

# CHAPTER 10

It is a turn very new and remarkable which the story of this chapter gives to the Acts of the apostles; hitherto, both at Jerusalem and every where else where the ministers of Christ came, they preached the gospel only to the Jews, or those Greeks that were circumcised and proselyted to the Jews' religion; but now, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles;" and to them the door of faith is here opened: good news indeed to us sinners of the Gentiles. The apostle Peter is the man that is first employed to admit uncircumcised Gentiles into the Christian church; and Cornelius, a Roman centurion or colonel, is the first that with his family and friends is so admitted. Now here we are told,

**I.** How Cornelius was directed by a vision to send for Peter, and did send for him accordingly (v. 18).

**II.** How Peter was directed by a vision to go to Cornelius, though he was a Gentile, without making any scruple of it, and did go accordingly (v. 9-23).

**III.** The happy interview between Peter and Cornelius at Cesarea (v. 24-33).

**IV.** The sermon Peter preached in the house of Cornelius to him and to his friends (v. 34-43).

**V.** The baptizing of Cornelius and his friends with the Holy Ghost first, and then with water (v. 44-48).

## ~~408~~ ACTS 10:1-8

### THE CASE OF CORNELIUS

The bringing of the gospel to the Gentiles, and the bringing of those who had been strangers and foreigners to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, were such a mystery to the apostles themselves, and such a surprise (~~408~~ Ephesians 3:3, 6), that it concerns us carefully to observe all the circumstances of the beginning of this great work, this part of the *mystery of godliness Christ preached to the Gentiles, and believed on in this world*, ~~508~~ 1 Timothy 3:16. It is not unlikely that some Gentiles

might before now have stepped into a synagogue of the Jews, and heard the gospel preached; but the gospel was never yet designedly preached to the Gentiles, nor any of them baptized. Cornelius was the first; and here we have,

**I.** An account given us of this Cornelius, who and what he was, who was the first-born of the Gentiles to Christ. We are here told that he was a great man and a good man, two characters that seldom meet, but here they did; and where they do meet they put a lustre upon each other: goodness makes greatness truly valuable, and greatness makes goodness much more serviceable.

**1.** Cornelius was an officer of the army, v. 1. He was at present quartered in Cesarea, a strong city, lately re-edified and fortified by Herod the Great, and called *Cesarea* in honour of Augustus Caesar. It lay upon the sea-shore, very convenient for the keeping up of a correspondence between Rome and its conquests in those parts. The Roman governor or pro-consul ordinarily resided here, ~~4223~~ Acts 23:23, 24; 25:6. Here there was a band, or cohort, or regiment, of the Roman army, which probably was the governor's life-guard, and is here called *the Italian band*, because, that they might be the more sure of their fidelity, they were all native Romans, or Italians. Cornelius had a command in this part of the army. His name, *Cornelius* was much used among the Romans, among some of the most ancient and noble families. He was an officer of considerable rank and figure, a centurion. We read of one of that rank in our Saviour's time, of whom he gave a great commendation, ~~4180~~ Matthew 8:10. When a Gentile must be pitched upon to receive the gospel first, it is not a Gentile philosopher, much less a Gentile priest (who are bigoted to their notions and worship, and prejudiced against the gospel of Christ), but a Gentile soldier, who is a man of more free thought; and he that truly is so, when the Christian doctrine is fairly set before him, cannot but receive it and bid it welcome. Fishermen, unlearned and ignorant men, were the first of the Jewish converts, but not so of the Gentiles; for the world shall know that the gospel has that in it which may recommend it to men of polite learning and a liberal education, as we have reason to think this centurion was. Let not soldiers and officers of the army plead that their employment frees them from the restraints which some others are under, and, giving them an opportunity of living more at large, may excuse them if they be not religious; for here was an officer of the army that embraced Christianity, and yet was neither turned out of his place nor turned himself out. And,

*lastly*, it was a mortification to the Jews that not only the Gentiles were taken into the church, but that the first who was taken in was an officer of the Roman army, which was to them *the abomination of desolation*.

**2.** He was, according to the measure of the light he had, a religious man. It is a very good character that is given of him, v. 2. He was no idolater, no worshipper of false gods or images, nor allowed himself in any of those immoralities to which the greater part of the Gentile world were given up, to punish them for their idolatry.

**(1.)** He was possessed with a principle of regard to the true and living God. He was *a devout man and one that feared God*. He believed in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and had a reverence for his glory and authority, and a dread of offending him by sin; and, though he was a soldier, it was no diminution to the credit of his valour to tremble before God.

**(2.)** He kept up religion in his family. He *feared God with all his house*. He would not admit any idolaters under his roof, but took care that not himself only, but all his, should serve the Lord. Every good man will do what he can that those about him may be good too.

**(3.)** He was a very charitable man: He *gave much alms to the people*, the people of the Jews, notwithstanding the singularities of their religion. Though he was a Gentile, he was willing to contribute to the relief of one that was a real object of charity, without asking what religion he was of.

**(4.)** He was much in prayer: He *prayed to God always*. He kept up stated times for prayer, and was constant to them. Note, Wherever the fear of God rules in the heart, it will appear both in works of charity and of piety, and neither will excuse us from the other.

**II.** The orders given him from heaven, by the ministry of an angel, to send for Peter to come to him, which he would never have done if he had not been thus directed to do it. Observe,

**1.** How, and in what way, these orders were given him. He had a vision, in which an angel delivered them to him. It was about the *ninth hour of the day*, at three of the clock in the afternoon, which is with us an hour of business and conversation; but then, because it was in the temple the time of offering the evening sacrifice, it was made by devout people an *hour of prayer*, to intimate that all our prayers are to be offered up in the virtue of

the great sacrifice. Cornelius was now at prayer: so he tells us himself, v. 30. Now here we are told,

**(1.)** That an angel of God *came in to him*. By the brightness of his countenance, and the manner of his coming in, he knew him to be something more than a man, and therefore nothing less than an angel, an express from heaven.

**(2.)** That he *saw him evidently* with his bodily eyes, not in a dream presented to his imagination, but in a vision presented to his sight; for his greater satisfaction, it carried its own evidence along with it.

**(3.)** That he called him by his name, *Cornelius*, to intimate the particular notice God took of him.

**(4.)** That this put Cornelius for the present into some confusion (v. 4): *When he looked on him he was afraid*. The wisest and best men have been struck with fear upon the appearance of any extra-ordinary messenger from heaven; and justly, for sinful man knows that he has no reason to expect any good tidings thence. And therefore Cornelius cries, “*What is it, Lord? What is the matter?*” This he speaks as one afraid of something amiss, and longing to be eased of that fear, by knowing the truth; or as one desirous to know the mind of God, and ready to comply with it, as Joshua: *What saith my Lord unto his servant?* And Samuel: *Speak, for thy servant heareth*.

**2.** What the message was that was delivered to him.

**(1.)** He is assured that God accepts him in walking according to the light he had (v. 4): *Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God*. Observe, Prayers and alms must go together. We must follow our prayers with alms; for the fast that God hath chosen is to *draw out the soul to the hungry*, <sup><286></sup>Isaiah 58:6, 7. It is not enough to pray that what we have may be sanctified to us, but we must *give alms of such things as we have*; and then, behold, all things are clean to us, <sup><214></sup>Luke 11:41. And we must follow our alms with our prayers that God would graciously accept them, and that they may be blessed to those to whom they are given.

