

Seeing God at work even when you don't like it?

Acts 9:32-10:23

March 1, 2020

Acts Series: Taking the Message of Jesus' Kingdom Everywhere

Acts 10 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment.² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.³ One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"⁴ Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked.

The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God."⁵ Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter.⁶ He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants.⁸ He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

⁹ About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.¹¹ He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners.¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds.