

Sermon Discussion Questions



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"GOD'S GRACIOUS WORK IN PETER AND CORNELIUS"

Big Idea: As the gospel advances, God is changing both the believer and the unbeliever.

Discuss

In his history of the expansion of Christianity, K. S. Latourette points to the inclusive nature of Christianity as one of the chief reasons its message spread so quickly in the first century of the church. "More than any of its competitors, it attracted all races and classes." Christianity "gloried in its appeal to Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian." He adds that it drew the lowly and unlettered and yet also commanded the respect of the learned. It welcomed both sexes as well as the rich and the poor. "No other [religion] took in so many groups and strata of society."¹

Jesus, of course, had told his disciples during his last days on earth that they would "receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" and that they were to be his witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Until the conversion of Cornelius, however, the good news of the gospel was still something primarily (if not exclusively) heard by fellow Jews. As a result of God's work in Peter's heart and life (and as we know from chapter 9, as a result of the dramatic conversion of Saul), the gospel was set to explode into the whole world.

- 1) Let's first consider what God provided for Cornelius.
 - What are we to make of the declaration of the angel? (v. 4)
 - Cornelius and his family are described as "devout and God-fearing." In Romans, we are told that righteousness "comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (3:22-23) Was Cornelius "good" or "bad"? Or are those the right (or the best) categories to use?
 - How did God prepare Cornelius for hearing the gospel?
- 2) Let's next consider what God was teaching Peter.
 - What was the purpose of the cleanliness laws? (See Deut. 4:5-8) To put it another way, what truths did God teach his people through the cleanliness laws?
 - What truths did God teach Peter in the vision and by direct communication from the Spirit?
- 3) How might we use this story of God's gracious work in the lives of Cornelius and Peter to winsomely and wisely share the gospel with those who:
 - question God's justice? (i. e., "Shouldn't all good people get to go to heaven?") (Hint: Who can see clearly into each person's heart?)
 - question the exclusivity of the gospel message? (i. e., "Why is Christianity the only way to God?")

DATE: April 19, 2020

SPEAKER: Frank

SERIES: Acts

PASSAGE: Acts 10:1-23a

Pray

A Prayer for Hope

O great God:

"In all my dangers, temporal and spiritual, I will hope in thee who art Almighty power, and therefore able to relieve me; who art infinite goodness, and therefore ready and willing to assist me.

O, precious blood of my dear Redeemer! . . . Who can contemplate the sufferings of God incarnate, and not raise his hope, and not put his trust in him? What, though my body be crumbled into dust, and that dust blown over the face of the earth, yet I undoubtedly know my Redeemer lives, and shall raise me up at the last day; whether I am comforted or left desolate, whether I enjoy peace or am afflicted with temptations, whether I am healthful or sickly, succored or abandoned by the good things of this life, I will always hope in thee, O, my chiefest, infinite good." Amen.

– Richard Allen, 1760-1831, founder of the African American Episcopal Church

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Metanoia Prison Ministries

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Brian and Connie Shepson serving with Mission Aviation Fellowship

¹K.S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol.1 (Harper and Row, 1937), quoted in Timothy Keller, *Evangelism: Studies in the Book of Acts*.