Cornelius prayed, and gave alms, not as the Pharisees, *to be seen of men*, but in sincerity, as unto God; and he is here told that they were *come up for a memorial before God*. They were upon record in heaven, in the book of remembrance that is written there for all that fear God, and shall be

remembered to his advantage: “Thy prayers shall be answered, and thine alms recompensed.” The sacrifices under the law are said to be *for a memorial*. See ~~Leviticus~~ Leviticus 2:9, 16; 5:12; 6:15. And prayers and alms are our spiritual offerings, which God is pleased to take cognizance of, and have regard to. The divine revelation communicated to the Jews, as far as the Gentiles were concerned in it, not only as it directed and improved the light and law of nature, but as it promised a Messiah to come, Cornelius believed and submitted to. What he did he did in that faith, and was accepted of God in it; for the Gentiles, to whom the law of Moses came, were not obliged to become circumcised Jews, as those to whom the gospel of Christ comes are to become baptized Christians.

**(2.)** He is appointed to enquire after a further discovery of divine grace, now lately made to the world, v. 5, 6. He must *send forthwith to Joppa, and enquire for one Simon Peter; he lodgeth at the house of one Simon a tanner; his house is by the sea side, and, if he be sent for, he will come; and when he comes he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do*, in answer to thy question, *What is it, Lord?* Now here are two things very surprising, and worthy our consideration

**[1.]** Cornelius prays and gives alms in the fear of God, is religious himself and keeps up religion in his family, and all this so as to be accepted of God in it, and yet there is something further that he ought to do he ought to embrace the Christian religion, now that God has established it among men. Not, He may do it if he pleases; it will be an improvement and entertainment to him. But, He must do it; it is indispensably necessary to his acceptance with God for the future, though he has been accepted in his services hitherto. He that believed the promise of the Messiah must now believe the performance of that promise. Now that God has given a further record concerning his Son than what had been given in the Old-Testament prophecies he requires that we receive this when it is brought to us; and now neither our prayers nor our alms can come up for a memorial before God unless we believe in Jesus Christ, for it is that further which we ought to do. *This is his commandment, that we believe*. Prayers and alms are accepted from those that believe that the Lord is God, and have not opportunity of knowing more; but, from those to whom it is preached that Jesus is Christ, it is necessary to the acceptance of their persons, prayers, and alms, that they believe this, and rest upon him alone for acceptance.

[2.] Cornelius has now an angel from heaven talking to him, and yet he must not receive the gospel of Christ from this angel, nor be told by him what he ought to do, but all that the angel has to say is, “Send for Peter, and he shall tell thee.” As the former observation puts a mighty honour upon the gospel, so does this upon the gospel ministry: it was not to the highest of angels, but to those who were less than the least of all saints, that this grace was given, *to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ* (<sup>4088</sup>Ephesians 3:8), that the excellency of the power might be of God, and the dignity of an institution of Christ supported; for *unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come* (<sup>3815</sup>Hebrews 2:5), but to the Son of man as the sovereign, and the sons of men as his agents and ministers of state, whose *terrors shall not make us afraid, nor their hand be heavy upon us*, as this angel's now was to Cornelius. And as it was an honour to the apostle that he must preach that which an angel might not, so it was a further honour that an angel was despatched on purpose from heaven to order him to be sent for. To bring a faithful minister and a willing people together is a work worthy of an angel, and what therefore the greatest of men should be glad to be employed in.

**III.** His immediate obedience to these orders, v. 7, 8. He sent with all speed to Joppa, to fetch Peter to him. Had he himself only been concerned, he would have gone to Joppa to him. But he had a family, and kinsmen, and friends (v. 24), a little congregation of them, that could not go with him to Joppa, and therefore he sends for Peter. Observe,

**1.** When he sent: As soon as ever the *angel which spoke unto him had departed*, without dispute or delay, he was obedient to the heavenly vision. He perceived, by what the angel said, he was to have some further work prescribed him, and he longed to have it told him. He made haste, and delayed not, to do this commandment. In any affair wherein our souls are concerned it is good for us not to lose time.

**2.** Whom he sent: *Two of his household servants*, who all feared God, *and a devout soldier*, one of those *that waited on him continually*. Observe, a devout centurion had devout soldiers. A little devotion commonly goes a great way with soldiers, but there would be more of it in the soldiers if there were but more of it in the commanders. Officers in an army, that have such a great power over the soldiers, as we find the centurion had (<sup>4088</sup>Matthew 8:9), have a great opportunity of promoting religion, at least of restraining vice and profaneness, in those under their command, if they

would but improve it. Observe, When this centurion had to choose some of his soldiers to attend his person, and to be always about him, he pitched upon such of them as were devout; they shall be preferred and countenanced, to encourage others to be so. He went by David's rule (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 101:6), *Mine eye shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me.*

**3.** What instructions he gave them (v. 8): *He declared all these things unto them*, told them of the vision he had, and the orders given him to send for Peter, because Peter's coming was a thing in which they were concerned, for they had souls to save as well as he. Therefore he does not only tell them where to find Peter (which he might have thought it enough to do *the servant knows not what his Lord doeth*), but he tells them on what errand he was to come, that they might importune him.

## ~~ACTS~~ ACTS 10:9-18

### PETER'S VISION

Cornelius had received positive orders from heaven to send for Peter, whom otherwise he had not heard of, or at least not heeded; but here is another difficulty that lies in the way of bringing them together the question is whether Peter will come to Cornelius when he is sent for; not as if he thought it below him to come at a beck, or as if he were afraid to preach his doctrine to a polite man as Cornelius was: but it sticks at a point of conscience. Cornelius is a very worthy man, and has many good qualities, but he is a Gentile, he is not circumcised; and, because God in his law had forbidden his people to associate with idolatrous nations, they would not keep company with any but those of their own religion, though they were ever so deserving, and they carried the matter so far that they made even the involuntary touch of a Gentile to contract a ceremonial pollution, (~~John~~ John 18:28). Peter had not got over this stingy bigoted notion of his countrymen, and therefore will be shy of coming to Cornelius. Now, to remove this difficulty, he has a vision here, to prepare him to receive the message sent him by Cornelius, as Ananias had to prepare him to go to Paul. The scriptures of the Old Testament had spoken plainly of the bringing in of the Gentiles into the church. Christ had given plain intimations of it when he ordered them to *teach all nations*; and yet even

Peter himself, who knew so much of his Master's mind, could not understand it, till it was here revealed by vision, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, <sup><4086></sup>Ephesians 3:6. Now here observe,

**I.** The circumstances of this vision.

**1.** It was when the messengers sent from Cornelius were now *nigh the city*, v. 9. Peter knew nothing of their approach, and they knew nothing of his praying; but he that knew both him and them was preparing things for the interview, and facilitating the end of their negotiation. To all God's purposes *there is a time*, a proper time; and he is pleased often to bring things to the minds of his ministers, which they had not thought of, just then when they have occasion to use them.

**2.** It was when *Peter went up upon the house-top to pray*, about noon.

**(1.)** Peter was much in prayer, much in secret prayer, though he had a great deal of public work upon his hands.

**(2.)** He prayed *about the sixth hour*, according to David's example, who, not only *morning and evening*, but *at noon*, addressed himself to God by prayer, <sup><457></sup>Psalms 55:17. From morning to night we should think to be too long to be without meat; yet who thinks it is too long to be without prayer?

**(3.)** He prayed *upon the house-top*; thither he retired for privacy, where he could neither hear nor be heard, and so might avoid both distraction and ostentation. There, upon the roof of the house, he had a full view of the heavens, which might assist his pious adoration of the God he prayed to; and there he had also a full view of the city and country, which might assist his pious compassion of the people he prayed for.

**(4.)** He had this vision immediately after he had prayed, as an answer to his prayer for the spreading of the gospel, and because the ascent of the heart to God in prayer is an excellent preparative to receive the discoveries of the divine grace and favour.

