

## **Acts 10: THE FIRST GENTILE CONVERSION**

### **Introduction**

We ended our Spring session with the Study of Acts chapter 9, which details the dramatic conversion of Saul. Luke introduced Saul to us gradually (in Chapters 7 and 8). He was the man whom the killers of Stephen laid their coats at his feet (Acts 7:58b) and one who approved of the killing of the disciples (Acts 8:1a). Acts chapter 9 details his conversion and some of his early actions as a new believer. In fact, as we go along, you will later discover that almost the entire second half of Acts is devoted to Paul's ministry and how he eventually fulfilled the latter portion of Jesus' commandment in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Ironically, however, we learn in Acts 10 that it was apostle Peter who preached the gospel to the first set of Gentiles. It was to a man named Cornelius and his family. Cornelius was a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. What is remarkable about this story is how much convincing God has to do to make Peter even visit the house of Cornelius, simply because he was a gentile. The Jews in those days did not visit or associate with Gentiles. After spending three years with Jesus and hearing from Him that the message of the gospel must go to the ends of the earth to both the Jews and Gentiles, it appears that Peter's personal prejudice as a Jewish man and his lack of courage was in the way of God's purpose (Galatians 2:11-13).

We see this in Peter's reaction to the trance, which was repeated three times, and his response to Cornelius's story (Acts 11:34). There is also evidence that this prejudice or lack of courage continued with Peter for a long time (Read Galatians 2:11-13). This is why many theologians believe Paul was God's second (or backup) plan since the early apostles did not fully embrace God's plan of taking the Gospel to the world. It is possible that Paul himself was referencing this when he referred to himself as "...one born out of due time." (Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

### **Study the Scriptures: Read the Passage Acts 10:1-48**

Note your thoughts as you read:

Write down any questions that come to mind as you read:

### Think Through the Following Questions

1. What do you make of Cornelious, an unbeliever having a vision? Do you think this still happens today?
2. What do you make of the word of the Lord to Cornelious in the vision, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God”? Does that mean God hears the prayers of unbelievers too?
3. What do you make of Peter’s trance and the fact that it was repeated three times?
4. What do you think of Peter’s response to God in Acts 10:14? Does it suggest pride, self-righteousness, lack of understanding of the gospel?
5. What can we make of Peter’s prejudice? How is it possible that someone that close to Jesus still finds it difficult to accept God’s word and was overcome by his racial or religious prejudice?
6. What lesson can we learn from this whole story about God’s providence, sovereignty, and importance of the gospel message, even to the best unbeliever?
7. What do you make of the fact that the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message while Peter was still speaking before an altar call was made? Does that mean they were born again before the message ended?
8. Are there ways we as believers behave like Peter today? Allowing our prejudice to prevent us from obeying God?

**Lessons Learned: Are there any new things you learned from this passage today?**

**Application: How do you think this will impact your thinking and/or actions going forward?**