

Cornelius Needed Salvation

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The Acts of the Apostles contains several accounts of salvation following the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. We believe these are recorded for our understanding that we might know how men and women in different walks of life can learn of the gospel and obey it for the remission of their sins. The record of the conversion of Cornelius is recorded in the 10th chapter of Acts, beginning with verse 1:

"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. 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. 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. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa" (Acts 10:1-8).

Most religious people today believe that morality makes one safe from the consequences of sin. When a man loves his family and his neighbor, and gives to the needy and poor, pays his debts, does not use bad language, and is honest and fair in his dealings with his fellow man, he is considered a good man, acceptable to God without any further changes in his life. Cornelius was a good moral man. A better moral man could not be found today.

1. Cornelius was a *devout* man. He was a religious, devout man. He had reverence for God. That indicates an honest heart and a desire to do His will.

Some men have **vain** religion. Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:1-9).

James 1:26-27 says: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Vain religion is that which is from a deceived heart, who does not control his tongue, and who follows the doctrines of men rather than God. Cornelius was not this kind of man.

2. Cornelius feared God. He had a deep reverence and respect for God. When Peter was at the house of Cornelius and saw the Holy Spirit come upon them, he said in Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Cornelius

already feared God when the angel of the Lord spoke to him. But he needed to do something more.

Some men do not fear God. "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18). We must serve God with godly fear. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29)

Even though Cornelius was a devout man who feared God, he still needed salvation. Then Peter told the men in Jerusalem why he went into the house of Cornelius. "And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:13-14). Peter was to tell him words by which he and all his house would be saved.

Not only did Cornelius fear God, but he feared God with all his house. He had the right influence upon his family. All members of his household had a deep reverence for God, and it was because of his influence and example before them.

3. Cornelius *gave alms*. Giving to the poor and needy is required of the disciples of Christ. They were to have the right attitude and give alms for the right purpose. In the sermon on the mount Jesus said: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:1-4).

Not only did Cornelius give alms, he gave **much** alms. One who gives much is commended by the Lord. Jesus was watching the people give money into the treasury and a poor widow gave all she had. "And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:42-44).

Dorcas was a disciple in Joppa and she was said to be "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." (Acts 9:36). She became sick and died. They prepared her for burial. They sent for Peter to come and he did. Verse 39 says: "Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them." She made garments and gave to the widows and others while she lived, and now they are grieving because she was gone from them. Peter raised her from the dead and presented her to those who wept. Cornelius was a person like Dorcas. He was generous with the poor.

4. Cornelius *prayed*. One who prays recognizes the goodness of God and His ability to give to those who ask Him. Every Christian ought to pray because it is a great privilege. The Bible teaches us to pray. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

Not only did Cornelius pray to God, he prayed always. He continued to pray. He prayed to God often. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). Every great man in the Bible prayed to God. Paul said: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).

Cornelius was a good moral man who was religious minded and prayed always, but he needed to be saved. An angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him to send to Joppa for Simon Peter who would come and "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts 10:6). "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). As he preached the Holy Spirit fell on those who heard, and they began to speak with tongues and magnify God. Peter said this was to show that God accepted the Gentiles as well as the Jews (Acts 11:15-17).

Then Peter asked: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days." (Acts 10:47-48). When Cornelius and his household were baptized, they received the remission of their sins and were added to the church (Acts 2:28,47). That is what everyone who heard the gospel of Christ must do to be saved.