

Acts Chapter 10

V: 1 **Map:** Caesarea - the main Roman sea port into Israel, and the official capital of the Roman province of Judea. For the most part the Roman governor stayed in Caesarea unless actually needed in Jerusalem.

- Cornelius, a Roman centurion, of the Italian band.
- Cornelius: “The Beam of the Sun.”
- The Roman army was divided into legions, each with 6,000 men. These were further divided into 10 cohorts / bands with 600 men each. The ten cohorts were divided into 6 centuries of 100 men, each commanded by a “centurion.”
- Centurions were chosen carefully, they were men of good character, in every instance where a centurion is mentioned in the Bible they are described as good men, honest men, and Cornelius was no exception, he was a good man.
- The Italian band being from Rome, Roman citizens, as opposed to other parts of the empire from which conscripts were taken.

V: 2 Cornelius is described as a ¹devout man, one that ²fears God (reminds me of our study in Job), a man who ³influenced his family with his faith, a ⁴generous and compassionate man, and a ⁵prayerful man. These are all good attributes!

- To be devout means to be committed, devoted and steadfast, pious. The word / description is only used 9 times in the NT, all but one of them in the book of Acts.
- **Luke 2:25** is the other reference, describing Simeon who was looking for the Messiah, I think we could add “God seeker” to our definition.
- Fearing God: The fear of the Lord is a loving reverence for God, who He is, what He says, and what He does.

Job 28:28 “... behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”

Proverbs 9:10 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”

- If we love God, we’ll keep His commandments:

1 John 5:3 “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.”

- Cornelius feared God, and served God in such a way that his faith impacted “all his house.” This would include not only his direct family, but also the household servants and anyone connected to his household.

Acts 16:30-31 “³⁰... sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

- Cornelius was a good witness to his family, he lived a real faith before them, and it impacted them.

1 Peter 3:1 “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word (non-believers), they also may without the word be won by the conversation / behavior of the wives.”

- That conversation or behavior being the living word of our lives, a living testimony!

2 Corinthians 3:3 “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

- Cornelius is a generous man: He gave to those in need and helped where he could.

Jesus said:

Matthew 6:21 “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

- You can determine a lot about a person when you examine their bank statement or their check book - it's more telling than people think. Cornelius would have fared well in that kind of an examination, he wasn't stingy, he was a good steward.

Proverbs 19:17 “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again.”

- Cornelius was a prayerful man; as we continue we'll see that it was when or as he was in prayer that the Lord spoke to him.

Philippians 4:6-7 “⁶Be careful / anxious for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

V: 3-4 A vision is a waking dream. The ninth hour is 3:00 PM which would be the 3rd hour of prayer through the day. (9:00 AM, 12:00 PM, 3:00 PM) Cornelius sees an angel of the Lord.

- Cornelius was afraid at first; but then he asks “**what is it Lord?**” or “what do you want?”
- The first things the angel communicates is that Cornelius’s prayers have been both heard and answered. God was aware of all of these things:

Malachi 3:16 “**Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.**”

- Cornelius was a Roman, a Gentile, a man who according to the Law was outside the covenant people, and he likely had a limited knowledge of God - yet at the same time God took note of his prayers.
- We would all agree at this point that Cornelius is a good man - and if that was all that was needed God would have left him alone - except that Cornelius wasn't saved - that was why He sent Peter - to share the good news of Jesus.
- Cornelius has no doubt seen the vanity of the Roman religious / paganism and was looking for something better. He had come as close to Judaism without actually becoming a Jew himself, a proselyte, or Jewish convert.
- He couldn't offer sacrifices in the Temple, so he offered his heartfelt prayers directly to the Lord. Somehow he knew though that his religious devotion wasn't enough to save him. He knew there was more.
- Sadly many religious people today are satisfied that their character and good works will get them to heaven, and they have no concept either of their own sin or of God's grace. In his prayers, Cornelius was asking God to show him the way of salvation.

Peter later explained to the believers in Jerusalem:

Acts 11:12-14 “**¹²And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house. ¹³And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; ¹⁴who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.**”

- Cornelius was an observant and religious man, a good man, but he was still looking for salvation:

Jeremiah 29:13 “**And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.**”

- This is the second time we've seen thus far in the book of Acts, God responding supernaturally to a seeking heart. The first being the Ethiopian eunuch whom God sent Philip in **Acts 8**.