**3.** It was when he became *very hungry*, and was waiting for his dinner (v. 10); probably he had not that day eaten before, though doubtless he had prayed before; and now *he would have eaten*, *ethele geusasthai* *he would have tasted*, which intimates his great moderation and temperance in eating. When he was very hungry, yet he would be content with a little, with a taste, and would not *fly upon the spoil*. Now this hunger was a



proper inlet to the vision about meats, as Christ's hunger in the wilderness was to Satan's temptation to turn stones into bread.

**II.** The vision itself, which was not so plain as that to Cornelius, but more figurative and enigmatical, to make the deeper impression.

**1.** He *fell into a trance or ecstasy*, not of terror, but of contemplation, with which he was so entirely swallowed up as not only not to be regardful, but not to be sensible, of external things. He quite lost himself to this world, and so had his mind entirely free for converse with divine things; as Adam in innocency, when the deep sleep fell upon him. The more clear we get of the world, the more near we get to heaven: whether Peter was now *in the body or out of the body* he could not himself tell, much less can we, <sup><471></sup>2 Corinthians 12:2, 3. See <sup><115></sup>Genesis 15:12; <sup><427></sup>Acts 22:17.

**2.** He *saw heaven opened*, that he might be sure that his authority to go to Cornelius was indeed from heaven that it was a divine light which altered his sentiments, and a divine power which gave him his commission. The opening of the heavens signified the opening of a mystery that had been hid, <sup><515></sup>Romans 16:25.

**3.** He saw *a great sheet full of all manner of living creatures, which descended from heaven, and was let down to him to the earth*, that is, to the roof of the house where he now was. Here were not only beasts of the earth, but fowls of the air, which might have flown away, laid at his feet; and not only tame beasts, but wild. Here were no fishes of the sea, because there were none of them in particular unclean, but whatever had fins and scales was allowed to be eaten. Some make this sheet, thus filled, to represent the church of Christ. It comes down from heaven, from heaven opened, not only to send it down (<sup><612></sup>Revelation 21:2), but to receive souls sent up from it. It is knit at the four corners, to receive those from all parts of the world that are willing to be added to it; and to retain and keep those safe that are taken into it, that they may not fall out; and in this we find some of all countries, nations, and languages, without any distinction of Greek or Jew, or any disadvantage put upon Barbarian or Scythian, <sup><181></sup>Colossians 3:11. The net of the gospel encloses all, both bad and good, those that before were clean and unclean. Or it may be applied to the bounty of the divine Providence, which, antecedently to the prohibitions of the ceremonial law, had given to man a liberty to use all the creatures, to which by the cancelling of that law we are now restored. By this vision we

are taught to see all the benefit and service we have from the inferior creatures coming down to us from heaven; it is the gift of God who made them, made them fit for us, and then gave to man a right to them, and dominion over them. Lord, what is man that he should be thus magnified! ~~4888~~ Psalm 8:48. How should it double our comfort in the creatures, and our obligations to serve God in the use of them, to see them thus let down to us out of heaven!

**4.** He was ordered by a voice from heaven to make use of this plenty and variety which God had sent him (v. 13): *“Rise, Peter, kill and eat: without putting any difference between clean and unclean, take which thou hast most mind to.”* The distinction of meats which the law made was intended to put a difference between Jew and Gentile, that it might be difficult to them to dine and sup with a Gentile, because they would have that set before them which they were not allowed to eat; and now the taking off of that prohibition was a plain allowance to converse with the Gentiles, and to be free and familiar with them. Now they might fare as they fared, and therefore might eat with them, and be fellow-commoners with them.

**5.** He stuck to his principles, and would by no means hearken to the motion, though he was hungry (v. 14): *Not so, Lord.* Though hunger will break through stone walls, God's laws should be to us a stronger fence than stone walls, and not so easily broken through. And he will adhere to God's laws, though he has a countermand by a voice from heaven, not knowing at first but that *Kill, and eat,* was a command of trial whether he would adhere to the more sure word, the written law; and if so his answer had been very good, *Not so, Lord.* Temptations to eat forbidden fruit must not be parleyed with, but peremptorily rejected; we must startle at the thought of it: *Not so, Lord.* The reason he gives is, *“For I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean; hitherto I have kept my integrity in this matter, and will still keep it.”* If God, by his grace, has preserved us from gross sin unto this day, we should use this as an argument with ourselves to abstain *from all appearance of evil.* So strict were the pious Jews in this matter, that the seven brethren, those glorious martyrs under Antiochus, choose rather to be tortured to death in the most cruel manner that ever was than to eat swine's flesh, because it was forbidden by the law. No wonder then that Peter says it with so much pleasure, that his conscience could witness for him that he had never gratified his appetite with any forbidden food.

**6.** God, by a second voice from heaven, proclaimed the repeal of the law in this case (v. 15): *What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common.* He that made the law might alter it when he pleased, and reduce the matter to its first state. God had, for reasons suited to the Old-Testament dispensation, restrained the Jews from eating such and such meats, to which, while that dispensation lasted, they were obliged in conscience to submit; but he has now, for reasons suited to the New-Testament dispensation, taken off that restraint, and set the matter at large as cleansed that which was before polluted to us, and we ought to make use of, and *stand fast in, the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free,* and not call that common or unclean which God has now declared clean. Note, We ought to welcome it as a great mercy that by the gospel of Christ we are freed from the distinction of meats, which was made by the law of Moses, and that now *every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused;* not so much because hereby we gain the use of swine's flesh, hares, rabbits, and other pleasant and wholesome food for our bodies, but chiefly because conscience is hereby freed from a yoke in things of this nature, *that we might serve God without fear.* Though the gospel has made duties which were not so by the law of nature, yet it has not, like the law of Moses, made sins that were not so. Those who command to abstain from some kinds of meat at some times of the year, and place religion in it, call that common which God hath cleansed, and in that error, more than in any truth, are the successors of Peter.

**7.** *This was done thrice,* v. 16. The sheet was drawn up a little way, and let down again the second time, and so the third time, with the same call to him, to kill, and eat, and the same reason, that what God hath cleansed we must not call common; but whether Peter's refusal was repeated the second and third time is not certain; surely it was not, when his objection had the first time received such a satisfactory answer. The trebling of Peter's vision, like the doubling of Pharaoh's dream, was to show that *the thing was certain,* and engage him to take so much the more notice of it. The instructions given us in the things of God, whether by the ear in the preaching of the word, or by the eye in sacraments, need to be often repeated; *precept must be upon precept, and line upon line.* But at last *the vessel was received up into heaven.* Those who make this vessel to represent the church, including both Jews and Gentiles, as this did both clean and unclean creatures, make this very aptly to signify the admission of the believing Gentiles into the church, and into heaven too, into the

Jerusalem above. Christ *has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers*, and there we shall find, besides *those that are sealed out of all the tribes of Israel*, an *innumerable company out of every nation* (~~ACTS~~ Revelation 7:9); but they are such as God has cleansed.

**III.** The providence which very opportunely explained this vision, and gave Peter to understand the intention of it, v. 17, 18.

**1.** What Christ did, Peter knew not just then (~~ACTS~~ John 13:7): *He doubted within himself what this vision which he had seen should mean*. He had no reason to doubt the truth of it, that it was a heavenly vision; all his doubt was concerning the meaning of it. Note, Christ reveals himself to his people by degrees, and not all at once; and leaves them to doubt awhile, to ruminate upon a thing, and debate it to and fro in their own minds, before he clears it up to them.

