

“The Conversion of a ‘Good’ Man!”

Acts 10 (10:1-23)

Intro. – A lady of a well-to-do household was giving last minute instructions to their butler for an upcoming reception. Lady: “I want you to stand at the front door and call the guests’ names as they arrive.” Butler: “Very well madam. I have been wanting to do that for years.”

R. B. Jones used only his initials as he did not have a first and middle name. This arrangement was never a problem until he went to work for the government. On the official forms for payroll and personnel departments, his name was carefully entered as follows: R(only) B(only) Jones. Sure enough, when R. B. received his pay check it was made out to “Ronly Bonly Jones.”

I use the above to introduce the idea that the name *Christian* is so often used loosely and just plain wrongly. Almost everyone and everything is referred to as *Christian*. The Bible is most specific whenever using this name. Because of this, you and I are obligated to use the name *Christian* no more and no less than what God’s Word permits. Amen?!

Acts 10 records the commencement of a most significant time in church history. Before this and in accord with Christ’s plan, the Gospel had been preached to the Jews only. God is now ready to reveal His grace to Gentiles. The case of Cornelius is the recorded instance through which God does this. Cornelius was a “devout man, a Roman centurion, yet a worshiper of God. He was a giving man. He was also a man of fervent prayer. He was such a “good man,” his goodness influenced his entire household.

Cornelius was all of these, even referred to as “righteous,” but, was he a Christian? He was good, but, is being good, good enough?

Purpose: to see that being good enough isn’t good enough

Cornelius was a devout, benevolent, even called righteous, but, at this stage in his life he was not a Christian. To be a Christian, one has to be “in Christ” (1 Peter 4:11; Galatians 3:27; Hebrews 5:9; Revelation 22:14 etc.). Apart from Christ there is no salvation (Acts 4:12; Romans 5:9; Hebrews 9:22; 1 John 1:7). Cornelius had not yet been cleansed by the blood of Christ. He had not yet been restored by the grace of God on God’s terms. The conversion of this *good man* naturally divides itself into three parts:

I A PREACHER & SINNER Brought Together (10:1-43)

A. An Angel Appeared to Cornelius (vv 1-9)

1. Angels often played a role in revealing God’s redemptive plan (e.g. Acts 7:53, 8:26; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 1:14)
2. An angel told Cornelius his prayers/alms ascended as a memorial before God:
 - a. Cornelius just as religious as his knowledge permitted him to be...
 - b. note: *religious* (morally good) but not a Christian.
 - c. God limited what could be done through Cornelius UNTIL he complied with the terms of grace and became an heir of the new covenant.
3. Angel told him to send for Peter = he would tell them words whereby he and his household would be saved (11:13,14).
 - Illus. – Today (NBC 5-11-98) = Sotheby’s art man was about to auction off a ’67 silk-screen of Marilyn Monroe by Andy Warhol. Matt Lauer asked, “How much...?” Art man responded, “3 to 4 million.” “How can you justify that?” Art man said, “Images are everything today, but words are nothing.”
4. God has always brought “preacher/messenger” and sinner together. Why? The unforgiven must hear and learn of God’s term of pardon from His Word.
5. Cornelius, being a God fearing man obeyed immediately...

B. Peter Had a Vision (vv 9-43)

1. To this point, Peter had preached to the Jews only.

2. Purpose of the vision was to show him, God the Father could cleanse the Gentiles, as well as, Jews by the blood of Christ...
3. The Spirit told Peter to go and go he did – note: as in the case of Philip and the eunuch, first thing was bring the preacher and the sinner together.
4. Peter rehearsed the facts of the Gospel (life, death, burial and resurrection)...
5. God wants to use each of us in like manner... (friends, neighbors, family)... wants us to bring messenger and the sinner together!

Note: studies times... fellowship times... Jules Miller dvd's all for bringing messenger/sinner together!

II Miraculous HOLY SPIRIT Given to the Sinner (10:44-46)

- remember on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) the apostles were given the miraculous gift of H.S... but no similar demonstration of this until now.
- A. What Persons Were Given This Gift?
 - “those who heard the Word” = Cornelius and his household
- B. What Were the Traits of This Gift?
 1. The exact same manifestations as on the day of Pentecost...
 2. It was something seen and heard... it was a demonstration of God's love, power, and grace.
- C. What Was the Effect of This Gift?
 1. They spoke in tongues and glorified God as did the apostles on the day of Pentecost.
 2. Were one to have the same gift today, they too could speak in tongues... work miracles...
- D. What Was the Purpose of This Gift?
 1. This was a special miracle to convince Peter and the rest of the apostles that the Gospel of grace was for Gentiles, as well as, Jews.
 2. Acts 11 Peter compelled to explain: 11:15-18 – miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit given to Cornelius at a critical time in church history. This was the first time grace being extended to Gentiles...

III GOOD MAN Becomes a Christian (10:47-49)

- A. Cornelius Repented
 - long before Peter's arrival, he and his household had already “turned about” and were headed back to God... the very definition for *repent*.
- B. Cornelius Believed
 - quite evident that Cornelius had strong convictions AND trust in the Lord...
- C. Cornelius Confessed
 - *exalting God* is the phrase used to describe Cornelius' confession of faith...
- D. Cornelius Was Immersed
 1. He and his household turned to God, heard the Word, believed, confessed their faith and were immersed into Christ. Why? For the remission of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 2. In turn they were *added to the Body of Christ* the same way as did all other before and since = saved BY grace, THROUGH faith, AT immersion, FOR good works!

Conclusion: We all know too well how difficult it is to communicate clearly during a loss or a calamity. Take for instance a car accident. The following are actual insurance accident report forms. Each of these were made by sincere, serious people, who did their best to be clear, accurate and concise:

It happens to us when talking to unforgiven friends, neighbors, and family about their need for Christ and His grace. What compounds this is the fact that many if not most people today have the false assumption that being good is good enough... If such were the case, Cornelius would never have sent for Peter. If ever a case

could be made for a religious, good, devout, being good enough person – it would have to be Cornelius. But he had to be covered by the blood of Christ just like you and me have to be covered.

Brethren and friend, please; I appeal to you on the basis of God's Word alone: that you see being good enough isn't good enough! You and I and every other accountable person is burdened with the guilt of our own sins. We need grace. We need cleansing by the blood of Christ alone. Being good enough isn't good enough!!!