



Title: A Peter Revelation

Theme: The Enjoyment of Ministry Accountability

Series: Essentials for Church Growth

“The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the Word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, ‘You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.’ Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened... When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God.”(Acts 11:1-4, 18)

A ministry matured in the Holy Spirit defeats criticism

The Holy Spirit reveals the importance of God’s work through Peter by moving Luke to refer to the events of the ministry in Cornelius’s household three different times in the Book of Acts. Although the Apostle Paul is often referred to as the Apostle to the Gentiles, Peter received a message from God giving him the instructions of taking the gospel to Cornelius’s family, thus he had the privilege to open the gospel door to the Gentiles. (Acts 10-11; Through the Bible; Barnes Notes; The Expositors Bible Commentary) Whenever, God starts a new work, a work done differently than what was usually done, the cancer of traditionalism births forth the death of criticism. A ministry matured in the Holy Spirit defeats that criticism.

I would propose to you if the work of the Lord was important enough to have the Holy Spirit move Luke to write down the events of Peter’s ministry, it should be important enough for the Body of Christ to take note of the truths proclaimed in this message. Peter shows a spiritual maturity that is missing in the Body of Christ.

Instead of presenting a sloppy-agape love, he shows true sacrificial love to his Lord and the Body of Christ.

It is important to note that those who criticized Peter’s ministry to the Gentiles were Jewish Christians, “circumcised believers” who needed a fuller understanding of the whole counsel of the Word of God. (Matthew Henry Commentary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; The Bible Exposition Commentary; The New American Commentary; Barnes Notes, The Expository Bible Commentary) The cancer of traditionalism and legalism kept them from understanding true circumcision of the heart, done by the Holy Spirit of Christ. (Romans 2:29) Circumcision of the spiritual heart is not just a New Testament revelation, God sent His prophets to teach the people of God that if outward circumcision was to have any significance, then it must be accompanied with an inner work on the spiritual heart. (The New International Dictionary of the Bible; Leviticus 26:41; Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 44:7) Deuteronomy 30:6 says, “The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.”

It is only by the hand of God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit that the Body of Christ can overcome dead religion and cultural habits. Christians who have the Holy Spirit illumination that Peter knew fear the dangers of the cancers of legalism, traditionalism, denominationalism and faddism. They seek answers to these questions.

How does a mature ministry receive revelation and how is God's revelation presented to the Body of Christ? How should spiritual leaders respond to the work the Lord is doing?

Have hearts that are seeking after God

*The first step toward enjoying Peter's revelation from the Lord is to have hearts that are seeking after God. Acts 10:1-2 says, "At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly." (Acts 10:1-2) The first key word to grasp is "devout" (*eusebes*) meaning to be a person who is respectful to God and things regarding worship unto Him. Devout people are dutiful in their efforts to seek God and know His will for them. (Complete Word Study of the Bible; Vines Amplified Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words; Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon; Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament) The second key word is "God-fearing" (*phobeo*) meaning to have a reverential obedience toward God. (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon)*

In the New Testament the term "God-fearing" had become what we would call a technical term for Gentiles who became frustrated with their gods and the result of the immorality of mankind. These particular people attached themselves to the Jewish religion. They were not circumcised and did not have a tremendous knowledge of the Word of God. They did however, attend some kind of meetings or had some kind of influence that enabled them to seek God. In Cornelius's case, he had enough revelation to become a man of prayer and have a heart for the needy. (Daily Study Bible Series)

It is amazing how God supernaturally has drawn people to cast away wrong worship and with the spiritual light revealed to them begin to dutifully seek God. This has been witnessed by many missionaries as they began to take the gospel into heathen lands, as in the case of the Sandwich Islands. When the missionaries arrived the people had cast away their idols and were seemingly awaiting a message of mercy, much like Cornelius's household.

God gave Cornelius a supernatural revelation, an angel spoke to Cornelius saying, "...your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God." Clearly, Cornelius' gifts were not for gaining favor from God, but works that came from a reverent worship unto the God of heaven and earth. Many times I have seen people come to church or do righteous acts only to win favor with God. Effective ministry duties and other works must be done out of a desire to

please Him and from supernatural revelation that what they are doing is good for them and their family. Spiritual revelation comes to those are seeking to know more of the Lord, desire His ways of truth and heavenly wisdom. (The Pulpit Commentary)

The Lord will give devout, God-fearing Christians that which they seek. He will use whatever instruments He pleases to guide true seekers to the place and person who is able to give divine revelation which satisfies the spiritual heart and soul. When God-fearing people faithfully use the light they do have, the Lord will open the door to revelation.

Listen to what the Lord revealed to Cornelius who was a God-fearing man, “One 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!’ 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. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.’ When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.” (Acts 10:3-8)

Christians who have Holy Spirit illumination grasp the truth of Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God.”

It is imperative that Christians understand. Devoted, God-fearing people who seek the Lord today, do so through the whole counsel of God’s Word. Just as the Lord called Peter to take a Word to Cornelius’ home, (Acts 10:22b) the Lord has given the Holy Spirit gift of “prophesying” (Romans 12:6) to the church, so that people may be informed of the will of God through the expounding of Scripture for making known the will of God. (The Expositors Bible Commentary; Ephesians 4:11; Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon; Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon; The Pulpit Commentary; Barnes Notes)

The Pittsburg Christian Advocate covered the story of Dr. Alexander Maclaren, a devout, God-fearing man who was recognized as being one of the clearest expositors of the Word of God in his day. They wrote, “How Dr. Maclaren became such a Bible scholar is worthy of note. ...[he] had one ministry habit that was never broken, ‘one hour alone with God every day.’ Dr. Maclaren would sit in his well-worn armchair with his Bible on his knees. He would not read to get a teaching text, nor read as a student, but as child would read a letter from [his] Father; [with] a loving heart drinking in every Word.”

Where does the Holy Spirit find your heart? Is it truly devoted and God fearing? Is your work unto the Lord done from a reverent worship unto God?

Peter's revelation through a heart of prayer

Hearts that seek after the Lord enjoy Peter's revelation through true worship and through a heart of prayer. Acts 10:9 says, "About noon the following day [Cornelius's servants] were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray." Cornelius was a man who had revelation from God and he was illuminated with God's will for him and his household. The Bible says, "[He] prayed to God regularly." (Acts 10:2b) Peter was a mere man. He is known among Bible studiers as being very spiritually mature, a spiritual leader, but he still needed to be a man of prayer. (The Preacher's Outline Sermon Bible; The Expositors Bible Commentary)

Peter had the heart of a true worshiper like Daniel who knew the joy of praying three times daily. (Daniel 6:10,13) Peter knew the truth written by the psalmist, "Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and He hears my voice." (Psalm 55:17)

The Bible says the next day after Cornelius gets his revelation from God, after a time spent in prayer the Lord gives Peter a vision that prepares his heart to take the gospel to the gentiles. (Acts 10:9-23) God does the work of grace of calling men to Christ (John 6:44) however, He uses human channels to deliver some kind of message, planting the seeds of His Word so eternal life may be received.

God's timing is always perfect and when devout, God-fearing men pray they enjoy the full benefits. The Bible says "While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision" the one he received after time spent in prayer, "...the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's [Peter's] house was and stopped at the gate."

Let the Holy Spirit place this truth into your spiritual heart. When devout, God-fearing men pray with a surrendered heart to God, they enjoy divine appointments and are sent to do ministry that introduces kingdom seekers to Christ. (Acts 10:34-48) It is such a peace to know that the sovereign Lord who controls every moment of the day is able to touch the spiritual heart at just the right moment and prepare it for service unto Him.

Please note in this early history of the church, we see two men fixed on prayer, however, the whole time of prayer is not on telling the Lord what to do, it is the listening spiritual heart that receives divine revelation and illumination to accomplish the will of God. It is an abuse of time to spend your time telling God your need and miss out on His instructions for you.

The great prayer warrior George Muller said, "the most important part of prayer was the first fifteen minutes after I said, 'Amen.'" (Knights Treasury of 2,000 Illustrations) Walter B. Knight wrote, "Prayer is not a monologue, it is dialogue – our talking to God and God talking to us." (Knights Treasury of 2,000 Illustrations) Christians illuminated with this truth grasp the truth of Psalm 85:8a, "I will listen to what the Lord will say..." Christians who desire to enjoy the

revelation and illumination that Peter enjoyed discipline their spiritual ears to listen.

Pastor O. C. Lunholm told of a lesson he learned from a scientist. They were on a loud, busy, crowded street corner when suddenly the scientist said, "Do you hear that?" "No" said the pastor. The scientist said, "I hear a cricket." They walked over next to the building, and the scientist overturned a small rock. Sure enough, there was a cricket. The pastor said, "How did you hear it, above all this noise?"

The scientist said, "Let me show you something." They both walked to the middle of the side walk and the scientist took a quarter and tossed up into the air. When the quarter hit the sidewalk, it made almost inaudible noise compared to the sound of the traffic. Nevertheless, people stopped and started looking for the quarter that landed on the sidewalk. The scientist said, "People will train their ears to hear what they want to hear and they will use their eyes to see what they want to see." (Knight's Book of 2,000 Illustrations)

Christians who catch revelation from God set their spiritual hearts to hear the Lord through prayer and will set their sights on what God has revealed to them, thus they are used of the Lord to do great things. Christians who desire Holy Spirit illumination must go beyond obedience to seasons of prayer and seize daily leisure, grasping strong feelings to be in prayer developing a listening heart. (Barnes Notes)

Peter's Revelation through sensitivity to the Holy Spirit

Prayer warriors enjoy Peter's Revelation through sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:19-20 says, "While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.'"

Peter was not spoken to by an angel nor was it in a vision, but the speaking of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew Henry Commentaries; A Commentary Critical and Explanatory; The Bible Exposition Commentary) Peter was enjoying what was taught by Jesus about the Holy Spirit. In John 16, our Lord said, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." (John 16:13-14)

Peter receives a "word of knowledge" (1 Corinthians 12:28) on what to do. Please note that the Holy Spirit had this Word for Peter, after he spent time in heart seeking, surrendered prayer. The men sent by Cornelius confirmed what the Holy Spirit had revealed to Peter. The men sent by Cornelius did not have a new revelation for Peter to submit to, what was said to Peter, Peter had first heard from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is surrendered to achieving God's purpose in the universe for the glory of God and Jesus Christ. It has been well said, "The heavenly Father brings forth, the Son of God, Jesus Christ disposes and arranges, the Holy Spirit perfects it all." (Kuyper) L. Thomas Holdcraft writes, "The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring into effect all that which Deity intends and has provided for."

Christians who have the same illumination as Peter have full revelation of Psalm 32:8, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you."

To be led of the Holy Spirit, a child of God must be willing to set aside dependence on self and natural wisdom when led of God to do so. It is important to note that the Holy Spirit can use our natural wisdom as long as we are willing to "Live by the Spirit and walk in step with the Holy Spirit." (Galatians 5:25) This has been referred to as "the intuitions of our sanctified judgment" (L. Thomas Holdcraft, *The Holy Spirit*, page 83) George Flattery writes, "The Holy Spirit leads us as a father leads his sons or as a master executive leads his work force. At times He delegates decisions to us; other times He influences our decisions; finally, there are times when He very directly reveals God's will to us."

The Holy Spirit led Jesus. (Luke 4:1) Simeon was led of the Holy Spirit to be in the temple to meet baby Jesus (Luke 2:27) The Bible says those who are "...led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (Romans 8:14) Being led of the Holy Spirit is a sign of Christian maturity.

On occasion, the Holy Spirit's leading is negative and preventive. We find this in Acts 16:6-7, "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to."

Edmund Tedeschi in his exposition on this passage of Scripture writes, "The Holy Spirit leads, and the result is that Christ is presented to an individual family, or a whole region of the world. And the checking of the Holy Spirit on effect withholds the gospel, perhaps to protect His messengers, perhaps in judgment of the region, perhaps to speed the gospel to some other more ready people, or perhaps because He is leading some other apostle, a sent one to that place."

