

Acts 10:1-23



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1 Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort,
2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually.
3 About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come in and said to him, "Cornelius!"
4 And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God.
5 "Now dispatch some men to Joppa and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter;
6 he is staying with a tanner named Simon, whose house is by the sea."
7 When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants,
8 and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.
9 On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.
10 But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance;
11 and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground,
12 and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air.
13 A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!"
14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean."
15 Again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."
16 This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.
17 Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate;
18 and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there.
19 While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you.
20 "But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself."
21 Peter went down to the men and said, "Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?"
22 They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you."
23 So he invited them in and gave them lodging. And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

Salvation is on the move. The Holy Spirit is hungry for more souls, many more, to press far beyond the Jewish bounds of centuries. The ethnic separation of Jew and Gentile is poised to come crashing down.

1. The essential component of salvation is forgiveness from sins not belief in God or moral living



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- 2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually.
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- 8 and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

The first critically important fact of this narrative is that Cornelius needed the gospel. Which will be a pretty significant surprise to those who consider religion to be a crutch or a necessary evil to ensure people behave in the best interests of the whole of society. Cornelius was a God fearing, devout man who probably gave and prayed more than you or me. How could this not be sufficient? For whatever God requires of man how could this possibly not be sufficient? For all the thousands of millions of people who believe relative morality is sufficient for approval from any possible deity there may be on the other side of death I challenge you with Cornelius. If goodness can get you into heaven Cornelius has nothing to worry about. Yet two things are crystal clear from this narrative, Cornelius is in fact not yet good before God but that God will not be stopped in bringing everything Cornelius needs to be saved right to his very doorstep. The gospel message, forgiveness, and ultimately the Holy Spirit are necessary for salvation. No amount of morality, giving, even prayers can save you from His wrath against your unrighteousness. Only your sin removed from you, paid for by Christ, and His very own Spirit given to you will rescue you. Oh how we ought to tremble under the terror of sin and rejoice over the gospel.

Keep in mind though that Gentile salvation isn't what's crazy in this narrative, it's that a Gentile could stay a Gentile. They could get up the next morning and enjoy their eggs and bacon. All the old God given ceremonial laws of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles are about to get torn out. The law has been fulfilled in Christ. There's a new separation, a new mark of holiness. Those who have had washed, forgiven, and received the Holy Spirit, been adopted into the kingdom of light, and those who haven't.

2. Divided by light not lizards



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A really important point is this exchange is that this isn't a chastisement of Peter for obeying the laws God had given him as a Jew but rather an informational update that the rules have changed. A new dispensation was arriving. The time of the Jews was pausing and the time of the Gentiles was beginning. Separation, holiness, distinction was no longer merely external but

primarily internal. Light from within given as a gift through forgiveness by the blood of Christ and that now offered freely to anyone everywhere.

It was God who had chosen ethnic Israel and it was God who was bringing in a new choice marked not by physical birth but spiritual birth by the Holy Spirit. It had begun with the Jews, it would be delivered to the Gentiles by the Jews, through the words of Peter, but the gospel, salvation, was in fact exploding out into the nations once categorically outside the call of God to be His children.

*ok, slight rabbit trail alert

I've been deeply challenged through my own study here in Acts to be far more intentional with my evangelism and to start sharing the gospel more. Specifically with my coworkers. To create, pursue and pray for opportunities to share the gospel with them. I've had a few great opportunities recently but it's honestly been really challenging. My coworkers are really smart, well connected and most are educated with far more breadth than myself. It's really intimidating, they aren't filled with logical fallacies they just start from a different set of assumptions. Chiefly that man is most important and that if there is a deity he either A) isn't that great or good or B) must conform to some standard of behavior that we have a right to judge.

Listening to them sometimes I fear that Christians who haven't thought deeply about their faith or the consequences of what they're actually clinging to are but a single difficult circumstance or question away from falling away from their faith.

How great do you think God is? Is God's favor and choice of ethnic Israel some type of God sanctioned racism? What happens to the Cornelius's out there in the world who are born, live and die never having heard Peter's message? How can God send people to eternal torment without even having the chance of hearing the gospel? How can we look the world in the face and say God is good when his ways seem so unfair, condemnable even detestable?

- My answer is until you see all men everywhere as irreconcilably sinful, without hope, undeserving of any rescue, having earned at every level their condemnation you cannot accept Christianity.
- And you won't accept that view of man until you see God as Divine Creator, far above the creature, holding a scepter of sovereign dominion and authority over us with every right to do with as he wishes.
- And you cannot accept that view of God until God Himself awakens the deadness of your spirit to the truth of it. And that is terrifying.

But that is the gospel, that God does that for us. Provides salvation in Christ and then spreads that gospel through its declaration to all men everywhere.



Romans 9:18–24

18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

God is Creator, we only know what he reveals, the world works as he designs, truth is what God dictates. He does as he wishes and it is good. We fell from His good in the garden, mankind lashed out in dishonor and distrust and with a single act our entire species was plunged into eternal darkness and only the gospel can call us out back into light. At first that light is given and stewarded by ethnic Israel but now is given to the church where both Jew and Greek will come together under the light of the gospel.

Which is a wonderful segway from our slight rabbit trail back to our text.



17 Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate;
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There should have been misgivings, hesitations, concern, this wasn't normal, this wasn't acceptable, but the Spirit addresses those and presses Peter into Christian thinking over Jewish thinking, and he dives in trusting God. So much hope, so much salvation, hinges right here with Peter, the founder of the church, the torch bearer of the new light of the gospel, obediently pressing into what would have been sinful defilement of his holiness as he leaps the divide between the old and new covenant. The time of the Jews and that of the Gentiles. Right there, in that home, in Joppa, the first brick in a divergent highway was laid which would eventually bring the gospel to me and you. How inexpressibly thankful we should be for this passage, it didn't have to be like this, we were not owed the gospel, none of us are but least of all those of us wild Gentile olive shoots entirely alienated from the life of God.



1 Peter 2:9–10

9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;
10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

We'll leave it here for now with Peter on his way to associate with a Gentile in order to present the gospel message. A previously unacceptable, unlawful act, one now requested by God as his new covenant is being enacted and the Jews fall out of the picture and the Gentiles begin to come into focus.

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- Have you accepted the gospel or are you just a good person?
 - Bad people go to hell. Good people go to hell. Praying people go to hell. Generous people go to hell.
 - Forgiven people go to heaven.
 - Those who've heard and accepted the gospel. Those who've recognized the greatness of God, the wickedness of their sin, and turned to Christ in repentance and faith for forgiveness and the filling of His Holy Spirit.
 - Are you sharing the gospel? There is no other way for people to be saved. Do not hold the only good news captive