

November 30, 2022

## THE BOOK OF ACTS -CHAPTER 9

Verses 1, 2: *"<sup>1</sup>There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, <sup>2</sup>a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always."*

a) Caesarea was a predominately Roman city on the shores of the Mediterranean in Judea. It was the headquarters of the Roman governor of the province of Judea.

b) Cornelius was an officer in the Roman Army. A patriotic Jew of that day would naturally dislike or even hate him.

c) Cornelius was a \_\_\_\_\_ man. He was in the category of what the Jews called "God fearers". These were Gentiles who loved the God of Israel and were sympathetic to and supportive of the Jewish faith \_\_\_\_\_ full Jews in lifestyle and circumcision. As a result, Jews could not really associate with them because they were not truly Jewish.

Verses 3- 8: *"<sup>3</sup>About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" <sup>4</sup>And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord? So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. <sup>5</sup>Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. <sup>6</sup>He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do. <sup>7</sup>And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. <sup>8</sup>So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa."*

a) *"Cornelius!"* It is significant that God spoke to Cornelius directly, even calling him by name. It is also significant that Cornelius responded with a \_\_\_\_\_ of the heavenly and holy (he was afraid). This shows that Cornelius had a real relationship with God.

b) *"Send for Simon whose surname is Peter."* Probably, Cornelius didn't even know who Peter was. But he knew that he should do what God told him to do, and he could trust that God was speaking to this one named Peter also (He will tell you what you must do).

c) *"He will tell you what you must do."* God sent an angel in a vision to Cornelius, but He used a \_\_\_\_\_ the gospel to him.

d) *"Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier"* Apparently, the faith of Cornelius was contagious and there were those of his household and under his command who also honored the God of Israel.

Verses 9, 10: <sup>9</sup> *The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. <sup>10</sup> Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance"*

a) *"Then he became very hungry"* This often happens during prayer; distractions in our body come as we try to direct ourselves to God. However, God \_\_\_\_\_ to speak to Peter, as he fell into a trance.

Verses 11- 16: <sup>11</sup> *and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. <sup>12</sup> In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. <sup>13</sup> And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." <sup>14</sup> But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."<sup>15</sup> And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."<sup>16</sup> This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again."*

a) *"A voice came to him"* We don't know exactly what this was like for Peter. It is rare for God to speak in an audible voice. More often, God speaks to our inner man. As a vision can be "seen" by the " \_\_\_\_\_", even so we can "hear" the voice of God with the " \_\_\_\_\_".

b) *"Rise, Peter; kill and eat."* When Peter became very hungry and wanted to eat during prayer, he no doubt regarded it as a distraction. Yet, God used it by speaking to him through a vision regarding food. His hunger perhaps made him pay more attention.

c) *"Not so, Lord!"* Peter's response was both absurd and yet typical of us. He said "no" to his Lord. The only legitimate answer to a \_\_\_\_\_ " \_\_\_\_\_".

d) Peter had a bad habit of telling Jesus "No" (Matthew 16:22, John 13:8). Compare Peter's response to God (Not so, Lord!) with Cornelius' response to God (*What is it, Lord?*). On that day, it seemed that Cornelius was more responsive to God than Peter was.

e) Peter was saved, Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, and Peter had been greatly used by God. At the same time, Peter was still Peter. God didn't use him because he was perfect, but because he was in the right direction and he was available. We often fall into the trap of thinking that \_\_\_\_\_ until God can really use us.

f) "By the time the drama had been acted out the third time, Peter must have begun to get the idea that God was trying to tell him something, even though he did not know exactly what it was" (J. M. Boice).

### Pause and Ponder

Peter had pretty much put God in a box of limitations, and now God was going to shake Peter up to change his thinking. He can do the same for us. "Shake yourself up a little, my brother. If you are too precise may the Lord set you on fire, and consume your bonds of red tape! If you have become so improperly proper that you cannot commit a proper impropriety, then pray God to help you be less proper, for there are many who will never be saved by your instrumentality while you study propriety" (Charles Spurgeon).

Verses 17- 23: *"<sup>17</sup> Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. <sup>18</sup> And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.<sup>19</sup> While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. <sup>20</sup> Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."<sup>21</sup> Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"<sup>23</sup> Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him."*

a) "The Spirit said to him" Previously, in Acts 10:13 and 10:15, it was simply said that a voice spoke to Peter. Now, we are told that the Spirit spoke to Peter. This was God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, speaking to Peter.

b) "Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius" Peter must have been shocked when he opened the door and saw two servants and a soldier (Acts 10:7) at his door. He would have known immediately that they were not Jews, and he would have wondered why God told him to go with them and why God had sent them.

c) The idea that God could send and use Gentiles was entirely new to Peter. God was

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d) "Some brethren from Joppa accompanied him." "I suppose he (Peter) anticipated what was to happen and the misunderstanding and opposition that would result, and he judged that whatever God was leading him into it would be good to have some of the other Jews along to verify the outcome" (J. M. Boice).