It must be understood, in the spiritual hearts of born again Christians is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9-11) and most of the time the Lord's leading will come through His illumination of the written Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit. (Ephesians 6:17; John 14:26) Therefore, it is imperative that you prayerfully read and study the whole counsel of God's Word.

Peter was so illuminated with this truth and so was the apostle Paul. 2 Peter 1:21 says, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Christians, who come to enjoy the illumination that Peter knew, know the Spirit's leading must not be confused with human desires and opinions. There are many well meaning Christians who will say that they are Holy Spirit led, yet what they think and say is only a product of human reasoning and opinion. Jesus knew this was a problem, He even rebuked Peter, Matthew 16:23 says, "Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.'" Every anointed ministry has had to deal with the opinion of man, even in the church, especially when having to deal with leadership, spiritual or governmental.

Adoniram Judson clearly was appointed by the Holy Spirit to minister the Word of God to the heathen. He reached Calcutta in the summer of 1812, ready to preach the Gospel, however was given orders to get out. He was saddened and could not understand how an effectual door opened should be so quickly shut.

Later, with a determined heart he returned to India, only once more to be kicked out. With a heavy heart he left Madras and fled to Rangoon, a missionary field of which Judson referred to as being a disgusting or dislikable place. Missionary Judson was allowed to stay, only to find bondage and imprisonments.

By July 13, 1813 he moved to Burma, there to find a door open for him to learn the Burmese language. He already knew Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. After finding a tutor, for three years he spent 12 hours per day learning the Burmese language and it was four years before he held even a semi-public service. By 1823, ten years after his arrival the entire New Testament was translated into the Burmese language. A.J. Grodon wrote, "Adoniram Judson was led of the Holy Spirit to go to Burma to translate the Word of God into the Burmese language, a work that has now seen over thirty thousand conversions to Christ." (All the information regarding Adoniram Judson came from Knights Treasury of 2,000 Illustration and Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia)

Christians who are led of the Holy Spirit will in due season find a work open to them, just as Peter and Adoniram Judson enjoyed. Christians who are led of the

Holy Spirit enjoy revelation and illumination, thus praying to completion the work set before them.

Accountability that can be substantiated

Holy Spirit led ministries have accountability that can be substantiated. Acts 11:4 says, "Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened" Acts 11:12b says, "...these six brothers also went with me..."

Acts 11:2 gives the heart attitude of those overcome with the cancer of legalism and traditionalism, "So when Peter went to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him." I love the way the New American Standard puts it, "But Peter... proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence..." Peter gave a full and fair accountability without argument or apology. (Matthew Henry Commentary) Holy Spirit illuminated Christians have such a conviction and understanding of their revelation from God that they have no problem presenting and substantiating their ministry to those who may criticize their work.

They are able to do so because they are devout, God-fearing, people who have a respect for the ministry of Jesus Christ. They are able to tell you how revelation came to them as they prayerfully sought the Lord and took time to listen to His instructions. Their ministry is birthed from the whole counsel of God's Word, thus their revelation can be explained and supported from the Word of God, because the Bible is the sword of the Holy Spirit. They have such an illumination of their calling they are able to pray through to completion that which God calls them to do. They are able to test their work by the Word of God, they are able to share how God used them and they are able to substantiate their ministry. Acts 11:12 tells that there were six men who could bear witness to the Word God had done in Cornelius's home.

Christians who have Peter's revelation on how to oversee a work with the Lord enable the Body of Christ to find peace in ministry and praise God for what He is doing. Acts 11:18 says, "When they heard [Peter's full accounting], they had no further objections, and praised God saying, 'So then, God has granted even the gentiles repentance unto life.'"

Holy Spirit illuminated ministries exercise their Spiritual gifts in the way of full accountability of their labors for the Lord. When Christians are exposed to ministries of Biblical accountability, they are to die to their own opinions, thrown off spiritual traditionalism, legalism, and denominationalism, and rejoice in what God is doing. True Holy Spirit illumination in the Lord's work brings rejoicing in the church and confidence to an on looking world. Let us pray!!!!