

ACTS

THE PERPETUAL POWER OF THE GOSPEL

The Impartial Gospel
Acts 10

Acts 10:1-45

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. 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.

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.

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.”

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. **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, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.”

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.”

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.

The Gospel in 4 Scenes

Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 4
<p><u>Cornelius</u></p> <p><i>Military captain who was “spiritual” but was overtly avoided by Jews. God pursued him for inclusion into The Family.</i></p>	<p><u>Peter</u></p> <p><i>Lead Apostle who “shouldn’t” associate with “unclean” people like Cornelius, but God told him that the Gospel was inclusive.</i></p>	<p><u>Intersection</u></p> <p><i>Peter and his people go see Cornelius and his people, intersecting the “old” with the “new” showing the inclusivity of the Gospel.</i></p>	<p><u>Us</u></p> <p><i>How can we focus on Jesus and the Gospel rather than our preferential rules and personal performance?</i></p>

Scene 1: Cornelius

“a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.”

**Roman Military
Captain**

**Honored God
and Served Others**

**Didn't know Jesus
or the Gospel**

- 1) His behavior didn't make him “clean”**
- 2) God meets you wherever you are, hears you, and speaks back (“vision” & “terror”).**

Scene 2: Peter

^{11b} something like a great sheet descending...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.”

Honored God
through obedience

Thought our
outward selves
determined our
acceptability

- 1) Still had a rules-based “Us & Them” mindset
- 2) God revealed the shockingly inclusive Gospel

Three Laws

Civil	Moral	Ceremonial
<i>Speed limits and taxes (Still have our own civil laws)</i>	<i>Ten Commandments (Love God, Love Others)</i>	<i>Purity/Clean Laws (Scapegoat and Sacrificial Lamb)</i>

“In short, the coming of Christ changed how we worship but not how we live. The moral law is an outline of God’s own character—his integrity, love, and faithfulness.”

Timothy Keller

Christian

Non-Christian

**Very
Clean**

“I’m doing pretty well and don’t do any of those really bad things, unlike those folks over there.”

“I don’t really need a spiritual cleaning. I’m definitely above average.”

**Too
Dirty**

“God cleaned me, but I keep rolling in the mud. I’m a huge disappointment.”

“I’m way too messed up and corrupt for God to reach and clean me.”

Mark 7:15

There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.”

Scene 3: Intersection

**34b God shows no partiality, ³⁵
but in every nation anyone
who fears him and does what
is right is acceptable to him...**

**38b God anointed Jesus of
Nazareth with the Holy Spirit
and with power. He went
about doing good and
healing... ^{39b} They put him to
death by hanging him on a
tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on
the third day... ⁴³ To him all
the prophets bear witness that
everyone who believes in him
receives forgiveness of sins
through his name.”**

**The Gospel is utterly
inviting to everybody.**

**1) It doesn't weigh-
down with rules for us
to be included.**

**2) It isn't watered-down
by saying that Jesus is
one of many ways, or
that following Jesus
doesn't need to impact
how we love.**

- 1) We are Unclean-er than we dare believe.**
(So Jesus became unclean on the cross for us as our “scapegoat” and “sacrificial lamb”)
- 2) We are made cleaner than we dare imagine.**
(Jesus has given us his cleanliness, which gives us full access to God as the curtain of the temple was torn in two)

Scene 4: Us

Which quadrant do you fit into?

<p>Superior Christian</p> <p><i>Who do you look down on?</i></p>	<p>Superior Non-Christian</p> <p><i>What if Jesus is truly pure?</i></p>
<p>Inferior Christian</p> <p><i>Do you see Jesus as disappointed?</i></p>	<p>Inferior Non-Christian</p> <p><i>Jesus is enough!</i></p>

Who is a Cornelius in your life that needs hope?