we study the Scriptures we are concentrating on a lesson that the apostle Peter learned in his dealings with Cornelius.
2. In Acts 10:28b Peter said, "*God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.*"
3. In our lesson we will point out:
  - a. how the Lord taught Peter this lesson
  - b. how the Lord teaches us this lesson.

Discussion:

- I. HOW THE LORD TAUGHT PETER NOT TO CALL ANYONE COMMON OR UNCLEAR [THROUGH A VISION]
  - A. Prior to Acts 10 the Gospel had not been taken to the Gentiles.
  - B. We must keep in mind that Christ gave "*the keys of the kingdom*" to Peter (Matthew 16:19).
  - C. As Acts 10 begins Cornelius [a Gentile] was instructed to send for Peter.
  - D. Before the servants of Cornelius arrived, Peter had a vision that he did not understand (vs.9-17).
  - E. After arriving at the home of Cornelius, Peter related the lesson that he had learned from the vision (vs.28).
  - F. As Peter began to teach those who were present, he gave additional details (vs.34-35).
  - G. After teaching these people about Christ, Peter "*commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord*" (vs.48).
- II. HOW THE LORD TEACHES US NOT TO CALL ANYONE COMMON OR UNCLEAR [THROUGH HIS WORD]
  - A. Some important instructions are given in James 2:1-13.
    1. We must understand that "respect of persons" is forbidden in Christianity (vs.1).
      - a. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34).
      - b. To be like God, His children must not be respecters of persons.
      - c. (vs.9) Respecters of persons transgress God's law and are guilty of sin.
    2. We must understand what "having respect of persons" is [it is illustrated in vs.2-4].
      - a. This situation involves two men entering an assembly of Christians.
        - 1) One is a rich man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing.
        - 2) The other is a poor man wearing "*vile raiment*" [dirty clothes].
      - b. Respecters of persons will treat these men differently.
        - 1) Respecters of persons will give the rich man a good place to sit.
          - a) He is not treated this way because he is such a good man.
          - b) He is shown favoritism because he is rich.
        - 2) Respecters of persons will tell the poor man to stand or to sit in a low place.
          - a) He is not treated this way because he is such a bad man.
          - b) He is looked down upon because he is poor.
        - c. This kind of treatment shows partiality [those guilty of such partiality are "*judges of evil thoughts*"].
      3. We must understand that "having respect of persons" makes no common sense (vs.5-7).
        - a. Consider God's treatment of the poor (vs.5-6a).
          - 1) He has blessed the poor spiritually.
          - 2) This does not mean that all poor people are good.
          - 3) However, poor people are generally more receptive to the Gospel than rich people.
          - 4) Looking down upon poor people just because they are poor makes no sense.
        - b. Consider how rich men have treated Christians (vs.6b-7).
          - 1) Rich men have oppressed Christians (Acts 13:50), they have drawn Christians before the judgment seats, and they have blasphemed the name of Christ.

- 2) This does not mean that all rich people are bad.
  - 3) However, the rich are generally more antagonistic toward Christians than the poor.
  - 4) Showing preferential treatment to rich people just because they are rich makes no sense.
- c. Respecters of persons demonstrate a lack of spiritual discernment.
4. We must understand that "having respect of persons" violates the royal law (vs.8-13).
- a. The royal law is identified in vs.8: *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*
    - 1) Jesus identified this law as the second great commandment (Matthew 22:39).
    - 2) The royal law sums up our responsibilities toward our fellow man (Romans 13:8-10).
  - b. Having respect of persons is a violation of this royal law.
  - c. (vs.12) We are to speak and act according to the law of liberty because we will be judged by it.
    - 1) The law of liberty emphasizes mercy over judgment (Matthew 5:7).
    - 2) Those who show no mercy will receive no mercy (vs.13).
- B. Some additional instructions are given in:
1. Matthew 7:1-2 [avoid unfair judgments]
  2. Matthew 7:12 [practice the Golden Rule]
  3. John 7:24 [make righteous judgments].

Conclusion:

1. We are seeing in our country what happens when people do not follow the instructions we have studied.
2. Let us practice these teachings of the Lord to the best of our ability.