

HEAVEN, THE REASON FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING RIGHTEOUSLY

Bro. Stephen Iluman (Bishop)

This is another searching teaching and preaching that will make Christians know who they are before God and what God wants them to be before Him according to **1 Pet. 1:13-21** ¹³ *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”*

¹⁷ *And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your ^[a]stay here in fear; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with ^[b]corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. ²⁰ He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was ^[c]manifest in these last times for you ²¹ who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

This is the living expected of us before God our father. The set of persons God is looking for in every generation as written as an example. **Acts 10:1-48.** *“Cornelius sends a delegation: There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian ^[a]Regiment, ² a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave ^[b]alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. ³ About ^[c]the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!”*

⁴And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. ⁵Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. ⁶He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He^[d] will tell you what you must do."

Now, those of you who are here right now are the Cornelius of our days that must be told what to do.

Peter's Vision – Acts 10:9-16 *⁹The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about ^[e]the sixth hour. ¹⁰Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. ¹³And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."¹⁴ But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."¹⁵ And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has ^[f]cleansed you must not call common."¹⁶ This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.*

Dear brethren, this is a teaching and preaching that will make us live righteously without discrimination, tribalism, oppression, injustice etc.

Peter summoned to Caesarea **Acts 10:17-22;** *¹⁷Now while Peter ^[g]wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. ¹⁸And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. ¹⁹While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. ²⁰Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."²¹ Then Peter went down to the men ^[h]who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"²² And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." Peter meets Cornelius **Acts:24-32;** *²⁴And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and**

worshiped him. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I myself am also a man.” ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. ²⁸ Then he said to them, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. ²⁹ Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?” ³⁰ So Cornelius said, ^[i]“Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, ³¹ and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your ^[i]alms are remembered in the sight of God. ³² Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. ^[k]When he comes, he will speak to you.’

Preaching to Cornelius household. **Acts 10:34-40;** ³⁴ Then Peter opened his mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵ But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. ³⁶ The word which God sent to the ^[i]children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— ³⁷ that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom ^[m]they killed by hanging on a tree. ⁴⁰ Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, ⁴¹ not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And ^[o]those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷ “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days. It is this righteousness of God through Christ Jesus we are to imitate as Paul put it in **1 Cor. 11:1; Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.**

There is always example as Paul who was converted from Judaism to Christianity lived righteously to gain eternity. He became all things to all men for righteousness sake. **1 Cor. 9:9-23**; ¹⁹ *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;* ²⁰ *and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the ^[b]law, that I might win those who are under the law;* ²¹ *to those who are without law, as without law (not being without ^[c]law toward God, but under ^[d]law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;* ²² *to the weak I became ^[e]as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.* ²³ *Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.*

In his bid to live righteously as a Christian in his days, a lot of corrections were carried by him. **1 Cor. 1:10-13, 1 Cor. 14:33-35, 1 Cor. 11:2-7.** We need to understand “Heaven, the reason for Christian living righteously” as Paul also demonstrated this through practicality and spirituality in partaking in Christ's suffering. **2 Cor. 11:22-33**; ²² *Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.* ²³ *Are they ministers of Christ?— I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.* ²⁴ *From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.* ²⁵ *Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;* ²⁶ *in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;* ²⁷ *in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—* ²⁸ *besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.* ²⁹ *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?*

³⁰ *If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my ^[a]infirmity.* ³¹ *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.* ³² *In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me;* ³³ *but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.*

Conclusion

Paul's Valedictory

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing – **2 Timothy 2:6-8**.

May God help all of us to receive the crown of righteousness as we heed to His word in Jesus name – Amen.