

Sunday, May 3, 2026 am

WHAT PETER TOLD CORNELIUS

Acts 10:34-43

Today I want to look at a portion of one of the accounts of conversion recorded in the book of Acts. Specifically, we want to notice the sermon Peter preached on that occasion. That sermon is worthy to study as it applies to the group of individuals we are most likely to interact with when trying to teach the gospel. In this lesson I want to notice some things about that sermon AND make some applications for us to consider as we try to study with others.

I. Background leading to the sermons

- a. The purpose of this lesson is not to in detail examine the events that led to Peter going to Cornelius, but we will begin with a brief reminder of what happened.
- b. We begin with vs. 1-2 where we learn that Cornelius was a centurion in the Roman army (and a Gentile). He was a man who did good works – fearing God, generous, devout and prayerful to God. NOTE: In America, the majority still believe in God and Jesus (though that number continues to decline). And most believe the Bible to be the word of God. Of course, there are many misconceptions about these things, but for most we can quickly establish acceptance of these facts. HOWEVER, if you ask the average believer of these things, you might see one who is LIKE Cornelius – a relatively good person, who believes in God & Jesus and tries to help others. How do you teach them? That’s where the sermon on this occasion comes in.
- c. This is important because in spite of Cornelius being a good man. It was not enough to save him. That is why an angel appears to him in a vision and tells him to send for Peter. Cornelius responds immediately. Meanwhile, Peter is being prepared by the Lord with visions declaring that the gospel is no longer is exclusive to the Jews. What God has cleansed, do not call unclean or common. When Cornelius servants arrive where he was staying, Peter is again told to go with them “doubting nothing” (vs. 20). The next day Peter takes with him 6 Jewish witnesses (Acts 11:12) and goes to the house of Cornelius. After Cornelius explains why Peter is there and that they are ready to hear what God had to say, Peter begins his sermon.

II. The sermon of Peter (34-43)

- a. ***Then Peter opened his mouth*** – notice how before Peter spoke, he listened. And he began where Cornelius was.
- b. ***God shows no partiality*** (34-35) – salvation is available to everyone. This was a message everyone present needed – both those with Peter and those with Cornelius. And it is a fundamental principal for each of us – Galatians 2:6, Colossians 3:9-11, etc. There are many today who believe they are unworthy for one reason or another. Thus the place we need to begin is with the understanding that God is able to save anyone. 1 Timothy 2:3-4 notes this, as does 2 Peter 3:9, etc.
- c. ***We must fear Him and “work righteousness”*** –
 - i. As Peter said this to Cornelius, he made it known that we have a part in salvation. Yes, salvation is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9) and cannot be earned, but while God has made it available to all, He will only give it to the one who reaches out to Him on His terms.
 - ii. **We need a proper understanding of Him** – “***whoever fears Him***”. Far too many fail to fear Him. Some when they obey the gospel misunderstand who God is and the seriousness of serving Him. They compare Him to an earthly father with casualness. We cannot view God that way!
 1. Hebrews 12:28-29 – we serve Him with reverence and godly fear.

2. Psalm 89:7, *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, And to be held in reverence by all those around Him.*
3. 1 Peter 1:17, *And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;*
- iii. We must be willing to obey Him – “**and works righteousness**”. Righteousness is about doing what is right.
 1. It is not about earning our salvation (Ephesians 2:9), but it is about obeying the gospel. Hebrews 5:9 – Jesus became the author of salvation to all who obey Him.
 2. Matthew 7:21 emphasizes it is not enough to call Him Lord, we must do the will of the Father in heaven.
 3. Psalm 15:2, *LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart;*
 4. Working righteousness is more than a mental acknowledgment. It is action. Look to the examples of Hebrews 11 – Hebrews 11:4 – Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice though which he obtained witness that he was righteous; Hebrews 11:7 – Noah became the heir of righteousness because he prepared the ark; Abraham believed and obeyed God, dwelt in Canaan as a foreigner, and ultimately was willing to sacrifice his son at God's command. While Hebrews 11 does not mention that he was righteous, James 2:23 does and ties it to his obedience. Hebrews 11:33 also mentions others “who worked righteousness, etc.
 5. The point: When one considers Jesus for their salvation, they MUST understand the commitment it involves. It not just about getting wet, but “*the answer of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 3:21) MORE on this in a moment.
- d. **Jesus is the giver of peace** – in context, Peter likely has in mind how Jesus was breaking down barriers, especially between Jews and Gentiles.
 - i. This agrees with what Paul says was accomplished on the cross – Ephesians 2:14-15.
 - ii. We too must consider the peace He offers from the bondage of sin. When we sin, we are at enmity with God (Romans 8:7, James 4:4). Ephesians 2:1-4 described how in sin we were children of wrath. 2:11-12 describes us having no hope and without God in the world. IF you have sin in your life you need to take care of it.
 - iii. We are also at enmity with ourselves – many turn to Jesus looking for answers because of the struggles within their lives. They have hit rock bottom or are tired of living broken and wounded lives. Some have nowhere to go but up. They need peace within themselves.
 - iv. Jesus brings the peace we need –
 1. John 14:27 Jesus would say to His apostles, *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*
 2. Ephesians 2:14 notes that He Himself is our peace. Colossians 3:15 calls for us to let the peace of God rule in our hearts.
 3. Philippians 4:6-7 – when we learn to put our trust in Him, *the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds thought Jesus Christ.*
 - v. The point: Jesus is the answer to our sins and even our inner struggles. NOTE: This is not a promise that they will miraculously go away, but He does provide the resources needed to be reconciled to God and to overcome our struggles.
- e. **Jesus is Lord of all** – again, in context Peter is emphasizing Jesus came for all mankind, not just the Jews or randomly selected individuals. That Jesus is Lord is something that MUST be understood

before one obeys the gospel. Far too many want to emphasize being saved and/or baptism without an understanding of the commitment to Jesus that is involved.

