**Cornelius, A Devout Man Who Feared God**

Acts 10:1-8

Introduction:

1. Have you ever found yourself thinking, “There might be something more that I need to do to be right in my relationship with God?”

2. I believe this question had caught Cornelius’ attention before. But even if it had not, it became evident now with this angelic message telling him to send to Joppa and have Peter brought to him.

3. Acts 11:14 says, “He (Peter) will speak words to you by which you will be saved.”

4. So, if you have been thinking, “There is something more that I need to do to be right in my relationship to God,” maybe this study about Cornelius will be helpful.

Discussion:

I. Cornelius was a good man who needed to be saved (10:1ff; 11:14).

A. Cornelius was a centurion.

1. A centurion was a Roman soldier nominally in control of one hundred men.

a. Centurions were the backbone of the Roman army.

b. The historian, Polybius, sums up their qualifications as follows: “Centurions are

not to be bold and adventurous, as good leaders, of steady and prudent mind, not

prone to take the offensive or start fighting wantonly, but able when over-

whelmed and hard-pressed to stand fast and die at their post” (History, 6.24).

2. Centurions are spoken of in a good light in Scripture. Jesus said of one in Matt.

8:11, “I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel,” and saw those from

the east and west dining with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom.

3. Cornelius was one of the first non-Jewish persons invited into the kingdom of God.

B. He was “a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many

alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually” (v. 2).

1. Devout is from “eusebēs” meaning to reverence and comes from a root signifying

sacred awe. Here it is used to describe Cornelius’s respectful attitude toward God

that led to expression in devoted activity.

2. He was a God fearer. These were Gentiles that accepted Jewish religion. They

accepted its monotheism and its ethical principles. They often assembled in the

synagogues and were reasonably conversant in the O.T. They were probably

distinguishable from proselytes in that God fearers had not given over completely to

becoming Jews. Circumcision may have been an issue. He had led his household

to become “God-fearers.”

3. Gave many alms to the Jewish people. These were gifts to the poor and so he

manifest compassion to the Jewish people.

4. He prayed to God continually.

5. Cornelius was a good man. Probably like you. God took notice of him and said,

“Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God.”

6. We might conclude that Cornelius didn’t need to change anything in his life. But if

we drew that conclusion we would be wrong.

7. The angel told him to, “Send to Joppa and have Simon brought here; and he will

speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household”

(11:14).

8. So, even though Cornelius was good, he was not good enough. There was

something more he needed to do to be right in his relationship with God.

C. Cornelius needed to be saved.

II. He needed to **hear** a message about forgiveness (22, 43; 11:14).

A. Cornelius sent for Peter.

B. When Peter arrived Cornelius had called together his relatives and close friends.

C. He explained to Peter about what had happened to him and said, “We are all here

present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord” (33).

D. What Cornelius needed to hear is made clear by what Peter taught him (34-43).

1. Part of what Peter taught related to his own realization that God was not one to

show partiality, that any man who feared God and did right is welcome.

2. Peter referenced the word that God had sent to the sons of Israel involving peace

through Jesus Christ.

3. He preached Jesus, anointed with the Holy Spirit to bring healing.

4. He testified, “We are witnesses of all these things.”

5. He preached the crucifixion, the resurrection and the commission to preach that

Jesus was the one appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. He noted

that the prophets said that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives

forgiveness of sins.

III. Cornelius needed to **believe** in Jesus (43).

A. This was no mere acknowledgement of the facts of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

B. It involved a placing of his trust in Jesus for forgiveness.

C. Cornelius’ devotion, his respectful attitude toward God had issued in actions reflective

of that devotion before.

1. No less now, such devotion would lead to actions reflective of his respectful

attitude toward what God had done in Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for his sin.

2. The Holy Spirit falling upon him reflected this too.

IV. Cornelius **repented** (11:18) and was **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ (48).

A. How do we know he repented? The Jews of Jerusalem, after hearing what happened

with Cornelius said, “God has granted to the Gentiles, also the repentance that leads

to life.”

1. This repentance was not a mere turning from this sin or that.

2. It was a turning to God for life.

B. Cornelius and his household were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

1. It was as if they were presenting a check to the bank of heaven signed by Jesus

Christ who was paying for their sins.

2. It was a water baptism (47-48).

3. It was for the forgiveness of sins. How do I know? This was what Peter preached.

In Acts 2:38 he had commanded the Jews on Pentecost saying, “Repent, and each

of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Conclusion:

1. Perhaps you are like Cornelius. You are a good person, but you feel like there is more that you need to do to be right with God.

2. If you have heard the message of Jesus Christ, have you believed it?

3. Have you repented, turned to God for life? Have you been baptized for the forgiveness of your sins?

4. Why do you wait? Cornelius didn’t!!!

5. Surely your goodness will lead you to do what Cornelius did.