



Sermon Text: Acts 10:1-35

Sermon Date: February 4, 2018

Our text focused on the miraculous way God worked to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. In order to cross the enormous gulf of prejudice and racism God had to prepare both Cornelius and Peter.

GOD MIRACULOUSLY PREPARES THE WAY FOR CORNELIUS TO HEAR

Our text begins introducing us to Cornelius, an uncircumcised Roman centurion who was a devout, God-fearing man who evidenced his devotion through generosity and continual prayer. An angel appears to him and he is commanded to send to Joppa to get Peter.

Most of our time was devoted to asking if Cornelius is proof that a devout individual can be saved even without knowledge of Christ. We saw four important clues that answered this question.

1. **The argument of Acts.** The whole argument of Acts is that even devout people need to repent of their sins and turn in faith to Jesus if they are to be saved.
2. **A message needed to be heard.** In Acts 10:22 and 11:13-14, it is clear that Peter had a message that Cornelius needed to hear— “he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household” (11:14).
3. **Forgiveness of sins through his name.** In 10:43 Peter reveals both the universality of salvation and the exclusivity of it— “To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” To receive forgiveness, Cornelius had to receive it through belief in Christ’s name.
4. **Repentance that leads to life.** In Acts 11:18, we learn that the Jews and the Gentiles were saved in the exact same manner, not by good works of religious sincerity, but by repentance and faith in Jesus.

John Stott explains it well, “The emphasis is that Cornelius’ Gentile nationality was acceptable so that he had no need to become a Jew, not that his own righteousness was adequate so that he had no need to become a Christian.”

GOD MIRACULOUSLY PREPARES THE WAY FOR PETER TO GO AND SHARE

God also prepared Peter to go and share by miraculously overcoming Peter’s racial prejudice. God did this by setting aside the ceremonial food laws. The food laws underscored Israel’s separation from the world. In a repeated vision, God declares all food clean, and in so doing, he declares all people clean also. In an instant, God deconstructed a central aspect of Peter’s Jewish identity and re-centered it upon the gospel. Only then would he be willing to go and share the gospel with Gentiles.

TWO TAKEAWAYS

1. **Right religious behavior will never save—only Jesus can.** Or to say it differently, religious people need Jesus too. Cornelius was a devout man who feared God, lived morally, and prayed continually. And yet, he still needed to turn from his sins and put his trust in Jesus Christ alone to be saved. Religion does not save, it cannot save, only Jesus can.
2. **An awesome incentive and urgent appeal for global evangelism.** The awesome news is that the gospel is for everybody equally. There is not a person or a culture to which it doesn’t apply. And yet, the message must be shared. Christ’s name must be heard. We must speak it. Like Peter we must go and tell.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?
2. What are some things you build your identity upon in addition to Christ? What are the consequences of building your identity on those things?
3. Why is it important to remember that no one will be saved apart from responding in faith to the gospel?