



Gentiles Receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit! Acts 10:1-48 (Lesson #16)



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OUTLINE:

- 1) An Angel appears to a Roman Centurion named Cornelius and directs him to send men to get Peter who is staying in Joppa (10:1-6).
- 2) Cornelius immediately dispatches men to Joppa to find Peter (10:7-9a).
- 3) As they are getting close to Simon the tanner's home, Peter goes up on the roof at noon to pray where he fell into a trance (10:9b-10).
- 4) In the trance Peter saw something like a large linen cloth filled with animals, let down from heaven, and he was given the command to kill and eat (10:11-13).
- 5) Peter responded to the command by replying that he had never eaten anything common or unclean, the vision happened three times (10:14-16).
- 6) Peter was perplexed by the vision and as he considered what he had seen, the men who had come from Cornelius' home showed up at the gate calling for Simon (10:17-18).
- 7) While this was happening, the Holy Spirit told Peter that three men had come seeking him and he was to go with them and doubt nothing (10:19-20).
- 8) Peter went down and identified himself and asked why the men had come (10:21).
- 9) The men recounted what had happened with Cornelius and why he had sent them (10:22).
- 10) Peter invited the men into the house and they stayed the night and rose the next morning along with other Jewish believers and traveled to Caesarea (10:23).
- 11) When Peter arrived at Cornelius' home, he had assembled others there to hear what Peter had to say (10:24).
- 12) When Peter entered the home, Cornelius fell down to worship him, Peter quickly stood him up and briefly spoke to him (10:25-27).
- 13) Peter reminded Cornelius and those present how unlawful it was for Peter to enter a Gentile home, but he also shared how God had showed him not to call any man common or unclean (10:28).
- 14) Peter then asked why he had been summoned and Cornelius recounted all that had occurred four days prior (10:29-33).
- 14) Peter preached to those present about Jesus, why he had come, and that anyone who believed in him would be forgiven of their sins (10:34-43).
- 16) While Peter was speaking the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles present, and they spoke in tongues which amazed those who had traveled with Peter (10:44-46).
- 17) The Gentiles were then baptized in water and requested that Peter and the others tarry with them for a few days (10:47-48).

10:1 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, 2 a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. 3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." 4 And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. 6 He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." 7 When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, 8 and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Vs 1 - Caesarea is located thirty miles north of Joppa. We have brushed into Caesarea before in (Acts 8 and Acts 9).

BACKGROUND: Caesarea was a predominantly Roman city and it was the headquarters of the Roman government.

In Caesarea, there was a certain man, in the Greek a certain man, a certain male, his name was Cornelius. This man was a centurion, a Roman soldier and as discussed, he had 100 soldiers who reported to him. He was a centurion of the Italian Cohort. The Italians were one segment of the Roman empire.

Cornelius was a Gentile and Luke identified him as a certain man. Not a disciple, brother, believer, or saint.

Vs 2 - Luke tells us four things about Cornelius that are very surprising:

- **First**, he was a **devout man**. He was a **pious man**, he was a **devoted man**, he was a **godly man**. **The word means worshipful**, it is only used four times in the NT (Acts 10:2, 7; 22:12; II Pet 2:9).
- **Second**, he was a **man who feared God** along with his household. Here was a Gentile who was seeking the true and living God. He led his entire house in that same direction.

He was likely raised **worshipping the pantheon of Roman gods**, but it seems, while serving in Palestine, he came into some knowledge of the true and living God, and Luke tells us this was a man who **feared God**.

By the way you are being introduced to a **category of people**, they were Gentiles who were **“God fearers.”** These “god fears” worshipped the Jewish God, but they stopped short of adopting the Jewish lifestyle, becoming Jewish proselytes, or being circumcised.

- **Third**, he gave alms to the people, this man gave **charitably to the poor**, this man was not like what we think of when we think of Roman centurion. This was a Gentile giving alms to the Jewish poor.
- **Fourth**, Luke tells us that he prayed continually to God. He prayed constantly to God.

The Greek word translated **prayed** is **δέομαι (deomai)** means to beg, to beseech, or to plead.

It appears this Gentile was in a **vibrant relationship** with **Yahweh**. He was at a minimum living in the light that had been provided him and **worshipping Yahweh**.

Vs 3 – It was about the ninth hour, they did not wear wristwatches, but it was about the time of the afternoon prayer, it was about **3:00pm** and he was praying. Now you may be thinking Rich it does not say that, do not worry when Cornelius recounts these events, he will tell us clearly that he was praying.

Cornelius saw “clearly” in a **vision**, an **angle of God**. The word translated vision is **ὄραμα (horama)**. **Ananias had a vision** when the Lord told him to go lay hands-on Saul. **Saul had a vision** when the Lord told him that a man was coming to him named Ananias who would lay his hands on him and he would receive his sight.

Cornelius is had a vision a **ὄραμα (horama)**, and in this vision an angel of God came to him and called him by name, **Cornelius**.

Vs 4-6 - In this vision, Cornelius stared at the angel and he was filled with fear, he was filled with terror!

BY THE WAY: A Godly reverent fear is a good thing. Especially when we do not know God.

Then, in this vision, he communicated with the angel and said: ***“What is it, Lord?”***

Then the angel, in the vision, said to Cornelius: ***“Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.”***

The angel tells him three important pieces of information:

- 1) Your prayers and your almsgiving have ascended, like incense, like smoke as a memorial before God. God has heard your prayers and seen your almsgiving.
- 2) **Send men to Joppa** and find a man named Simon, whose sir name is Peter, he is currently lodging with a man named Simon, who is a tanner, who lives by the sea.
 - a. It is likely that Cornelius has no idea who this Peter is.
 - b. Also, isn't it interesting that God says “send men”, we might have imagined God would say go to Joppa and find one named Peter. Instead, send men to Joppa.
- 3) The men you send are to **implore Peter to come to you**.

INTERESTING NOTE: The angel could have shared the gospel with Cornelius, but God uses the angel to provide directions to Cornelius on where he should go to find a man, who will share the gospel with him!

Vs 7-8 - The angel finished speaking and departed from Cornelius. The angel departed and the vision ended.

Then Cornelius called two of his servants, and a devout soldier from among those who attended to him. He related everything that had happened to him, to them and **he sent them to Joppa.**

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

Vs 9 - So it is the next day, the trip from Caesarea to Joppa is a **two-day journey**, the next day, while the three men are travelling, unbeknownst to Peter, they are getting close to the city.

Peter decides to go up on the housetop to pray, since it is the **sixth hour**, it is the **noon time hour of prayer**.

Vs 10 - While praying he becomes hungry, the Greek word is a **Hapax-Legomenon**, used only here in the entire New Testament and means **very hungry** and he desired something to eat. Peter became VERY HUNGRY.

While the food was being prepared as he was on the roof and he fell into a **trance**, the Greek word is **ἔκστασις (ekstasis)**. This is where we get the **word ecstasy**. The word literally means to be outside oneself

Vs 11-12 - In this trance, Peter saw the heaven open, and what appeared to be a very large sheet, The **word translated sheet** is only used here and when Peter explains what happened in Acts 11.

This massive sheet was being let down to the earth, as it was being held by its four corners. In this massive sheet were all kinds of animals, reptiles, and birds this included both clean and unclean animals.

Vs 13 - As Peter is watching this happen, he hears a voice that tells him: **"Rise, Peter; kill and eat."**

Vs 14 - Peter being the devout Jew that he is responds to the heavenly voice, **by no means (Lord)** likely meaning sir, for I have never eaten anything common or unclean!

By no means Lord, no Lord, this seems a **little paradoxical**, to say no Lord, but God will work Peter through this issue.

Peter is responding the way a faithful Jew would respond, and he is following the law (Le 20:25). He likely thought this was some type of test, **coming to him while he was hungry**.

Vs 15 - The voice comes a second time, this time additional information: **"What God has made clean, do not call common."**

The first and obvious conclusion from this vision is that God has cleansed all food, that is taught elsewhere in the New Testament (Ro 14:2; 14:14; I Tim 4:4). But there is another conclusion as well.

Vs 16 - This event, while Peter was in a trance happened three times, and then the entire sheet was taken up to heaven.

17 Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate 18 and called out to ask

whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. 19 ¶ And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. 20 Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." 21 And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" 22 And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." 23a So he invited them in to be his guests.

Vs 17-18 - The **trance ended**, and Peter is **left inwardly perplexed**. He had doubts, he was confused, he lacked certainty as to what the vision meant. Peter remains **unconvinced** and **uncertain** about the nature of the vision.

Here we are told it was a **vision**, a **ὄραμα (horama)**. This is the same Greek word that was used to describe what Cornelius saw (10:3).

As Peter sat on the **roof puzzled, at that precise time...**

The men who were sent by Cornelius, having asked around as to which house belonged to Simon the tanner, the men were now standing at the gate, and calling out, **asking** if one Simon who was also called Peter was staying there.

Vs 19-20 - While Peter was **pondering the vision**, While Peter was **playing the vision over in his mind**, considering **what it might mean**.

In the midst of his uncertainty and confusion, the Spirit communicated to Peter and said: **"Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them."**

- 1) Three men are looking for you
- 2) Rise and accompany them
- 3) Do so without hesitation (why would Pete hesitate)
- 4) I (the Holy Spirit) have sent them

The **Holy Spirit takes full responsibility** for their presence.

Point to notice, as best we can tell the Holy Spirit **did NOT tell Peter the men are Gentiles**. He says go down, go with them, without hesitation, for I have sent them.

Vs 21 - Peter comes down from the roof, and he goes down to the gate, he opens the gate and low and behold, do you know what he sees? **A Roman soldier and two Gentiles!**

But then he tells the men: **"I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?"**

Vs 22 - The three respond, we are not sure if one did most of the talking and the other simply agreed, we do not know. But they told Peter this is about:

- 1) Cornelius, who is a Roman Centurion.
- 2) This man is upright (righteous).
- 3) This man is a God-fearing man.
- 4) Who is **well spoken of** by the Jewish nation, even though he himself was a Gentile.

This Cornelius was directed by a **holy angel** to send for you and ask that you **come to his house** and speak to him and he **would hear what you have to say!**

Although there are no sirens flashing or alarms going off, this is a **critical moment**, a **crucial point in the expansion of the kingdom** and this is a crucial point in the **expansion of the gospel**.

Will free and full salvation be offered to the Gentiles or must they become Jewish proselytes to partake in the Messiah?

To get us to this point, took an angel coming to Cornelius, it took a voice out of heaven speaking three times to Peter, it took the Holy Spirit to audibly tell Peter that I have sent these men and you are to go with them without hesitation. It took two visions, the first to the Gentile seeker, the second to the Jewish proclaimer.

Vs 23a - A Jewish reader would have fallen out of their seat. Peter is a good Jew. How could he invite this Roman soldier and these other Gentiles into his house?

This is **highly controversial** and **absolutely unacceptable** for a Jew to invite Gentiles into His abode.

Yet Peter, maybe still not fully understanding is **following the lead of the Holy Spirit!**

23b The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." 27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. 28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

Vs 23b - The next day... So, these Gentiles spent the night in the same house with these Jews!

Then on the next day, Peter arises and heads off to Caesarea with the three men who were sent by Cornelius.

He also takes some of the brothers, some of the believers who live there in Joppa with him.

In Acts 11:12 we are told that he brings six brothers. These would be Jewish believers who are traveling with him to Cornelius' home.

We do not know what moved Peter to do this, but this would prove to be extremely important. I would remind us of (Deut 19:15 and II Cor 13:1).

