

Acts 10:28 in the Navajo Bible

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Áko Peter hach'i' haadzii'go ání, T'áá nihí nihíł béédahózin, Jew dine'é náánáła' dine'é bił nijildeeh dooleełgo, éí doodaii' dabighangóó hootaa dajikai dooleełgo doo bee há haz'áa da, ákondi Diyin God, diné ła' t'áá bóhólníhígúí índa danchxó'í doo bidideeshniitgóó shił úshjání áyiilaa. (Acts 10:28)¹

He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. (Acts 10:28)²

Introduction

The words *shił úshjání áyiilaa* mean roughly, "it was shown to me," or as NIV has it, "God has shown me." The speaker in this sentence is Peter. What was shown to Peter? What was it God revealed to him? God revealed to Peter "that I should not call any man impure or unclean."

Discussion

How did God reveal this point to Peter? Through the vision of the sheet earlier in the chapter (vss. 9-33). Many people read this story and conclude that God wants us to eat pork. Is that the point of the story? What does the text say?

He [Peter] saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." ¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." ¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." (Acts 10:11-15)

"Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (vs. 15). The message appears to be about food and Peter was about to eat when he hears these things. There was another thing about to happen. Immediately after receiving the vision the men sent by Cornelius called for him. So what was God saying to Peter?

One way to know is by asking Peter. When we do this, it is clear that the vision of the sheet has nothing to do with what Peter should eat for lunch, or with what we should eat for lunch. Pigs are just as dirty now as they ever were before – and just as diseased. They are not

¹ Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

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fit to eat. This is why God told His people long ago not to eat them. Our willingness to listen to this instruction might have changed, but the instruction itself has not.

And yet God said, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (vs. 15). He was making something clean that had been unclean before and was telling Peter not to consider something unclean that he had always considered unclean before. Something was changing, but it was not food. Peter had always consider Gentiles unclean. All Jews did. Jews could not associate with them, nor could they eat with them.

In Christ, however, we are all on the same level. No person or type of person is better than any other. God sent the men who were asking for Peter and He wanted these people, and Cornelius who sent them, to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. By giving Peter the vision of the sheet He was commanding Peter to accept the men who had come from Cornelius, to go with them, and to tell all of them about Jesus. This same point comes through in the story a number of times. One example is found in vs. 28 (above), but there are three more to consider. I am not taking anything out of context.

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts **men from every nation** who fear him and do what is right. (Acts 10:34-35)

The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out **even on the Gentiles**. (Acts 10:45)

So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted **even the Gentiles** repentance unto life." (Acts 11:17-18)

Conclusion

If God was telling Peter that no person or type of person should be called unclean, is He telling us something different? Is it the case that God want Peter to draw a point about people, but for us to draw a point about food? I don't think so. When we read this story and conclude that Christians are free to eat anything and everything they might wish, we're twisting the author's intent. He was not talking about food in Acts 10, nor was the Holy Spirit who inspired him. Getting pork out of Acts 10 is simply wishful thinking.

The gospel needed to go to all people everywhere, but the church didn't understand this yet. So God sent Peter a vision – three times – to make the necessary point that we must not make distinctions among people. Anyone can be saved if they believe in Christ. This is what the entire book of Acts is about – not just the four passages mentioned here. Everyone must hear the good news about Jesus. In Christ everyone can respond to God and be clean, and pure, and holy. We must learn from this story what God intended, or we will learn from it what He did not intend.