Psalm 34:15 "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry."

V: 5-6 The angel next gives Cornelius direction: Send men to Joppa to fetch Peter.

- Peter is "sent" by the church to Samaria, then he works his way to Joppa and now he is "sent for" - obviously Peter is not in charge here... the Holy Spirit is in charge.
- This is incidental to the overall story but God totally has Peter's number: He knows Peter's name, right where to find him, and who he's hanging with.
- An interesting thought here is that if the angel could instruct Cornelius about getting Peter, couldn't he just as easily have shared the Gospel with Cornelius and his household?
- Couldn't he have done the same for the Ethiopian Eunuch? Instead, in each instance God sent a man to communicate the Gospel to these other men.

1 Corinthians 1:21 "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Romans 10:14-15 "¹⁴How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

- Another question might be: why didn't God send or use Phillip? He was already in Caesarea.

Acts 8:40 "But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea."

- Peter had been given the keys:

Matthew 16:17-19 "¹⁷And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. ¹⁸And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever

thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

- Peter has three keys, he used the first to share, to open the doors of the Gospel to the Jews at Pentecost, secondly he came to the Samaritans, and now he's come to the Gentiles and opened the door to salvation to them.

V: 7-8 As soon as the angel departs, Cornelius takes action in sending for Peter.

- He is obedient to what he was told to do - part and parcel to “fearing the Lord.”
- He called two household servants - all of whom feared the Lord, and a “devout” soldier. The soldier no doubt was for primarily the protection of the servants, but also communicated the authority of a Centurion.
- I like the continued testimony of Cornelius' faith as it impacted his household servants and the soldiers under his command.
- Cornelius gives them the run down and sends them to go get Peter in Joppa.

V: 9-10 Joppa is about 30 miles from Caesarea, so it's a day or perhaps a day and a half walk between the two.

- While Cornelius' men are traveling, getting close to Joppa - Peter is up on the roof of Simon the Tanner's house getting ready to pray.
- The houses in those days had flat roofs with a small wall around them, often times they would have an awning for shade and it was a great place to hang out and catch the breeze in the warmer parts of the day. Picture a patio on the roof.
- Peter is getting ready to pray and became very hungry and fell into a trance... I do the same thing when I get hungry!
- This all happens around the sixth hour or about noon.

Trance: (G-1611) *Ekstasis*; ¹An ecstasy in which the mind is for a time carried, as it were, out of or beyond itself and lost. Great astonishment, amazement. ²A trance, sacred ecstasy or rapture of the mind beyond itself when the use of the external senses are suspended and God reveals something in a peculiar manner

Vision: (V3) (G3705) A supernatural appearance, vision.

V: 11-18 Peter's vision:

V: 11-12 First Peter sees a sheet, a picnic blanket lowered from heaven, knit at the four corners, lowered down from heaven to earth.

- He sees all manner of fourfooted beasts, and other presumably mostly if not all un-clean. If there had been any that were clean, Peter would naturally have picked them. I'll take two kosher steaks, medium well!
- The word of the Lord to Cornelius was pretty straight forward; but here Peter's vision was not so straight forward and seems to need some interpretation.
- Four corners may represent the four corners of the earth, filled with a bunch of creepy wild things, beasts is mentioned twice, fowling up the air - humans.

V: 13-14 The voice of the Lord tells Peter, rise, kill, and eat. Peter says no, he objects because he's never eaten anything "unclean."

- "Not so Lord..." NKJV is the same. NASB "*By no means Lord...*" NIV "*Surely not Lord...*"
- It sounds even stronger in the Greek: "*I'll have none of it Lord...*"
- This is pretty disobedient, God had given him a commandment, and Peter said "no."
- We often do the same thing, God's Word is oh so clear, but we argue against it and refuse.

V: 15-16 The Lord then tells Peter not to call what God has cleansed unclean.

- There are multiple applications for this verse: (Kosher / not Kosher, liberty)

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Ephesians 1:4 "According as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love:"

- This was all repeated three times, then the sheet with the animals was withdrawn.

