

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

CENTURION (ACTS 10:1-8) ONE DAY DURING AFTERNOON WORSHIP

Cornelius was an Italian gentile that had become monotheistic and devoted to Judaism through prayer, worship, and "charitable deeds for the Jewish people."

- During prayer, an angel told him to send men to find Peter because "Your prayers and acts of charity have become a memorial offering before God."

PRAYER AND WORSHIP ARE DOORS

Notice Cornelius had an encounter after he initiated intentional prayer time. **God uses prayer to lead His people into maturity and ministry.**

- At this point, Cornelius didn't possess the entire truth, and he was not saved, but he was **hungry for truth and sensitive to spiritual promptings.**

HE WAS A MAN THAT KNEW RESPECT

Cornelius was a military leader, so his reply to the angel with "lord," showing respect, would have been no surprise. His expedience in responding also showed respect. He immediately sent 3 people to find Peter.

- **God will not use rebellious, arrogant, or disrespectful people for His work. In fact, He resists them** (James 4:6).

WE ALSO LEARN THAT THERE IS A PROGRESSION

The theological point is made: **people who act on a revelation from God receive more revelations from Him.** God gives us signs all the time, but **are we looking, or have we hardened our hearts?** (Romans 1:20-21). Cornelius had responded long before this account, and that is what led him to the truth and his salvation.

THE LARGE SHEET (ACTS 10:9-16) ALMOST 31 MILES AWAY

Just as Cornelius' men are about to arrive in Joppa, Peter also receives a vision from God. As he was praying on a roof around noon and getting hungry, Peter went into a "visionary state." He saw heaven open up, and an object like a picnic sheet came down to the earth.

ON THE SHEET WERE ALL KINDS OF ANIMALS

Jews were not allowed to eat certain kinds of food because they were considered "unclean" or unfit. Peter, being a good Jew, had never consumed pork, shellfish, or anything else "common and ritually unclean." Any Jew would have been revolted by the command to "kill and eat" these kinds of animals, but Peter listened to God.

THIS HAPPENED 3 TIMES

There are a lot of 3's in Peter's life: 3 denials of Jesus, 3 times he was restored, now 3 times he saw this sheet from heaven.

- Maybe this is a lesson on God's grace and our obedience? **God is gracious to repeat Himself, but we must also be wise enough to eventually respond.**

FOOD WASN'T REALLY THE POINT

The food vision was a set up for the acceptance of the "unclean" non-Jews that Christ was about to bring into the family.

- The dietary laws of the Bible changed because **one cannot fully accept someone with whom they are unwilling to share a meal.**

MAJORS AND MINORS

If one feels conviction or just wants to follow the dietary restrictions of Leviticus and Ezekiel, that is totally fine. But, we learn straight from God's mouth that this is no longer a requirement for His people.

- We can dispute things that are not salvific in nature, but we cannot impose personal convictions on others.

CENTURION: PART 2 (ACTS 10:17-33) SO, WHY ALL THE ANIMALS?

As Peter was "deeply perplexed" about the vision, the men Cornelius had sent found Simon's house and were waiting at the gate, asking if Peter was there.

- The Spirit told Peter that the men had arrived and that he was to "accompany them with no doubts at all because I [God] had sent them."

ACCEPTING THE CALL BEFORE KNOWING THE MISSION

God was about to change the church's method of reaching the lost. Interestingly, Peter agreed to go before he even knew the details of what he was going to do.

- God will instruct us, but **we must be willing to go wherever He tells us before we even know the destination. Do we trust Him?**

MEETING THE ROMAN SOLDIER

Cornelius had called together his relatives and close friends to meet Peter. When Peter walked in, the respected Centurion "fell at his feet and worshiped him." Peter immediately reminded everyone that he was just a man.

BREAKING THE LAW

The visions now make sense. Jewish culture made it illegal to be in the home of a foreigner, but Peter was shown that all people are to be welcomed into the faith.

- Peter knew that God had changed the rules. **The rationale and decision were God's, and he just needed to be obedient.**

GIVE US THE TRUTH (V33)

Cornelius said, "we are all present before God, to hear everything you have been commanded by the Lord." He wanted the truth, whatever the truth was.

- Maybe we make it too mechanical. **Perhaps we need to pray, be present, and position ourselves to hear from God and then speak the truth to others.**

GOOD NEWS (ACTS 10:34-43) "GOD DOESN'T SHOW FAVORITISM"

The Jewish fisherman that followed Christ and had become the leader of the church sweeps away centuries of prejudice and clearly states, "**in every nation, the person who fears Him and does righteousness is acceptable to Him.**"

- Salvation is for everyone who trusts in Jesus and obeys His teachings.

GOING OVER THE GOSPEL

More than likely, Cornelius and the people in his home knew the story of Jesus because roughly 10 years had passed since his death. Peter wanted to give the meaning behind the history. Not just what God has done, but why.

- **Jesus loves us and came to deliver us from the "tyranny of the Devil" and offer "forgiveness of sins" via the cross.**

THE GOSPEL IS ACTIVE

Peter wanted to communicate that the gospel of salvation wasn't just a one-time event but an active invitation to anyone that will come and accept this gift.

- **We are saved by grace through faith** (Ephesians 2:8), **that leads us to be obedient** (John 14:15) **and to perform good works** (James 2:17).

THE SPIRIT (ACTS 10:44-48) THEY HAD HEARD ENOUGH

Apparently, the gentiles' hearts were ready to be filled with God's Spirit because that is exactly what happened.

- Some call this the "Gentile Pentecost" because it closely mirrors the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 with its spontaneity and speaking in tongues.

SOME DEBATE WHAT KIND OF TONGUES

In Acts 2, people spoke known languages for the sake of everyone hearing the gospel in their native tongue. The word for tongues in v46 is the same as Acts 2, but some think this was "prayer language" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14 because they all spoke the same native language.

THE MAIN POINT IS STILL CLEAR

Whether they spoke modern languages or the "tongues of angels," the point is the same: **these outsiders were now filled with the Spirit of God and welcomed into His family.** The response was baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. Again, **action follows faith.**

AND LIVES ARE FOREVER CHANGED

Peter doesn't perform the baptisms; the job is **delegated** to the six brothers with him. A radical breakthrough has just taken place – the precedent is now set that **anyone willing to accept the truth is welcomed into God's family.**

EVERYONE IS INVITED

- A relationship with the Creator God is available to anyone regardless of color, location, appearance, or past mistakes.
- This doesn't mean that we remain the same, but that we have an opportunity to change and become more fashioned into the likeness of God.

ACCEPTANCE INTO GOD'S FAMILY

- Humble enough to admit that they don't have all the answers, but Christ does.
- Willing to submit to authority
- Hungry for the truth, whatever it may be
- Willing to respond and be obedient
- Willing to grow and mature in their faith
- Willing to commit for life, regardless of the earthly sacrifice