Vs 24 - The next day, again this is a two-day trip, the next day the group arrives in Caesarea.

Cornelius is expecting them so in the interim, he has called together **relatives** and **close friends**.

Keep in mind, Cornelius had no received a text, email, or tweet. Rather he was fully trusting that what God had initiated, God would complete.

We can imagine that he has told them what the angel said to him in the vision and they are now all waiting there with **great expectation**.

We do not know **how many Gentiles are present**, but we should see this as a **mixed bag, a homogenous mixture of Gentiles**, assembled there to **receive the word from Peter**.

Vs 25 - Peter enters the house and Cornelius meets him and then falls down at his feet to worship him.

Cornelius had no idea who Peter was, but he assumed he was worthy of worship, we will come back to this.

This again, as you will see, **would violate** the Jewish norms and Jewish customs of the day.

This practice was not contained in the Old Testament, it was not part of Jewish law, but it was part of Pharisaic Judaism to not associate with or visit one of another nation.

Vs 26 - Peter quickly grabs him, stands him up and says I too am a man!

Peter refused to be treated as a God, but he also refused to treat Cornelius as if he were a dog.

Vs 27 - So Peter **chatted it up with him**, and then he went into Cornelius' home. This, as you will see broke all Jewish traditions, norms, and practices. But Peter went in.

Upon going in, Peter was likely escorted into a back room where Peter found “many persons” gathered and waiting to hear what he had to say.

Vs 28 - Peter began the conversation by saying, you all know that it is unlawful for a Jew (like myself) to associate with or to visit with anyone from another nation.

It was common knowledge to Gentiles that the Jews found them unclean and in accord with Pharisaic Judaism it was unlawful for Jews to even enter their homes.

Peter says, I know, that you yourselves know, that according to the Jewish fathers, it is unlawful form me to even associate with you, much less enter your home! Then Peter goes on to say, **BUT God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.**

Peter likely understood the smaller lesson about foods, but he also understood the greater lesson about people.

This is a **new revelation** of which the Genesis seems to be the vision he had while in Simon the tanner’s home.

The vision that Peter had was not only about food, but it was much bigger it was about people. Peter understood the multi-faceted lesson!

Vs 29 - That is why when you sent for me, **I came, without any objection.**

I got what the Lord was teaching! I understood the greater lesson, the Holy Spirit, made it clear to me. In other words, this is not something I would have normally done. So here I am, I have come as you asked, why did you send for me?

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

Vs 30 - Cornelius, begins by answering Peter’s question: **Why did you send for me?** Four days ago, at about this **exact hour**, I was praying in my house, it was 3:00pm and **BEHOLD**, suddenly there was a man standing before me in bright clothing.

It had been exactly four days, to the hour, here Cornelius tells us plainly that he was praying in his house and behold a man stood before him in bright clothing. This is a new detail that Luke had not previously shared with us. **Bright clothing** is generally associated with angels (Acts 1:9-10; Mat 28:2-3).

Vs 31 - The man (angel), standing in bright clothing said to me: **Your prayers have been heard** and your alms have been remembered before God.

Vs 32 - Then the angel said, **Therefore, send to Joppa** and ask for one Simon who is also called Peter. You will find him lodging in the house of Simon a tanner, who lives by the ocean, by the Mediterranean Sea.

Vs 33 - So, I wasted no time, I sent for you at once, immediately. Thank you for coming.

Now we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.

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."

TWO IMPORTANT THINGS and A POINT OF APPLICATION:

- 1) As Peter was used at Pentecost to open the door of salvation to the Jews, as he was used following the preaching of Phillip to open the door of salvation to the Samaritans, he is now used of God to open the door of salvation to the Gentiles.
- 2) We now come to Peter's sermon. It begins in verse 34, with the word truly and it is interrupted in verse 43. It is only 225 words in the English of the ESV. You can read the entire sermon in approximately 40 seconds.