- This was all done in a vision, a dream like scenario. God is using all of this to teach Peter a lesson. If he had agreed and moved forward the dream probably would have stopped there, with his willingness - it would be hard to actually kill and eat an animal in a vision or dream.
- Peter is struggling against what he's been taught his whole life.
- Peter has gone from ministering to the Jews in Jerusalem, to the Samaritans in Samaria with Philip, now he's being prepared to go to the Gentiles in Caesarea.
- God is preparing Peter for what Paul would eventually write:

Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

V: 17-18 While Peter is thinking, trying to figure it all out, Cornelius' men knock on the door asking if Peter could come out and play.

- While Peter is thinking about the vision, the Holy Spirit speaks to him and tells him to go with the men and not to doubt.
- Peter was given the vision three times and he wasn't getting it so now the Lord will speak to him more directly - go with these men and don't doubt.
- We see God working on both sides of this equation through both Cornelius and through Peter. When Cornelius' men arrived it was confirmation to both parties that God had in fact been speaking.
- I've had people come to me and say that the Lord had spoken to them about something relating to me - "***The Lord told me to tell you...***" If that is the case then He would also have already spoken to me, and their telling me would be a confirmation. He works on both ends.

V: 19-20 Peter is thinking about what just happened, trying to make sense of it when the Spirit speaks to him very specifically.

- I wonder just exactly how the Spirit spoke to Peter? Was it an audible voice? Was it a strong impression?
- Was it a feeling, and later it proved to be right? Circumstances bore it out, then later we'll say "... the Lord spoke to me."

- Sometimes as with Elijah (**1 Kings 19:11-13**) God speaks to us in that still small voice.
- Again we see God working on both sides of the equation, speaking to Cornelius, to the men that he sent, and to Peter - instructing him to receive the men sent from Cornelius.
- Peter is told to go with them and not to doubt - "... *for I have sent them.*"
- God described the situation to Peter ahead of time so that when he saw it, it was confirmation that these things were in fact from God.

V: 21 Peter was obedient, he went down and presented himself to Cornelius' men.

Ephesians 4:30 "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

- We grieve the Holy Spirit through our disobedience, hindering the Holy Spirit from working in our lives the way He might want to. But the opposite is true as well, in our obedience we not only express love to Jesus, but we facilitate the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Here we see Peter moving forward - in what is for him uncharted territory.
- He's learning the lesson of the sheet and the animals. God is breaking down the walls between the Jews and the rest of the world.

Ephesians 2:14 "For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."

Colossians 3:11 "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

- Peter asks what they want with him, a natural enough question.

V: 22 The servants repeat what we've already read, that Cornelius is a good guy and that God spoke to him about sending for Peter.

- Peter now has the same information that we've had about Cornelius.

V: 23 Evidence of a lesson learned. The Lesson is / was that he was not to call unclean that which God has cleansed - even if it contradicts his understanding or traditions.

- Peter invited these gentiles into his house (Simon the Tanner's house) and lodged them - this is no different than what would later happen when he went to stay in the house of Cornelius - it was breaking the law / tradition either way.

Isaiah 42:6 "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;"

- The next morning Peter, Cornelius' men, and 6 brethren who accompany Peter all begin the trip North to Caesarea some 35 miles away.

V: 24 The day after; so they initially spent the night with Simon the Tanner, the next morning they take off, travel all day, spend the night along the way, and the next day they arrive in Caesarea and proceed to Cornelius' house.

- Cornelius is expecting them and had gathered his friends and family to hear what God would speak through Peter.

V: 25-26 As Peter enter's Cornelius' house, Cornelius who had been waiting for Peter "*fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.*"

- Cornelius is sincere, and he's ignorant, but that will change with instruction and understanding.
- Peter makes the needed correction instructing Cornelius that Peter is only a man, just as he is and not to worship him.
- Notice he doesn't "rebuke" him, he "instructs" him. Peter is loving and gentle with him.
- The Apostle John makes the same mistake when in the heavenly scene he's confronted with an angel.

Revelation 19:10 "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, see thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

- Sometimes people find it difficult to worship a God whom they cannot see, and so when they see an object that represents God in some way or someone who God is using who they can see and touch they begin to transfer that worship to the instrument instead of the creator, the true object of worship. We're wired to worship. We have to be very careful to worship God only.