**2.** Yet he was made to know presently, for *the men who were sent from Cornelius* were just now come to *the house*, and were at *the gate enquiring whether Peter lodged there*; and by their errand it will appear what was the meaning of this vision. Note, God knows what services are before us, and therefore how to prepare us; and we then better know the meaning of what he has taught us when we find what occasion we have to make use of it.

## ~~ACTS~~ ACTS 10:19-33

### INTERVIEW BETWEEN PETER AND CORNELIUS

We have here the meeting between Peter the apostle, and Cornelius the centurion. Though Paul was designed to be the apostle of the Gentiles, and to gather in the harvest among them, and Peter to be the apostle of the circumcision, yet it is ordered that Peter shall break the ice, and reap the first-fruits of the Gentiles, that the believing Jews, who retained too much of the old leaven of ill-will to the Gentiles, might be the better reconciled to their admission into the church, when they were first brought in by their own apostle, which Peter urges against those that would have imposed circumcision upon the Gentile converts (~~ACTS~~ Acts 15:7), *You know that God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel*. Now here,

**I.** Peter is directed by the Spirit to go along with Cornelius's messengers (v. 19, 20), and this is the exposition of the vision; now the riddle is unriddled: *While Peter thought on the vision*; he was musing upon it, and then it was opened to him. Note, Those that would be taught the things of God must think on those things; those that would understand the scriptures must meditate in them day and night. He was at a loss about it, and then had it explained, which encourages us, when we know not what to do, to have our eyes up unto God for direction. Observe,

**1.** Whence he had the direction. The Spirit said to him what he should do. It was not spoken to him by an angel, but spoken in him by the Spirit, secretly whispering it in his ear as it were, as God spoke to Samuel (~~1~~ Samuel 9:15), or impressing it powerfully upon his mind, so that he knew it to be a divine afflatus or inspiration, according to the promise, ~~1~~ John 16:13.

**2.** What the direction was.

**(1.)** He is told, before any of the servants could come up to tell him, that three men below want to speak with him (v. 19), and he must arise from his musings, leave off thinking of the vision, and go down to them, v. 20. Those that are searching into the meaning of the words of God, and the visions of the Almighty, should not be always poring, no, nor always praying, but should sometimes look abroad, look about them, and they may meet with that which will be of use to them in their enquiries; for the scripture is in the fulfilling every day.

**(2.)** He is ordered to *go along with the messengers to Cornelius*, though he was a Gentile, *doubting nothing*. He must not only go, but go cheerfully, without reluctance or hesitation, or any scruple concerning the lawfulness of it; not doubting whether he might go, no, nor whether he ought to go; for it was his duty “*Go with them, for I have sent them: and I will bear thee out in going along with them, however thou mayest be censured for it.*” Note, When we see our call clear to any service, we should not suffer ourselves to be perplexed with doubts and scruples concerning it arising from former prejudices or pre-possessions, or a fear of men's censure. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and prove his own work.*

**II.** He receives both them and their message: *He went down to them*, v. 21. So far was he from going out of the way, or refusing to be spoken with, as one that was shy of them, or making them tarry, as one that took

state upon him, that he went to them himself, told them he was the person they were enquiring for. And

**1.** He favourably receives their message; with abundance of openness and condescension he asks what their business is, what they have to say to him: *What is the cause wherefore you are come?* and they tell him their errand (v. 22): “*Cornelius*, an officer of the Roman army, a very honest gentleman, and one who has more religion than most of his neighbours, *who fears God above many* (~~1012~~ Nehemiah 7:2), who, though he is not a Jew himself, has carried it so well that he is *of good report among all the people of the Jews* they will all give him a good word, for a conscientious, sober, charitable man, so that it will be no discredit to thee to be seen in his company *he was warned from God,*” *echrematisthe* “*he had an oracle from God, sent to him by an angel*” (and the lively oracles of the law of Moses were given by the disposition of angels), “by which he was ordered to send for thee to his house (where he is expecting thee, and ready to bid thee welcome), *and to hear words of thee:* they know not what words, but they are such as he may hear from thee, and not from any one else so well.” *Faith comes by hearing.* When Peter repeats this, he tells us more fully, they are *words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved,* ~~1014~~ Acts 11:14. “Come to him, for an angel bade him send for thee: come to him, for he is ready to hear and receive the saving words thou hast to bring to him.” **2.** He kindly entertained the messengers (v. 23): *He called them in, and lodged them.* He did not bid them go and refresh and repose themselves in an inn at their own charge, but was himself at the charge of entertaining them in his own quarters. What was getting ready for him (v. 10) they should be welcome to share in; he little thought what company he should have when he bespoke his dinner, but God foresaw it. Note, It becomes Christians and ministers to be hospitable, and ready, according as their ability is, and there is occasion for it, *to entertain strangers.* Peter lodged them, though they were Gentiles, to show how readily he complied with the design of the vision in eating with Gentiles; for he immediately took them to eat with him. Though they were two of them servants, and the other a common soldier, yet Peter thought it not below him to take them into his house. Probably he did it that he might have some talk with them about Cornelius and his family; for the apostles, though they had instructions from the Spirit, yet made use of other information, as they had occasion for it.

**III.** He *went with them* to Cornelius, whom he found ready to receive and entertain him.

**1.** Peter, when he went with them, was *accompanied by certain brethren from Joppa*, where he now was, v. 23. Six of them went along with him, as we find, <sup><44112></sup>Acts 11:12. Either Peter desired their company, that they might be witnesses of his proceeding cautiously with reference to the Gentiles, and of the good ground on which he went, and therefore he invited them (<sup><44112></sup>Acts 11:12), or they offered their service to attend him, and desired they might have the honour and happiness of being his fellow travellers. This was one way in which the primitive Christians very much showed their respect to their ministers: they accompanied them in their journeys, to keep them in countenance, to be their guard, and, as there was occasion, to minister to them; with a further prospect not only of doing them service, but of being edified by their converse. It is a pity that those who have skill and will to do good to others by their discourse should want an opportunity for it by travelling alone.

**2.** Cornelius, when he was ready to receive him, *had got some friends together of Cesarea*. It seems, it was above a day's journey, nearly two, from Joppa to Cesarea; for it was *the day after* they set out that *they entered into Cesarea* (v. 24), and the afternoon of that day, v. 30. It is probable that they travelled on foot; the apostles generally did so. Now when they came into the house of Cornelius Peter found,

**(1.)** That he was expected, and this was an encouragement to him. *Cornelius waited for them*, and such a guest was worth waiting for; nor can I blame him if he waited with some impatience, longing to know what that mighty thing was which an angel bade him expect to hear from Peter.

**(2.)** That he was expected by many, and this was a further encouragement to him. As Peter brought some with him to partake of the spiritual gift he had now to dispense, so *Cornelius had called together*, not only his own family, but *kinsmen and near friends*, to partake with him of the heavenly instructions he expected from Peter, which would give Peter a larger opportunity of doing good. Note, We should not covet to eat our spiritual morsels alone, <sup><83117></sup>Job 31:17. It ought to be both given and taken as a piece of kindness and respect to our kindred and friends to invite them to join with us in religious exercises, to go with us to hear a sermon. What Cornelius ought to do he thought his kinsmen and friends ought to do too;

and therefore let them come and hear it at the first hand, that it may be no surprise to them to see him change upon it.

