

**SERMON: A SOLDIER AND A PREACHER
A DIVINE DUO
(A VETERAN'S DAY SERMON)**

Acts 10:1-6

(1) There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band call the Italian band. (2) A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. (3) He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. (4) And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. (5) And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: (6) He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

Introduction

God moves in mysterious ways. This is true in many aspects of life. It is certainly true in the narrative in chapter ten of Acts. Two of the most unlikely individuals met in a productive way and God was glorified.

Cornelius was a centurion; he had one hundred men under his authority. It usually took fifteen or more years of exceptional military service to attain the rank of centurion. The pay and the status were exceptional. Cornelius had to have been a good soldier to move up through the ranks. It is certain he was brave, talented, tough, well trained, and had no problem following orders. He was a Gentile and part of the Roman army occupying Israel. He was a godly man who had abandoned paganism and was worshipping the God of the Jews. Thus, he was unique. Even though he was part of the occupying force, he was kind to the local residents. He shared his wealth by performing many generous deeds to the surrounding Jewish community.

Peter was a Jewish fisherman who had become a preacher. The Jews detested Gentiles. The Old Testament commands for separation had been taken out of context and gone far beyond the original intent. Jews would not enter the house of a Gentile, nor would they allow Gentiles to enter their homes. Any utensil or object bought from or touched by a Gentile had to be purified before use by a Jew. Jewish midwives were prohibited from assisting Gentile women during child birth, lest they defiled themselves and would not be available to deliver a Jewish baby. The Jews had double animosity for the Roman soldiers. They were Gentiles and they had brutally invaded their country. Peter was known for his quick temper and was call a "son of thunder." Yet God brought

this Roman centurion and this “hot headed” Jew to build a bridge between cultures and ethnic groups.

Let’s review this narrative, which extends for the entire tenth chapter, and extract some practical truths.

Exposition

1. Sovereign Preparation.

(God Prepares Us To Fulfil Our Destinies.)

(Both Cornelius and Peter had Visions.)

(The Visions Prepared Them for What Was To Come.)

2. Short-Lived Perplexity.

(The Meaning Of The Vision Was Initially Unclear To Peter.)

(God Had To Speak To Peter Three Times In Quick Succession.)

3. Strategic Coordination.

(There Was Perfect Timing In The Sequence Of Events.)

(Including The Conversion Of Paul, The Apostle To The Gentiles.)

(Paul Was Converted In Chapter Nine.)

(God Uses The Right People At The Right Time To Get The Right Results.)

4. Submissive Obedience.

(Both Men Obeyed God.)

(Cornelius Sent For Peter.)

(Peter Went To Meet Cornelius.)

5. Salvation Presented and Accepted.

(Cornelius And His Entire Household Accepted Christ.)

6. Sending of the Holy Spirit.

(The Spirit Came In A Mighty Way.)

(The Spirit Interrupted The Sermon.)

7. Forging Of A Bridge For Diversity And Inclusion.)

Closing Thoughts

The conversion of Cornelius and his household represented the decisive step forward in the spread of Christianity to the Gentiles. Cornelius was not the first Gentile to receive Christ, however. An Ethiopian and some converts of Philip had become followers of Christ. This situation was unique because it involved Peter, the recognized leader of the

movement. Furthermore, it was validated by God's miraculous superintending of events, including the revelation to Peter that He declared all foods pure.

It was a strategy of the Roman army, when in battle, to burn their bridges after they had passed over, in order to prevent their opponents from taking advantage of their construction and following them. Cornelius did not burn a bridge; he built a bridge and Peter walked right across and gave the plan of salvation. We all need to tear down more barriers and build more bridges. Jesus is willing to help us. Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

Related Scripture

Acts 10:1-48

End Notes

1. Both Cornelius and Peter received guidance from the Lord during times of prayer. This should inspire each of us to continue to maintain regular periods of time in prayer. Let us be attentive during our prayer times. The Lord may give us guidance on a particular decision or issue we are facing.

2. In last Sunday's sermon I said there are "celestial angels" and there are "earth angels." We all can be earth angels. A celestial angel told Cornelius to contact Peter and Peter gave him and his family the plan of salvation. Why didn't God just have the celestial give Cornelius the plan of salvation and skip Peter? A simple answer: It is not their job. We are to carry the gospel. If the celestial angel had given Cornelius the plan of salvation, we would have an excuse never to witness to the lost. The great commission was given to us, not to the celestial angels.

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