Verses 24 – 33: *"<sup>24</sup> And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup> As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. <sup>26</sup> But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." <sup>27</sup> And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. <sup>28</sup> Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. <sup>29</sup> Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?" <sup>30</sup> So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, <sup>31</sup> and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. <sup>32</sup> Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.' <sup>33</sup> So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."*

a) *"As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. <sup>26</sup> But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man."* Cornelius didn't know Peter, but must have thought him to be a special man of God, so he fell down at his feet and worshipped him. This reaction was understandable, though wrong.

b) *"But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean."* Peter understood that the vision was about people, not food. But the principle still relates to food. We understand believers are not under any obligation to keep a kosher diet. How we eat may be better or worse from a health perspective, but it doesn't make us \_\_\_\_\_.

c) Jesus spoke of this principle: *"Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart, but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?"* (Mark 7:18-19).

d) Paul knew this principle: *I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself* (Romans 14:14). Therefore he could conclude, *Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink...which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ* (Colossians 2:16-17).

e) "Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God." The message Peter was about to preach had great preparation. Peter was prepared by the Holy Spirit, and those at Cornelius' house were prepared to hear the message Peter brought. Our blessing is \_\_\_\_\_ to hear the word of God.

f) "When you go to church, do you want to receive a good message? If so, the best way is to come with a prepared heart. I know that the preacher must be prepared too. But when God prepares the messenger as well as those who are to hear him, then tremendous things happen." (J. M. Boice)

Verses 34- 43: "<sup>34</sup> Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. <sup>35</sup> But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. <sup>36</sup> The word which God sent to the <sup>[1]</sup>children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— <sup>37</sup> that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. <sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. <sup>40</sup> Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead."

a) "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality." This is the foundation for Peter's understanding that the gospel should now go forth to Gentiles. This statement goes completely against the prevailing Jewish thought at that time that God certainly *did* show partiality, towards the Jews and against the Gentiles. In essence, many Jews of Peter's day thought that \_\_\_\_\_. Also, the Gentiles despised Jews as weird traditionalists, and believed that they were evil plotters who worshipped pigs. After all, they thought, Jews refused to eat pork, so they must worship pigs!

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d) Peter's sermon was a wonderful explanation of the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth:

- Jesus was baptized in identification with humanity.
- Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power.
- Jesus went about doing good and healing, delivering those oppressed by the devil.
- Jesus did this with the power of God, for God was with Him.
- Jesus did these things in the presence of eyewitnesses.
- Jesus was crucified.
- Jesus was raised from the dead, resurrected in view of many witnesses.
- Jesus commanded His followers to preach the message of who He is and what He did.
- Jesus is ordained by God to be Judge of the entire world and Jesus is the one foretold by the prophets.

*Verses 44- 48: "44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. 45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, 47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days."*

a) "While Peter was still speaking these words" Salvation came when each one of these Gentiles \_\_\_\_\_ with believing faith in their hearts, so that they were actually born again as they listened and believed.

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d) "The Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word... they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God" Their filling with the Holy Spirit was accompanied by the demonstration of spiritual gifts. This was a filling with the Holy Spirit in two senses: First, in the sense that He \_\_\_\_\_ in every believer; second, in the sense of a special \_\_\_\_\_ with gifts and graces from the Holy Spirit.

e) When they spoke with tongues, it was to \_\_\_\_\_, not to \_\_\_\_\_. The audience was God, not man, as is consistent with the principle of 1 Corinthians 14:2.

f) This was unique. It was not common in the Book of Acts or in subsequent Christian experience for those who were not previously converted (born again) to instantly be born again and receive such evident spiritual gifts. Yet it was good and even necessary on this occasion, to show that they received *the exact same Spirit, the exact same blessing* as the apostles and first followers of Jesus did on the morning of Pentecost (Acts 2).

**Works sourced:**

Acts 10 NKJV - Cornelius Sends a Delegation - There - Bible Gateway

David Guzik: Enduring Word Bible Commentary Acts Chapter 10 (2018).

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## ANSWERS

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**b)** All of this changed with the spread of the gospel. Christianity was the first religion to **disregard racial, cultural and national limitations**.

**c)** Peter's sermon was a wonderful explanation of the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth:

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