- i. Matthew 16:24 – to follow Jesus requires that we deny self, take up our cross (willing to sacrifice/suffer) and follow Him. Luke 14:33 notes that one not willing to forsake all cannot be His disciple.
 - ii. Romans 10:9 notes we must confess Him as Lord leading toward salvation.
 - iii. What does it mean that Jesus is Lord?
 1. The word “Lord” means that one is master or ruler. It implies supremacy. More than 700 times the Greek word most often translated “Lord” is used to describe Jesus.
 2. You are surrendering to Him – He has all authority IN YOUR LIFE. Galatians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 13:5, 2 Corinthians 5:17 – in Christ we are a new creation. Colossians 3:24 declares that you serve the Lord Christ.
 3. You must repent of your sinful ways – you no longer walk as you used to.
 4. You will obey Him in everything – Matthew 28:19-20.
 5. You willing put on His name - Acts 11:26 – first called Christians in Antioch.
 6. You are living a new life – Colossians 2:6 - *As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,*
 - iv. You WILL NOT be a true believer if you are not willing to make Him Lord! And it does not end when you obey the gospel. It is to become a way of life.
- f. ***Understanding the foundation of the gospel*** (37-41) – Peter gives a brief introduction to who Jesus is.
- i. He notes several things about the work of Jesus that are at the very foundation of our salvation and God’s purpose for this world. Included in what Peter declared:
 1. Jesus began His work after His baptism by John – Matthew 3:13-4:17.
 2. He preached throughout Galilee, Samaria and Judea where Jerusalem is located.
 3. God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit – clearly God was with Him. At His baptism the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and the Father declared Him – Matthew 3:16-17.
 4. Throughout His life, Jesus had compassion and did good for mankind – Matthew 4:23-25.
 5. God was with Him in all of this – John 8:29, cf. John 3:2.
 6. This was done openly – Peter and others were witnesses having spent years with Him. Cf. Luke 24:46-48, Acts 1:8
 7. But He was killed by the Jewish leaders – crucified. Acts 2:23, Matthew 27:22-25
 8. But God raised Him (from the dead) on the 3rd day (Sunday) – Matthew 28:1ff.
 9. He was shown openly to many witnesses, but not to everyone. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, as well as various appearances described in the final chapter of each gospel. NOTE: Peter is also clear it was a LITERAL resurrection – we ate with Him – Luke 24:40-43.
 - ii. THIS is the message that our faith is based upon. People need to understand God’s plan of redemption fulfilled in Jesus. Galatians 4:4 described it as “the fullness of the time”.
 - iii. WHY should Jesus be Lord? When you study His life you find the answer to that.
- g. ***One day He will judge the world*** –
- i. Peter declares that this was their commission – Mark 16:15-16, Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:46-48.
 - ii. We must understand that one day we will stand before God in judgment.
 1. Jesus taught this – John 5:28-29, Matthew 25:31-46, etc.
 2. Romans 14:10-12, 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 – we will all stand before Him in judgment one day. Hebrews 9:27 warns that we will die and then face judgment.

3. This is WHY sharing the gospel is important. And it is ONE of the principles those we are studying with must grasp. It is not something to ignore.
 4. Acts 24:25 – a Paul reasoned with Felix in Caesarea about faith in Christ, he spoke of righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come. We know that Felix trembled and put it off, BUT it had to be said.
 5. We do none a favor when we fail to preach the reality of eternal reward – both toward the righteous and the unsaved. It can become a motivator that leads to obeying the gospel.
- h. ***He was commanded to obey the gospel*** – Following Peter’s lesson, the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his household. They spoke in tongues in the same way as the apostles had received the HS on Pentecost.
- i. Peter KNOWS this is a sign to declare God had made salvation available to all nations. Both for him and those who came with him as witnesses – 44-46.
 - ii. Time will not permit a discussion of why the Holy Spirit came on that occasion. Suffice it to say, it was NOT the act that saved Cornelius and those with him.
 - iii. What was Cornelius told to do? The same thing he told the audience on Pentecost – Acts 2:38.
 - iv. What was involved in the salvation of Cornelius. 1) He heard, 2) believed, 3) repented (cf. Acts 11:18) and was baptized (10:47-48) the SAME way as on Pentecost.

And thus we see the recorded sermon of Peter to Cornelius on that occasion. Perhaps more was said, but we do have recorded is fundamental. These are things that one ought to understand when he/she commits to following Christ. Being a Christian is about much more than a single act that puts one into Christ. Obeying the gospel is just the beginning. You now belong to you Lord. Is He Lord in your life? Think about it!