

Breaking Down Barriers

Acts 10:1-11:18

*"Watch to see where God is working and join Him in His work."
- Henry Blackaby (principle from Experiencing God study).*

I. THE MAN (Acts 10:1-2)

"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:1-2).

- A. **SIGNIFICANT AUTHORITY** – Cornelius was in a position of influence and responsibility. He was a Roman centurion commanding 100 soldiers. He was part of the Italian Regiment (600 soldiers under 6 centurions).
- B. **SPIRITUAL APPETITE** – Cornelius "feared God" - followed the God of the Jews without being Jewish. He "prayed to God always", meaning he was seeking God. He also led his entire household in worship.
- C. **SACRIFICIAL ALMS** – Cornelius "gave alms generously to the people". He was known for helping those less fortunate than himself. His actions got God's attention.

II. THE MIRACLE (Acts 10:3-8)

"About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, 'Cornelius!' And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, 'What is it, Lord?' So he said to him, 'Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God'" (Acts 10:3-4).

- A. **A VISION SEEN** – The ninth hour was at 3 PM. This angel acknowledged Cornelius's prayers and giving. It was God's response to a seeking heart (Jeremiah 29:13).
- B. **A VISITOR SENT** – "send for Simon" is literally "go fetch" in the Greek (see Acts 11:13-14). God was telling Cornelius that Peter would instruct him on what he must do (v. 6). The visitor was sent by Cornelius (v. 8).

III. THE MISSION (Acts 10:9-34)

- A. **THE CONFUSION** - Peter's Vision (vv. 9-16) - Peter's response: "Not so, Lord!" (contradiction in terms)
- B. **THE COMMAND** - Holy Spirit's Direction (vv. 17-23) "Go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them" (v.20).

C. **THE COURAGE** - Breaking Cultural Barriers (vv. 24-34) - Peter lodges Gentile messengers (v. 23). He travels to Cornelius's house (Jews did not do this with Gentiles). Peter made two bold statements: "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (v. 28) and "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality" (v. 34). The Wuest translates from the Greek accurately, "I am in the process of comprehending..."

IV. THE MESSAGE (Acts 10:35-43)

- A. **JESUS IS GOD'S PEACE** (v. 36 - "Preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all")
- B. **JESUS IS GOD'S POWER** (v. 38 - "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power Who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil...")
- C. **JESUS IS GOD'S PARDON** (vv. 39-42)
- D. **JESUS IS GOD'S PATH** (v. 43 - "Through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins")

V. THE MANDATE FOR US (Acts 10:44-48; 11:17-18)

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word... Then Peter answered, 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?'" (10:44, 47).

1. **GOD PARTNERS WITH US IN EVANGELISM** - God sets up divine appointments (10:30-33).
2. **NEVER PRACTICE SELECTIVE EVANGELISM**
 - "God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34)
 - "Has not God also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life?" (Acts 11:18)
 - James 2:1 - "Do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with partiality"
3. **WORSHIP GOD WHEN HE DOES THINGS YOU'RE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH –**
 - Initial resistance gives way to celebration (Acts 11:18 - "When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God").
 - Our comfort zones must yield to God's heart for all people.
4. **GOD HAS ENTRUSTED THE MESSAGE TO MANKIND**
 - Romans 10:14 - "How shall they hear without a preacher?"
 - The gospel requires human messengers
5. **THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVES IN RESPONSE TO OUR OBEDIENCE**
 - Nothing happened until Peter shared the gospel (v. 44)
 - God's sovereignty works through human responsibility.