Isaiah 42:8 "I am the Lord: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images."

V: 27-29 As he talked with him, they went in... I'm sure that Peter was very personable with Cornelius and probably sought to help him to his feet, and perhaps even walked in arm in arm like they were friends.

- The Spirit works in our hearts and binds us all together as brothers and sisters, the body and the family of Christ.
- Peter makes it a point to point out that he is breaking with the Law and with tradition by entering into his house but that he is being obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit in doing so.
- The Word of God was more authoritative in Peter's life than all his traditions, his likes or his dislikes - he's allowing Jesus to truly be the Lord of his life.
- Peter then asks Cornelius directly / personally why am I here?

V: 30-33 Cornelius relates the account of his encounter with the angel of the Lord and what was spoken.

- Then he adds, "we're all here, what message do you have for us from God?"
- There is a sense of expectation on behalf of Cornelius, his family, and his friends - they expect God to speak to them - we should come to church every time with the same sense of expectancy, inclining our ears and hearts.

V: 34 Peter has learned that God is not a respecter of persons, meaning that He's used the Jews, just as He'll use the Gentiles, but that he's not playing favorites - all are sinners in need of a savior, and He wants to save all.

Deuteronomy 10:17 "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of Lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward."

Paul would say the same thing to the churches in Rome, Galatia, and Ephesus: (Galatians 2:6, Ephesians 6:9)

Romans 2:11 "For there is no respect of persons with God."

- Jew's and Gentiles all on an even playing field, all in need of a Savior.

Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

V: 35-37 Anyone who fears God, who repents of their sins, and believes in Jesus can be saved - will be accepted by Him.

John 6:29 "... this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

- The word / Gospel was sent first to Israel - which was published / proclaimed throughout Judea, started in Galilee. You've no doubt heard this or some of this before.

Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

- The public in general knew about the ministry of Jesus, His life, and His death - but they didn't all know about the resurrection.
- Preaching peace, peace with God through Jesus - who is Lord of all.

V: 38-40 God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power. Jesus used that anointing as He was led by the Spirit to heal people, and to deliver them from demon oppression & possession - things that Peter witnessed first hand.

Isaiah 11:2 “And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.”

Isaiah 61:1 “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

- Believers cannot be “**possessed**” but they can be “**oppressed**” the difference being afflicted from without, or controlled from within.

2 Corinthians 12:7 “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”

- And the Jews responded by crucifying Jesus, but God raised Him from the dead on the third day and people saw it.
- Roman style of execution / “*hanged on a tree*” vs: Jewish style / stoning.
- There has been great debate over the years as to who was responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. The Jews and the Romans each blaming each other, this has in fact led to anti-semitism on the part of the Romans.
- The Bible clearly lays responsibility at the feet of the Jews: The Gospels point out that Pilate was determined to let Jesus go, but the Jews forced the issue.

Matthew 27:25 “Then answered all the people, (Jews) and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.”

- The reality is that anyone who has ever sinned is responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, that is all of us!
- Like Peter, if we’re going to share the Gospel, then we have to talk about His death and His resurrection, it the most important part of the package.

V: 41 Jesus didn’t reveal Himself to everyone, but to those whom He would - but even that was a big number, big enough to be beyond question.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 “³For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures: ⁵And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: ⁶After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. ⁷After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. ⁸And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”

V: 42 Jesus commanded us to preach and to testify about Jesus who is ordained of God to be the judge of the living and the dead.

V: 43 All the prophets speak, testify, witness of Jesus - as do all the scriptures.

Psalms 40:7 “Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me.”

V: 44-46 As Peter was speaking the Spirit moved in their midst, falling upon all those present.

- The six witnesses that Peter brought with him were blown away that God would also give the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles.
- They heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. That means the 6 witnesses, believers, spoke different languages and were able to give interpretation of the utterances in tongues.
- In Samaria they received salvation, then they received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in separate events. Here we see salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit as simultaneous events.

V: 46b-48 That being the case Peter says it’s time to get baptized. If they’re saved, and baptized in the Holy Spirit, there’s no reason why they shouldn’t also be baptized in water - which they did.

Acts 2:37-38 “³⁷Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? ³⁸Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

- Peter then hung out and continued to teach them God's Word.