**IV.** Here is the first interview between Peter and Cornelius, in which we have,

**1.** The profound and indeed undue respect and honour which Cornelius paid to Peter (v. 25): *He met him as he was coming in*, and instead of taking him in his arms, and embracing him as a friend, which would have been very acceptable to Peter, *he fell down at his feet, and worshipped him*; some think, as a prince and a great man, according to the usage of the eastern countries; others think, as an incarnate deity, or as if he took him to be the Messiah himself. His worshipping a man was indeed culpable; but, considering his present ignorance, it was excusable, nay, and it was an evidence of something in him that was very commendable and that was a great veneration for divine and heavenly things: no wonder if, till he was better informed, he took him to be the Messiah, and therefore worshipped him, whom he was ordered to send for by an angel from heaven. But the worshipping of his pretended successor, who is not only a man, but a sinful man, the man of sin himself, is altogether inexcusable, and such an absurdity as would be incredible if we were not told before that all *the world would worship the beast*, <sup>(613)</sup> Revelation 13:4.

**2.** Peter's modest and indeed just and pious refusal of this honour that was done him (v. 26): *He took him up* into his arms, with his own hands (though time was when he little thought he should ever either receive so much respect from or show so much affection to an uncircumcised Gentile), *saying, "Stand up, I myself also am a man*, and therefore not to be worshipped thus." The good angels of the churches, like the good angels of heaven, cannot bear to have the least of that honour shown to them which is due to God only. *See thou do it not*, saith the angel to John (<sup>(614)</sup> Revelation 19:10; 22:9), and in like manner the apostle to Cornelius. How careful was Paul *that no man should think of him above what he saw in him!* <sup>(615)</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:6. Christ's faithful servants could better bear to be vilified than to be deified. Peter did not entertain a surmise that his great respect for him, though excessive, might contribute to the success of his preaching, and therefore if he will be deceived let him be deceived; no, let him know that Peter is a man, that *the treasure is in earthen vessels*, that he may value the treasure for its own sake.



**V.** The account which Peter and Cornelius give to each other, and to the company, of the hand of Heaven in bringing them together: *As he talked with him **synomilon auto**, he went in*, v. 27. Peter went in, talking familiarly with Cornelius, endeavouring, by the freedom of his converse with him, to take off something of that dread which he seemed to have of him; and, when he came in, *he found many that were come together*, more than he expected, which added solemnity, as well as opportunity of doing good, to this service. Now,

**1.** Peter declares the direction God gave to him to come to those Gentiles, v. 28, 29. They knew it had never been allowed by the Jews, but always looked upon as an *unlawful thing*, **athemiton** an abomination, for a man that is a Jew, a native Jew as I am, to keep company or come unto one of another nation, a stranger, an uncircumcised Gentile. It was not made so by the law of God, but by the decree of their wise men, which they looked upon to be no less binding. They did not forbid them to converse or traffic with Gentiles in the street or shop, or upon the exchange, but to eat with them. Even in Joseph's time, the Egyptians and Hebrews could not eat together, <sup><433></sup>Genesis 43:32. The three children *would not defile themselves with the king's meat*, <sup><2118></sup>Daniel 1:8. They might not come into the house of a Gentile, for they looked upon it to be ceremonially polluted. Thus scornfully did the Jews look upon the Gentiles, who were not behindhand with them in contempt, as appears by many passages in the Latin poets. "But now," saith Peter, "God hath shown me, by a vision, that I should not call any man common or unclean, nor refuse to converse with any man for the sake of his country." Peter, who had taught his new converts to *save themselves from the untoward generation of wicked men* (<sup><410></sup>Acts 2:40), is now himself taught to join himself with the towardly generation of devout Gentiles. Ceremonial characters were abolished, that more regard might be had to moral ones. Peter thought it necessary to let them know how he came to change his mind in this matter, and that it was by a divine revelation, lest he should be upbraided with it as having used lightness. God having thus taken down the partition-wall,

**(1.)** He assures them of his readiness to do them all the good offices he could; that, when he kept at a distance, it was not out of any personal disgust to them, but only because he wanted leave from heaven, and, having now received permission, he was at their service: "*Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for*, ready to preach the same gospel to you that I have preached to the Jews." The disciples of

Christ could not but have some notion of the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, but they imagined it must be only to those Gentiles that were first proselyted to the Jewish religion, which mistake Peter acknowledges was not rectified.

(2.) He enquires wherein he might be serviceable to them: “*I ask, therefore, for what intent you have sent for me? What do you expect from me, or what business have you with me?*” Note, Those that desire the help of God’s ministers ought to look well to it that they propose right ends to themselves in it, and do it with a good intention.

2. Cornelius declares the directions God gave to him to send for Peter, and that it was purely in obedience to those directions that he had sent for him. Then we are right in our aims, in sending for and attending on a gospel-ministry, when we did it with a regard to the divine appointment instituting that ordinance and requiring us to make use of it. Now,

(1.) Cornelius gives an account of the angel’s appearing to him, and ordering him to send for Peter; not as glorying in it, but as that which warranted his expectation of a message from heaven by Peter.

[1.] He tells how this vision found him employed (v. 30): *Four days ago I was fasting until this hour*, this hour of the day that it is now when Peter came, about the middle of the afternoon. By this it appears that religious fasting, in order to the greater seriousness and solemnity of praying, was used by devout people who were not Jews; *the king of Nineveh proclaimed a fast*, <sup>318</sup>Jonah 3:5. Some give these words another sense: *From four days ago I have been fasting until this hour*; as if he had eaten no meat, or at least no meal, from that time to this. But it comes in as an introduction to the story of the vision; and therefore the former must be the meaning. *He was at the ninth hour praying in his house*, not in the synagogue, but at home. *I will that men pray* wherever they dwell. His praying in his house intimates that it was not a secret prayer in his closet, but in a more public room of his house, with his family about him; and perhaps after prayer he retired, and had this vision. Observe, *At the ninth hour of the day*, three of the clock in the afternoon, most people were travelling or trading, working in the fields, visiting their friends, taking their pleasure, or taking a nap after dinner; yet then Cornelius was at his devotions, which shows how much he made religion his business; and then it was that he had this message from heaven. Those that would hear comfortably from God must be much in speaking to him.

[2.] He describes the messenger that brought him this message from heaven: *There stood a man before me in bright clothing*, as Christ's was when he was transfigured, and that of the two angels who appeared at Christ's resurrection (<sup><220></sup>Luke 24:4), and at his ascension (<sup><401></sup>Acts 1:10), showing their relation to the world of light.

[3.] He repeats the message that was sent to him (v. 31, 32), just as we had it, v. 46. Only here it is said, *thy prayer is heard*. We are not told what his prayer was; but if this message was an answer to it, and it should seem it was, we may suppose that finding the deficiency of natural light, and that it left him at a loss how to obtain the pardon of his sin and the favour of God, he prayed that God would make some further discoveries of himself and of the way of salvation to him. "Well," saith the angel, "*send for Peter*, and he shall give thee such a discovery."

(2.) He declares his own and his friends' readiness to receive the message Peter had to deliver (v. 33): *Immediately therefore I sent to thee*, as I was directed, *and thou hast well done that thou hast come* to us, though we are Gentiles. Note, Faithful ministers do well to come to people that are willing and desirous to receive instruction from them; to come when they are sent for; it is as good a deed as they can do. Well, Peter is come to do his part; but will they do theirs? Yes. "Thou art here prepared to speak, and we are here prepared to hear," <sup><003></sup>1 Samuel 3:9, 10. Observe,

[1.] Their religious attendance upon the word: "*We are all here present before God*; we are here in a religious manner, are here as worshippers" (they thus compose themselves into a serious solemn frame of spirit): "*therefore*, because thou art come to us by such a warrant, on such an errand, because we have such a price in our hand as we never had before and perhaps may never have again, we are ready now at this time of worship, here in this place of worship" (though it was in a private house): "*we are present, paresmen we are at the business*, and are ready to come at a call." If we would have God's special presence at an ordinance, we must be there with a special presence, an ordinance presence: *Here I am*. "*We are all present*, all that were invited; we, and all that belong to us; we, and all that is within us." The whole of the man must be present; not the body here, and the heart, with the fool's eyes, in the ends of the earth. But that which makes it indeed a religious attendance is, *We are present before God*. In holy ordinances we present ourselves unto the Lord, and we must be as before him, as those that see his eye upon us.