It will be interrupted by an amazing event that God does after Peter declares: *To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.*"

APPLICATION: God does not need you and I to be biblical scholars, he needs us to open our mouths and declare salvation in Jesus. He can run with that!

Vs 34-35 - Peter having heard all this, opens his mouth and says...

Peter opens his sermon with a confession that is also a grand declaration: **OK, I get it Lord**, I truly understand that God shows no partiality, that God is not a respecter of persons **as far as nationality and salvation are concerned**. Here is what Peter has just figured out.

Rather, in every nation, anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him. Peter is of course correct. But God is not a respecter of persons as it relates to salvation in the Messiah, we all know what Peter is about to do!

Vs 36 - The word came to Israel, in the person of Jesus. I would remind us that the word is the logos of (John 1:1-4).

And the divine logos came to Israel "preaching" good news of peace, that is peace with God through the finished work of Jesus who was the Messiah. Not only that, also the declaration that Jesus was Lord of all:

Vs 37-38 - Then he begins recounting what happened in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, but he leads with **"you yourselves know what happened."**

You yourselves know what happened here in the land of Israel. **Beginning from Galilee** following Jesus' the baptism by John.

Vs 38 - God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power. Jesus received a special anointing of the Holy Spirit, in fulfillment of (Is 61:1-3):

Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good, He went about healing those who were **oppressed by the devil**.

God was with him! He was able to do all this because he operated in the power of the Spirit, God was with Him.

Vs 39 - We are witnesses. Here Peter is likely thinking of the apostles, although he could equally be speaking of the other six men. In either case, we are witnesses of all that he did in Israel and all that he did in Jerusalem.

Then the sobering reality! God did all this through the Messiah, but “they” our Jewish rulers in cabal with the Romans, killed him, in the most heinous way, they killed him on a cross!

Vs 40-41 – BUT, God raised him from the dead on the third day and made him to appear. Again, there are human witnesses. He did not appear to all people, but he did appear to those who God chose to be witnesses.

Not only did he appear, Jesus ate and drank with us after he rose from the dead. We, and others are witnesses.

Vs 42 - Not only that, this same resurrected Jesus commanded us **to preach the gospel, the good news to the people. God commanded us to testify that this one (Jesus) is also** appointed by God as the ultimate and final judge (see Joh 5:22; II Tim 4:1).

Vs 43 - The prophets all bear witness to him, in fact the prophets bear witness that whoever believes in him will receive forgiveness of their sins in his name!

OBSERVATIONS: FIRST, this gospel that Peter delivered to the Gentiles was the same gospel he had delivered to the Jews (Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-33).

SECOND, Yet, there is a difference. To this Gentile audience he does not quote a single Psalm or prophet, only that their messages point to the Messiah.

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

Vs 44 - While he was still preaching, the Holy Spirit fell! This is the first time, at least that we are told, that an uncircumcised Gentile is brought into the family of faith.

We had Pentecost of the Jews, then we had something similar for the Samaritans, now we have Pentecost for the Gentiles.

We can be sure that the Gentiles assembled that day, the moment Peter gave the formula, believe and receive forgiveness of sins, **believed and received forgiveness of sins** and the **gift of the Holy Spirit**.

Vs 45 - The six Jewish believers who accompanied Peter were amazed! They were surprised, they were astonished, they were literally beside themselves. Because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on Gentiles.

Vs 46-47 - The ESV says: “they were hearing”, the Greek verb tense is imperfect, and points to a continued action, for some period of time these Jewish believers “kept hearing these Gentiles speak with other tongues and extoll God!

Peter asks can anyone withhold baptizing these people in water who have already been baptized into the body by the Holy Spirit, just like we were.

Vs 48 - Then Peter commanded the Jewish believers to baptize these Gentile believers in the name of Jesus Christ. Following the baptismal service, Cornelius and those with him requested Peter and the others remain with them some days.

The door of faith has been opened to the Gentiles!
