

THE STORY OF PETER

And

THE STORY OF RUTH

Aunt Hattie's Bible Stories

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by

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PETER, THE JEW AND CORNELIUS, THE GENTILE

WHILE Peter was in Joppa he stayed with a man named Simon who was a tanner by trade and lived by the seaside.

A long time before, when Jesus asked the disciples who people said that He was, Peter answered, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

And Jesus told Peter at that time that He would give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus did not mean by that that Peter should be able to say who should enter heaven. A key is a symbol of authority and Peter found out later what Jesus meant.

At Pentecost when he preached his first sermon he used the “keys” to open the door of salvation to his own nation, the Jews, but they rejected Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Messiah.

Several times after this the offer was made again but it was always rejected.

Now Peter is to use these wonderful keys again. Of course you understand they were not actual keys, but an illustration of opening spiritual doors.

In Caesarea, a city on the Mediterranean coast, a few miles north of Joppa, lived a prominent official of the Roman government by the name of Cornelius. He was a Gentile of excellent character, who gave to the poor, and with his family feared God and prayed daily.

I think that all of these things explain why God came to him in a vision and told him to send to Joppa for Peter.

Cornelius at once called two servants and sent them. The next day as these men neared the city of Joppa, Peter went up on the housetop to pray. While there he became very hungry and, while dinner was being prepared for him, he fell asleep and God came to him in a vision.

He saw heaven open and a great sheet, tied at each corner, let down to earth. In this sheet were all kinds of tame animals and wild animals, creeping things and birds. As he looked at them he heard a voice saying, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat."

But Peter was a very strict Jew and lived under the law which forbade him to eat unclean flesh, so he answered, "No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

The voice from heaven answered, "What I have cleansed you must not call common or unclean."

Three times this vision was repeated. Then the sheet was taken up again into heaven.

While Peter was thinking over and over again what the vision might mean, the men from Caesarea knocked at the gate and asked for Peter. Up on the housetop Peter had not heard the men ask for him, but the Holy Spirit told him to go down to the men who were looking for him.

So Peter went down to them and said, "Here I am. I am the one for whom you are seeking. What is it that you want?"

And they told him that Cornelius had sent them to ask Peter to go to see him.

The next morning Peter, together with six Christian Jews of Joppa and the two servants of Cornelius, started for Caesarea.

Cornelius invited his relatives and near friends to gather in his home to receive his honored guests. How eagerly they waited the hour of their arrival! As Peter came in Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet to worship him! But Peter said, "Stand up, Cornelius, I am a man just as you are."

As Peter looked upon this gathering of Gentiles I think the vision of the sheet with its load of clean and unclean animals came to him in a new way. He began to see what it meant.

When the greetings were over he talked to them in a very informal way. He said, "You well know how we believe it unlawful for a man who is a Jew to keep company or to come to one of another nation; but God has been showing me that I should call no man common or unclean. Therefore, when your invitation reached me I came at once. Now tell me, why did you send for me?"

Cornelius then repeated the story of the way God had come to him while he was praying and told him to send to Joppa and call Peter to come to speak to them.

“And,” he said, “we are gathered here before God to hear what God has commanded you to tell us.”

“Of a truth, I perceive,” said Peter, “that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.”

In simpler words he said, “I was born a Jew and have been brought up to believe that the Jews are far better and superior to every other person, but, now that I am a Christian, God has showed me that He came down to save us all, both Jew and Gentile.”

Peter told those people all about the Lord Jesus Christ who, when He was upon earth, went about doing good in the city of Jerusalem and throughout the land, and of the way the Jews had crucified Him on the cross; that He died for the sins of the whole world, that whosoever would believe in Him should have forgiveness of sins.

That was the best news Cornelius and his friends had ever heard. They immediately believed, and the Holy Spirit came down upon them in wonderful power. The Jewish believers who had come from Joppa were astonished to think that the Gentiles as well as the Jews could receive salvation and the Holy Spirit. However, they joined with the company in praising the name of the Lord.

And, on that very day the new converts were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the door of salvation was unlocked and opened to the Gentiles when they accepted the invitation of Jesus Christ.

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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