[2.] The intention of this attendance: “*We are present to hear all things that are commanded thee of God, and given thee in charge to be delivered to us.*” Observe, *First*, Peter was there to preach all things that were commanded him of God; for, as he had an ample commission to preach the gospel, so he had full instructions what to preach. *Secondly*, They were ready to hear, not whatever he pleased to say, but what he was commanded of God to say. The truths of Christ were not communicated to the apostles to be published or stifled as they thought fit, but entrusted with them to be published to the world. “We are ready to hear *all*, to come at the beginning of the service and stay to the end, and be attentive all the while, else how can we hear all? We are desirous to hear all that thou art commissioned to preach, though it be ever so displeasing to flesh and blood, and ever so contrary to our former notions or present secular interests. We are ready to hear all, and therefore let nothing be kept back that is profitable for us.”

## ⚔️ ACTS 10:34-43

### PETER PREACHES IN THE HOUSE OF CORNELIUS

We have here Peter's sermon preached to Cornelius and his friends: that is, an abstract or summary of it; for we have reason to think that he did with many other words testify and exhort to this purport. It is intimated that he expressed himself with a great deal of solemnity and gravity, but with freedom and copiousness, in that phrase, *he opened his mouth, and spoke*, v. 34. *O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open to you*, saith Paul, ⚔️<sup>2</sup> Corinthians 6:11. “You shall find us communicative, if we but find you inquisitive.” Hitherto the mouths of the apostles had been shut to the uncircumcised Gentiles, they had nothing to say to them; but now God gave unto them, as he did to Ezekiel, *the opening of the mouth*. This excellent sermon of Peter's is admirably suited to the circumstances of those to whom he preached it; for it was a new sermon.

**I.** Because they were Gentiles to whom he preached. He shows that, notwithstanding this, they were interested in the gospel of Christ, which he had to preach, and entitled to the benefit of it, upon an equal footing with the Jews. It was necessary that this should be cleared, or else with what comfort could either he preach or they hear? He therefore lays down this

as an undoubted principle, *that God is no respecter of persons; doth not know favour in judgment*, as the Hebrew phrase is; which magistrates are forbidden to do (<sup><B117></sup>Deuteronomy 1:17; 16:19; <sup><B23></sup>Proverbs 24:23), and are blamed for doing, <sup><B22></sup>Psalm 82:2. And it is often said of God that he doth not respect persons, <sup><B17></sup>Deuteronomy 10:17; <sup><B19></sup>2 Chronicles 19:7; <sup><B34></sup>Job 34:19; <sup><B21></sup>Romans 2:11; <sup><B25></sup>Colossians 3:25; <sup><B17></sup>1 Peter 1:17. He doth not give judgment in favour of a man for the sake of any external advantage foreign to the merits of the cause. God never perverts judgment upon personal regards and considerations, nor countenances a wicked man in a wicked thing for the sake of his beauty, or stature, his country, parentage, relations, wealth, or honour in the world. God, as a benefactor, gives favours arbitrarily and by sovereignty (<sup><B17></sup>Deuteronomy 7:7, 8; 9:5, 6; <sup><B10></sup>Matthew 20:10); but he does not, as a judge, so give sentence; *but in every nation, and under ever denomination, he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him*, v. 35. The case is plainly thus:

**1.** God never did, nor ever will, justify and save a wicked Jew that lived and died impenitent, though he was *of the seed of Abraham*, and a *Hebrew of the Hebrews*, and had all the honour and advantages that attended circumcision. He does and will render *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; and of the Jew first*, whose privileges and professions, instead of screening him from the judgment of God, will but aggravate his guilt and condemnation. See <sup><B3></sup>Romans 2:3, 8, 9, 17. Though God has favoured the Jews, above other nations, with the dignities of visible church-membership, yet he will not therefore accept of any particular persons of that dignity, if they allow themselves in immoralities contradictory to their profession; and particularly in persecution, which was now, more than any other, the national sin of the Jews.

**2.** He never did, nor ever will, reject or refuse an honest Gentile, who, though he has not the privileges and advantages that the Jews have, yet, like Cornelius, fears God, and worships him, and works righteousness, that is, is just and charitable towards all men, who lives up to the light he has, both in a sincere devotion and in a regular conversation. Whatever nation he is of, though ever so far remote from kindred to the seed of Abraham, though ever so despicable, nay, though in ever so ill a name, that shall be no prejudice to him. God judges of men by their hearts, not by their country or parentage; and, wherever he finds an upright man, he will be found an upright God, <sup><B25></sup>Psalm 18:25. Observe, *Fearing God, and*

*working righteousness*, must go together; for, as righteousness towards men is a branch of true religion, so religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness. Godliness and honesty must go together, and neither will excuse for the want of the other. But, where these are predominant, no doubt is to be made of acceptance with God. Not that any man, since the fall, can obtain the favour of God otherwise than through the mediation of Jesus Christ, and by the grace of God in him; but those that have not the knowledge of him, and therefore cannot have an explicit regard to him, may yet receive grace from God for his sake, *to fear God and to work righteousness*; and wherever God gives grace to do so, as he did to Cornelius, he will, through Christ, accept the work of his own hands. Now,

(1.) This was always a truth, before Peter perceived it, *that God respecteth no man's person*; it was the fixed rule of judgment from the beginning: *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And, if not well, sin, and the punishment of it, lie at the door,* ~~Gen~~Genesis 4:7. God will not ask in the great day what country men were of, but what they were, what they did, and how they stood affected towards him and towards their neighbours; and, if men's personal characters received neither advantage nor disadvantage from the great difference that existed between Jews and Gentiles, much less from any less difference of sentiments and practices that may happen to be among Christians themselves, as those *about meats and days*, Romans 14. It is certain *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*; and he that in these things serveth Christ is accepted of God, and ought to be approved of men; for dare we reject those whom God doth not?

(2.) Yet now it was made more clear than it had been; this great truth had been darkened by the covenant of peculiarity made with Israel, and the badges of distinction put upon them; the ceremonial law was a wall of partition between them and other nations; it is true that in it *God favoured that nation* (~~Rom~~Romans 3:1, 2; 9:4), and thence particular persons among them were ready to infer that they were sure of God's acceptance, though they lived as they listed, and that no Gentile could possibly be accepted of God. God had said a great deal by the prophets to prevent and rectify this mistake, but now at length he doth it effectually, by abolishing the covenant of peculiarity, repealing the ceremonial law, and so setting the matter at large, and placing both Jew and Gentile upon the same level before God; and Peter is here made to perceive it, by comparing the vision

which he had with that which Cornelius had. Now *in Christ Jesus*, it is plain, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision*, <sup><BIB></sup>Galatians 5:6; <sup><BIB></sup>Colossians 3:11.

**II.** Because they were Gentiles inhabiting a place within the confines of the land of Israel, he refers them to what they themselves could not but know concerning the life and doctrine, the preaching and miracles, the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus: for these were things the report of which spread into every corner of the nation, v. 37, etc. It facilitates the work of ministers, when they deal with such as have some knowledge of the things of God, to which they may appeal, and on which they may build.

