

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.