

43. A Global, Diverse Family

ACTS 10

Introduction:

- Last week: Paul's conversion and him being apostle to Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16)
- Who were the Gentiles? Explain Jew v. Gentile hatred (c.f. Acts 22)

[Acts 10:1] At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, [2] a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.

- Caesarea → 70 miles from Jerusalem, capital of Judea, port town
- Centurion (commander of 100 men) of the Italian Cohort (Cohort = 1000 men. Ten cohorts = a legion) → (1) Metric system is the way to be and (2) he's Socially prominent
- Not a typical roman soldier... he is a devout man who feared God w/ all his household...
 - E.g. He was a Gentile (explain) who followed the Jewish God but was just one important step away from becoming a full on proselyte → circumcision
- Even though he was a devout man, he was still a dirty Gentile... He's still uncircumcised and irreligious in eyes of the Jews. They might respect him publicly, but he's still dirty.

[3] About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." [4] And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. [5] And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. [6] He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." [7] When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, [8] and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

- His prayers and alms = Jewish practice of faith. God saw his genuine faith and piety
 - God recognized his faith as genuine, but Jews did not.
 - Loving religion vs. loving God
- Cornelius is a man of action, like a good soldier, and obeys immediately, sends men.

[9] The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. [10] And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance [11] and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. [12] In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. [13] And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." [14] But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." [15] And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." [16] This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

- Every go grocery shopping when you're hungry? Peter daydreaming about food.

- Jews had strict dietary laws according to their law and traditions (Lev 11:2-47)
- Peter knows Jesus, understands that salvation is by trust, but he still has baggage
- Peter hears a voice telling him to kill and eat. In his mind, this seems to be a direct violation of the law, but the law was fulfilled by Jesus and abolished by Jesus
 - Doesn't mean you can go murder people (law of Christ), but you can wear stretchy pants
- This happens three times so Peter realizes that it isn't just a tummy trance
- "What God has made clean..." God is using an international buffet to make a point → anyone, any nation, can be part of my family
- God is adopting a global, diverse family and it's messing w/ Peter's head

[17] Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate [18] and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. [19] And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. [20] Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." [21] And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" [22] And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." [23] So he invited them in to be his guests.

- Peter is thinking things over when he sees three men standing by the gate.
- The Spirit prompts him to follow them without hesitation.
- They explain to Peter → sounds like T-Ball, "Please come tell us the gospel." He obeys.
- This sounds amazing to me, but this might be your biggest fear!

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. [24] And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. [25] When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. [26] But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." [27] And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. [28] And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation (Love Peter's lack of tact...), but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. [29] So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

- They start their two day journey to Caesarea. Cornelius is eagerly waiting and has gathered together his relatives and close friends. Everyone is there WAITING
- Cornelius is what is called a person of peace - a gospel access point to his community
 - In the Hub training, this is a big part of what we teach. This is what we all want!
- "You yourselves know..." Now, this isn't true of the OT but of the Pharisaical Law
- God is pushing against Peter's paradigm and he's about to topple the tower of cards.

[30] And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing [31] and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. [32] Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' [33] So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

- Ninth hour... crucifixion, veil torn → now the holy of holies is open to ALL, not just Jews.
- As such, here are some God-fearing Gentiles who are literally asking for Peter to tell them whatever it is that God has commanded him to say (Matt 28; Acts 1:8-10)

[34] So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, [35] but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. [36] As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), [37] you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: [38] how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. [39] And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, [40] but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, [41] not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. [42] And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. [43] To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

- Peter looks at what God has done - the vision, the trance, the messengers, and pulls all the threads together. God has made it very clear that he is calling these people to Jesus
- Remember: Nobody comes to Jesus unless the Father draws him → this is happening!
- But what types of people? Not Jews... These people aren't even circumcised!
- But God doesn't seem to mind. He shows no partiality.

[44] While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. [45] And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. [46] For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, [47] "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" [48] And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

- The HS falls on all of them → it's like Pentecost v2.0
- The Jewish followers of Jesus are AMAZED. God has accepted EVEN the Gentiles
- Acts is a book of transitions. The HS progresses and every time a new "type" of people get saved, God doesn't send the HS until it's in front of the leadership to prove his point
 - Jews → Samaritans → God-Fearers → Pagans
- Peter's response: If God has accepted them, who are we to reject them? Get dunked.

WHAT DOES THIS TEACH ABOUT GOD?

- **God shows no partiality.**
 - Black, white, American, Afghani → God shows no partiality. He's looking for ppl
 - God isn't just looking for white Americans to be Christian
 - God IS drawing people from every tribe, tongue, nation, walk of life, ethnicity, skin color, economic background, educational, vocational, etc.
 - If you don't like diversity, you will hate the new heaven and new earth
 - He is looking for people who are ripe for the harvest regardless of background
- **Jesus is the hope of the religious and irreligious alike.**
 - If Paul can be saved, then any religious person has hope
 - The stiff stuffy legalist from Footloose
 - If Gentiles can be saved, then any irreligious person has hope (and they get even more pagan as the chapters go by!)
 - The dude at the moon dance in West Cape May
- **What God has declared clean, no one can declare unclean.**
 - Beyond that, what God declares clean, you cannot (and have no right) to declare unclean... Yourself... the other guy → if salvation is real, he is declared clean
 - *Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand (Romans 14:4)*

WHAT DOES THIS TEACH ABOUT MAN?

- **You show partiality, but the ground is level at the foot of the cross**
 - We all need Jesus, Jew and Gentile alike. All are born into sin. All need salvation.
 - From heaven, we all look to be the same height.
 - Just because you're standing on a pile doesn't make you closer to God.
- **The gospel will upset your paradigms.**
 - Jew v. Gentiles in one body
 - What's your paradigm? Ex: Joby's tattoo story; Ex: Our fundraising story;

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

- **Go global**
 - Pray for the Czech trip
 - Next year go on the trip. Money? Start saving and raising now.
 - Pray for our church planting partners in CR and Indo
- **Embrace Diversity**
 - Go love and hang out w/ someone who is different from you
 - Be exposed. Learn.

WHO ARE YOU GOING TO TELL?

- **Get involved with building this crazy family**
- Jesus is building his island of misfit toys. Be part of the process
- Who do you NOT want to hear the gospel? Go tell him