**1.** They knew in general, *the word*, that is, the gospel, *which God sent to the children of Israel: That word, I say, you know*, v. 37. Though the Gentiles were not admitted to hear it (Christ and his disciples were *not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*), yet they could not but hear of it: it was all the talk both of city and country. We are often told in the gospels how the fame of Christ went into all parts of Canaan, when he was on earth, as afterwards the fame of his gospel went into all parts of the world, <sup><BIB></sup>Romans 10:18. That word, that divine word, that word of power and grace, *you know*.

**(1.)** What the purport of this word was. God by it *published the glad tidings of peace by Jesus Christ*, so it should be read *euangelizomenos eirenev*. It is God himself that proclaims *peace*, who justly might have proclaimed war. He lets the world of mankind know that he is willing to be at peace with them through Jesus Christ; in him he was *reconciling the world to himself*.

**(2.)** To whom it was sent to the children of Israel, in the first place. The prime offer is made to them; this all their neighbours heard of, and were ready to envy them those advantages of the gospel, more than they ever envied them those of their law. *Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them*, <sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 126:2.

**2.** They knew the several matters of fact relating to this word of the gospel sent to Israel.

**(1.)** They knew the baptism of repentance which John preached by way of introduction to it, and in which the gospel first began, <sup><BIB></sup>Mark 1:1. They

knew what an extraordinary man John was, and what a direct tendency his preaching had to *prepare the way of the Lord*. They knew what great flocking there was to his baptism, what an interest he had, and what he did.

(2.) They knew that immediately after John's baptism the gospel of Christ, that word of *peace*, was published throughout all Judea, and that it took its rise from Galilee. The twelve apostles, and seventy disciples, and our Master himself, published these glad tidings in all parts of the land; so that we may suppose there was not a town or village in all the land of Canaan but had had the gospel preached in it.

(3.) They knew that Jesus of Nazareth, when he was here upon earth, went about doing good. They knew what a benefactor he was to that nation, both to the souls and the bodies of men; how he made it his business to do good to all, and never did hurt to any. He was not idle, but still doing; not selfish, but doing good; did not confine himself to one place, nor wait till people came to him to seek his help, but went to them, went about from place to place, and wherever he came he was doing good. Hereby he showed that he was sent of God, who is good and does good; and does good because he is good: and who hereby left not himself without witness to the world, in that he did good, <sup>4447</sup>Acts 14:17. And in this he hath set us an example of indefatigable industry in serving God and our generation; for we came into the world that we might do all the good we can in it; and therein, like Christ, we must always abide and abound.

(4.) They knew more particularly that he healed all that were oppressed of the devil, and helped them from under his oppressing power. By this it appeared not only that he was sent of God, as it was a kindness to men, but that he was sent to destroy the works of the devil; for thus he obtained many a victory over him.

(5.) They knew that the Jews put him to death; they slew him by hanging him on a tree. When Peter preached to the Jews, he said whom you slew; but now that he preached to the Gentiles it is whom they slew; they, to whom he had done and designed so much good. All this they knew; but lest they should think it was only a report, and was magnified, as reports usually are, more than the truth, Peter, for himself and the rest of the apostles, attested it (v. 39): *We are witnesses, eye-witnesses, of all things which he did; and ear-witnesses of the doctrine which he preached, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, in city and country.*



**3.** They did know, or might know, by all this, that he had a commission from heaven to preach and act as he did. This he still harps upon in his discourse, and takes all occasions to hint it to them. Let them know,

**(1.)** That this Jesus *is Lord of all*; it comes in in a parenthesis, but is the principal proposition intended to be proved, that Jesus Christ, by whom peace is made between God and man, *is Lord of all*; not only as *God over all blessed for evermore*, but as Mediator, *all power both in heaven and on earth* is put into his hand, and all judgment committed to him. He is Lord of angels; they are all his humble servants. He is Lord of the powers of darkness, for he hath triumphed over them. He is king of nations, has a power over all flesh. He is king of saints, all the children of God are his scholars, his subjects, his soldiers.

**(2.)** That *God anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power*; he was both authorized and enabled to do what he did by a divine anointing, whence he was called *Christ the Messiah, the anointed One*. The Holy Ghost descended upon him at his baptism, and he was full of power both in preaching and working miracles, which was the seal of a divine mission.

**(3.)** That *God was with him*, v. 38. His works were wrought in God. God not only sent him, but was present with him all along, owned him, stood by him, and carried him on in all his services and sufferings. Note, Those whom God anoints he will accompany; he will himself be with those to whom he has given his Spirit.

**III.** Because they had had no more certain information concerning this Jesus, Peter declares to them his resurrection from the dead, and the proofs of it, that they might not think that when he was slain there was an end of him. Probably, they had heard at Cesarea some talk of his having risen from the dead; but the talk of it was soon silenced by that vile suggestion of the Jews, that *his disciples came by night and stole him away*. And therefore Peter insists upon this as the main support of that word which preacheth peace by Jesus Christ.

**1.** The power by which he arose is incontestably divine (v. 40): *Him God raised up the third day*, which not only disproved all the calumnies and accusations he was laid under by men, but effectually proved God's acceptance of the satisfaction he made for the sin of man by the blood of

his cross. He did not break prison, but had a legal discharge. *God raised him up.*

**2.** The proofs of his resurrection were incontestably clear; for God *showed him openly. He gave him to be made manifest edoken auton emphane genesthai*, to be visible, evidently so; so he appears, as that it appears beyond contradiction to be him, and not another. It was such a showing of him as amounted to a demonstration of the truth of his resurrection. He showed him not publicly indeed (it was not open in this sense), but evidently; *not to all the people*, who had been the witnesses of his death. By resisting all the evidences he had given them of his divine mission in his miracles, they had forfeited the favour of being eye-witnesses of this great proof of it. Those who immediately forged and promoted that lie of his being stolen away were justly given up to strong delusions to believe it, and not suffered to be undeceived by his being shown to all the people; and so much the greater shall be the blessedness of those *who have not seen, and yet have believed Nec ille se in vulgus edixit, ne impii errore, liberarentur; ut et fides non praemio mediocri destinato difficultate constaret* He showed not himself to the people at large, lest the impious among them should have been forthwith loosed from their error, and that faith, the reward of which is so ample, might be exercised with a degree of difficulty. Tertul. Apol. cap. 11. But, though all the people did not see him, a sufficient number saw him to attest the truth of his resurrection. The testator's declaring his last will and testament needs not to be before all the people; it is enough that it be done before a competent number of credible witnesses; so the resurrection of Christ was proved before sufficient witnesses.

**(1.)** They were not so by chance, but they were *chosen before of God* to be witnesses of it, and, in order to this, had their education under the Lord Jesus, and intimate converse with him, that, having known him so intimately before, they might the better be assured it was he.

**(2.)** They had not a sudden and transient view of him, but a great deal of free conversation with him: *They did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.* This implies that they saw him eat and drink, witness their dining with him at the sea of Tiberias, and the two disciples supping with him at Emmaus; and this proved that he had a true and real body. But this was not all; they saw him without any terror or consternation, which might have rendered them incompetent witnesses, for they saw him so

frequently, and he conversed with them so familiarly, that *they did eat and drink with him*. It is brought as a proof of the clear view which the nobles of Israel had of the glory of God (<sup>(1241)</sup>Exodus 24:11), that *they saw God, and did eat and drink*.

**IV.** He concludes with an inference from all this, that therefore that which they all ought to do was to believe in this Jesus: he was sent to tell Cornelius what he must do, and it is this; his praying and his giving alms were very well, but one thing he lacked, he must believe in Christ. Observe,

**1.** Why he must believe in him. Faith has reference to a testimony, and the Christian faith is *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, it is built upon the testimony given by them.

