

Cornelius The Centurion

Introduction

- I. I believe with all my heart that the gospel is universal in application, and intended for all races, classes and conditions of humanity (Rom. 1:16–17).
 - A. It is intended to reach down to lowest depths of degradation and despair.
 - B. Also intended for the very best man this nation affords, morally speaking.
- II. In this lesson I want look at a prominent man, known throughout the country in which he lived and against whom very few things could be said—his name is Cornelius, a resident of Caesarea Maritima, and his story is found in Acts 10.

Discussion

I. Character Of Cornelius (Acts 10:1–2, 22)

- A. Many today would think it strange that he needed to do anything in order to be saved from his sins.
- B. People today might be honest, honorable, prayerful, generous, with hearts open to the poor—what do they have to fear at the hands of a just and merciful God?
- C. Cornelius was told four times that he needed to “hear words” in order to be saved (Acts 10:6, 22, 32; 11:14).

II. Appearance Of The Angel (Acts 10:3–6)

- A. How many preachers in this town would question his salvation?
- B. Though an angel had spoken and God heard prayers, he must yet hear words from another man’s lips before he will be saved.
- C. The angel to did not appear to convert him, to preach to him or change his heart in any way.
- D. The humility of Cornelius is shown (Acts 10:6).
- E. Did not inquire if he could be saved in some other way.

III. The Messenger: The Apostle Peter (Acts 10:9–18)

- A. Our scene changes from Caesarea to the city of Joppa, some 30 miles away.
- B. The Lord prepares Peter for a favorable reception of the servants of Cornelius (cf. Acts 10:17).
- C. While Cornelius was waiting he called his friends together (Acts 10:24, 33).

IV. The Sermon Preached—Not In Order (Acts 10:34–35)

- A. In the introduction of the sermon we find a positive declaration that God respects not persons, but character—to fear Him and work righteousness is the ground of acceptability.
- B. The content of the sermon (Acts 10:36–44).
- C. Peter did not preach this sermon without interruption (Acts 11:15).
 1. “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them...” (NKJV).
 2. “No sooner had I begun to speak...” (Weymouth).
 3. “Just as I was starting to speak...” (NIV).
 4. “Now just as I began to speak...” (Moffatt).
 5. “But just as I was getting started...” (Living Bible).

- D. The Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his household. Why?
 - 1. He did not preach the needed words.
 - 2. If Cornelius was saved when the Spirit came, he was saved before Peter's sermon; therefore he was saved before faith.
 - 3. "So then faith comes by hearing..." (Rom. 10:17).
- E. Speaking by the Spirit of God does not prove salvation.
 - 1. Saul, while seeking to kill David, had the Spirit of God upon him, and did what Cornelius did—spoke by the Spirit of God (1 Sam. 19:21–23).
 - 2. While the Israelites were camped across from Jericho, Balaam's donkey spoke by the Spirit (Num. 22:28).
 - 3. Caiaphas, the High Priest, prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation.
 - a) God used this unregenerate man to speak (John 11:51; 2 Pet. 1:20–21).
 - b) Caiaphas was a persecutor of the church (Acts 4:6).
- F. The Holy Spirit proved that the Gentiles could be saved (Acts 11:15–18).
- G. Ten years later, in Peter's final words in Acts, he told how the Gentiles would be saved in the same manner as the Jews (Acts 15:7–11)
- H. Remission of sins through His name (Acts 10:43; cf. Matt. 28:18–19).
 - 1. "And he commanded them to be baptized..." (Acts 10:48).
 - 2. This is in harmony with Peter's first sermon (Acts 2:38–39; Luke 24:47).

Conclusion

- I. I repeat what I said at the start: no man will be saved by morality alone.
 - A. They have to heard words (Matt. 28:18).
 - B. I pray you would follow the steps of Cornelius and obey God's commands.
- II. If you are waiting for an angel to come, eternity will find you still unprepared.
 - A. Angels no long come—we have the word of God.
 - B. The word of God is still powerful (Heb. 4:12).
- III. If you are waiting for the baptism of the Holy Spirit—you will die disappointed.
 - A. Only two cases of Holy Spirit baptism in world history (Acts 2, 10).
 - B. The purpose of Holy Spirit baptism has been fulfilled.
- IV. If Christ were visibly present, He would point you to His word (Heb. 5:8–9).
- V. We are saved, not by the appearance of an angel, the baptism of Holy Spirit, nor by miracles, but by humble, loving, trusting obedience to authority of God.