

## FIRST GENTILE CONVERTS ACTS 10

When Peter and the other apostles opened the door to the kingdom in Acts 2, three thousand obeyed the terms of pardon. The Jews had been the chosen people of God. But the eternal purpose of God had been to unite Jew and Gentile in the fulness of time in the one body of Christ (Eph. 2:11-18; 3:1-6), and to proclaim salvation to all people through Christ (Isa. 49:6; Luke 3:6). Peter would even state in Acts 2:39.. Yet for several years after Pentecost, the gospel was preached only to the Jews.

That brings us to Acts 10. The case of conversion recorded in Acts 10 is remarkable because it was the initial instance of conversion from among the Gentiles and because it plainly implies that, regardless of the uprightness of one's moral character, all men need a Savior. How thankful we should be when we read of this account of the gospel being extended to all people of every race and nationality. The man was Cornelius. Let's look at what happened on that occasion.

- I. The man Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2).
  - A. A military man– captain of one hundred men.
  - B. A religious man –
    1. A devout man–deeply religious
    2. A man who feared God–respected God
    3. A charitable man–gave to help people.
    4. A man of prayer–believed in the importance of prayer.
  - C. Why did a man like that need anything further?
    1. His character already puts to shame a great many of those who profess to be good Christians.
    2. Does a man like this need to be converted? Absolutely!
    3. There are many who fall far short of his attainments who nevertheless expect to receive salvation on the basis of their moral character.
    4. Just because a man is good, upright, honest, prayerful, does not argue that he is a child of God.
    5. No man has ever yet been saved on account of his intrinsic worth or inherent value: and if any-one is every saved, it will be by virtue of the fact that he has been washed in that fountain filled with the precious blood of Christ.
    6. In spite of all that is said about Cornelius, he still had to hear words whereby he might be saved
    7. If that man need to hear words by which he might be saved, don't you need something of the same kind?
  - D. What about his praying?
    1. For years religionists have held that one is saved by prayer.
    2. However: no one is authorized to pray for:
      - a. Salvation, for the word saves (James 1:21).
      - b. Purification or begettal, which is accomplished by obeying the truth (I Pet.1: 22,23).
      - c. For sanctification, for one is sanctified by the word of God (John 17:17).
    3. There is nothing for which alien sinners are authorized to pray.
  - E. Cornelius, though a devout man, was not a Christian.
    1. He was not "in Christ"
    2. No salvation outside the name of Christ (Acts 4:12; Heb.9:22; Gal. 3:26,27; Eph.1:3)
- II. An angel speaks to Cornelius
  - A. The angel told Cornelius his prayers had come up as a memorial to God.
    1. The prayers of Cornelius reminded the Lord of something... the intent to bring the gospel to all
    2. God did not intend to allow the Jews to thwart His purposes, and this prayer was a reminder.
    3. Eph. 2:15,16

- B. The angel did not tell Cornelius what to do to be saved.
    - 1. Same for Ethiopian, Saul, and now Cornelius.
    - 2. There was a reason for that.
  - C. When Jesus gave the great commission, he delivered the gospel, God's power to save into the hands of earthen vessels.
    - 1. II Cor. 4:7
    - 2. II Tim. 2:2
    - 3. The human agency was indispensable. (Acts 11:14)
  - D. Cornelius acted promptly. Devout men are always anxious to do their duty and will make no petty excuses
- III. The vision of Peter.
- A. While the men from Cornelius were traveling, God was preparing Peter to go with them.
  - B. Something had to be done to make Peter willing to go.
    - 1. Peter needed to have his vision cleared, for as yet it had never been announced that the middle wall of partition had been broken down.
    - 2. Peter saw the heavens opened and a vessel descending.
    - 3. It contained all manners of creatures.
    - 4. Peter resisted the temptation to eat anything unclean (Duet. 14:3-21; Lev. 11.)
    - 5. After three times, the vessel was "received up into heaven."
    - 6. While Peter was trying to understand the meaning of the vision, the messengers from Cornelius came.
    - 7. The Spirit told Peter to go with them (v.20).
    - 8. No person was to be considered unclean whom God was willing to accept.
    - 9. God wanted the Great Commission fulfilled.
    - 10. As a matter of a precaution, Peter took six Jewish brethren with him to be witnesses in case something unusual or out of the ordinary should happen. (10:22,45; 11:12).
  - C. Peter's arrival and sermon (10:25-26)
    - 1. Stand up!
    - 2. Far cry from those today who claim to be successors of Peter.
    - 3. The vision was to convince him that all nations had a right to the blessings in Christ Jesus. (v.28)
    - 4. Why have you sent for me? (V.29)
    - 5. The response of Cornelius (vss.30-33)
      - a. What an audience (vss.24,27,33).
      - b. What an attitude (vs.33).
        - (1) They were assembled in the sight of God!
        - (2) They were assembled to "hear things commanded of God."
    - 6. The message was similar to that found in Acts 2.
    - 7. Peter did not preach a different gospel to the Gentiles. The plan Peter preached was the plan that the prophets foretold (vs.43).
    - 8. Forgiveness of sins is conditioned on an obedient faith.
  - D. As Peter began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles, as it did on the Jews at the beginning
    - 1. When this occurred, Peter said to those with him (v.47).
      - a. Knew they had received the H/S because they spoke with tongues.
      - b. Not a common occurrence because Peter had to go back to Pentecost to find another event.
    - 2. He commanded them to be baptized (v.48).
    - 3. Such is the account of the conversion of Cornelius.
  - E. How were Cornelius and his household saved?
    - 1. He heard the gospel—Acts 15:7
    - 2. He believed the gospel—Acts 15:7

3. He repented of his sins–Acts 11:18
4. He was baptized–Acts 10:48

Con: No man has ever yet been or ever will be saved on account of his goodness. Such is not the terms of salvation. We must be willing to follow in the footsteps of Cornelius, do the things commanded by God, do the things that he did – hear, believe, and obey the gospel.

If you wait for the coming of an angel, eternity will find you unprepared. If you wait for the baptism of H/S, you will die absolutely disappointed, for there have never been but two cases in the history of the world of that occurrence—one of them at Pentecost and the other on the household of Cornelius. They had their specific purpose, which has been fulfilled and passed away. All men, regardless of their moral character, need a Savior. Will you obey the gospel today?