**(1.)** By the apostles. Peter as foreman speaks for the rest, that *God commanded them*, and gave them in charge, to *preach to the people, and to testify* concerning Christ; so that their testimony was not only credible, but authentic, and what we may venture upon. Their testimony is God's testimony; and they are his witnesses to the world. They do not only say it as matter of news, but testify it as matter of record, by which men must be judged.

**(2.)** By the prophets of the Old Testament, whose testimony beforehand, not only concerning his sufferings, but concerning the design and intention of them, very much corroborates the apostles' testimony concerning them (v. 43): *To him give all the prophets witness*. We have reason to think that Cornelius and his friends were no strangers to the writings of the prophets. Out of the mouth of these two clouds of witnesses, so exactly agreeing, *this word is established*.

**2.** What they must believe concerning him.

**(1.)** That we are all accountable to Christ as our Judge; this the apostles were commanded to testify to the world, that this Jesus is *ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and dead*, v. 42. He is empowered to prescribe the terms of salvation, that rule by which we must be judged, to give laws both to *quick and dead*, both to Jew and Gentile; and he is appointed to determine the everlasting condition of all the children of men at the great day, of those that shall be found alive and of those that shall be raised from the dead. He hath assured us of this, *in that he hath raised him from*

*the dead* (~~4173~~ Acts 17:31), so that it is the great concern of every one of us, in the belief of this, to seek his favour, and to make him our friend.

(2.) That if we believe in him we shall all be justified by him as our righteousness, v. 43. The prophets, when they spoke of the death of Christ, did witness this, *that through his name*, for his sake, and upon the account of his merit, *whosoever believeth in him*, Jew or Gentile, *shall receive remission of sins*. This is the great thing we need, without which we are undone, and which the convinced conscience is most inquisitive after, which the carnal Jews promised themselves from their ceremonial sacrifices and purifications, yea, and the heathen too from their atonements, but all in vain; it is to be had only through the name of Christ, and only by those that believe in his name; and those that do so may be assured of it; their sins shall be pardoned, and there shall be no condemnation to them. And the remission of sins lays a foundation for all other favours and blessings, by taking that out of the way which hinders them. If sin be pardoned, all is well, and shall end everlastingly well.

## ~~4114~~ ACTS 10:44-48

### THE EFFECT OF PETER'S SERMON

We have here the issue and effect of Peter's sermon to Cornelius and his friends. He did not labour in vain among them, but they were all brought home to Christ. Here we have,

**I.** God's owning Peter's word, by conferring the Holy Ghost upon the hearers of it, and immediately upon the hearing of it (v. 44): *While Peter was yet speaking these words*, and perhaps designed to say more, he was happily superseded by visible indications that *the Holy Ghost*, even in his miraculous gifts and powers, *fell on all those who heard the word*, even as he did on the apostles at first; so Peter saith, ~~4115~~ Acts 11:15. Therefore some think it was with a rushing mighty wind, and in cloven tongues, as that was. Observe,

**1.** When the Holy Ghost fell upon them while Peter was preaching. Thus God bore witness to what he said, and accompanied it with a divine power. Thus were the *signs of an apostle wrought among them*, ~~4112-2~~ Corinthians 12:12. Though Peter could not give the Holy Ghost, yet the

Holy Ghost being given along with the word of Peter, by this it appeared he was sent of God. The Holy Ghost fell upon others after they were baptized, for their confirmation; but upon these Gentiles before they were baptized: as Abraham was justified by faith, being yet in uncircumcision, to show that God is not tied to a method, nor confines himself to external signs. The Holy Ghost fell upon those that were neither circumcised nor baptized; for *it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.*

**2.** How it appeared that the Holy Ghost had fallen upon them (v. 46): *They spoke with tongues* which they never learned, perhaps the Hebrew, the holy tongue; as the preachers were enabled to speak the vulgar tongues, that they might communicate the doctrine of Christ to the hearers, so, probably, the hearers were immediately taught the sacred tongue, that they might examine the proofs which the preachers produced out of the Old Testament in the original. Or their being enabled to speak with tongues intimated that they were all designed for ministers, and by this first descent of the Spirit upon them were qualified to preach the gospel to others, which they did but now receive themselves. But, observe, when they spoke with tongues, they *magnified God*, they spoke of Christ and the benefits of redemption, which Peter had been preaching to the glory of God. Thus did they on whom the Holy Ghost first descended, c. 2:11. Note, Whatever gift we are endued with, we ought to honour God with it, and particularly the gift of speaking, and all the improvements of it.

**3.** What impression it made upon the believing Jews that were present (v. 45): *Those of the circumcision who believed were astonished* those six that came along with Peter; it surprised them exceedingly, and perhaps gave them some uneasiness, because *upon the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost*, which they thought had been appropriated to their own nation. Had they understood the scriptures of the Old Testament, which pointed at this, it would not have been such an astonishment to them; but by our mistaken notions of things we create difficulties to ourselves in the methods of divine providence and grace.

**II.** Peter's owning God's work in baptizing those on whom the Holy Ghost fell. Observe,

**1.** Though they had received the Holy Ghost, yet it was requisite they should be baptized; though God is not tied to instituted ordinances, we are; and no extraordinary gifts set us above them, but rather oblige us so

much the more to conform to them. Some in our days would have argued “These are baptized with the *Holy Ghost* and therefore what need have they to be baptized with *water*? It is below them.” No; it is not below them, while water-baptism is an ordinance of Christ, and the door of admission into the visible church, and a seal of the new covenant.

**2.** Though they were Gentiles, yet, having received the Holy Ghost, they might be admitted to baptism (v. 47): *Can any man, though ever so rigid a Jew, forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?* The argument is conclusive; can we deny the sign to those who have received the thing signified? Are not those on whom God has bestowed the grace of the covenant plainly entitled to the seals of the covenant? Surely those that have *received the Spirit as well as we* ought to receive baptism as well as we; for it becomes us to follow God's indications, and to take those into communion with us whom he hath taken into communion with himself. God hath promised to pour his Spirit upon the seed of the faithful, upon their offspring; and who then can forbid water, that they should not be baptized, who have *received the promise of the Holy Ghost as well as we?* Now it appears why the Spirit was given them before they were baptized because otherwise Peter could not have persuaded himself to baptize them, any more than to have preached to them, if he had not been ordered to do it by a vision; at least he could not have avoided the censure of *those of the circumcision that believed*. Thus is there one unusual step of divine grace taken after another to bring the Gentiles into the church. How well is it for us that the grace of a good God is so much more extensive than the charity of some good men!

**3.** Peter did not baptize them himself, but *commanded them to be baptized*, v. 48. It is probable that some of the brethren who came with him did it by his order, and that he declined it for the same reason that Paul didlest those that were baptized by him should think the better of themselves for it, or he should seem to *have baptized in his own name*, <sup>4015</sup>1 Corinthians 1:15. the apostles received the commission to *go and disciple all nations by baptism*. But it was to prayer and the ministry of the word that they were to *give* themselves. And Paul says that he was sent, *not to baptize but to preach*, which was the more noble and excellent work. The business of baptizing was therefore ordinarily devolved upon the inferior ministers; these acted by the orders of the apostles, who might therefore be said to do it. *Qui per alterum facit, per seipsum facere dicitur* What a man does by another, he may be said to do by himself.

**III.** Their owning both Peter's word and God's work in their desire for further advantage by Peter's ministry: *They prayed him to tarry certain days.* They could not press him to reside constantly among them they knew that he had work to do in other places, and that for the present he was expected at Jerusalem; yet they were not willing he should go away immediately, but earnestly begged he would stay for some time among them, that they might be further instructed by him in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Note,

- 1.** Those who have some acquaintance with Christ cannot but covet more.
- 2.** Even those that have received the Holy Ghost must see their need of the ministry of the word.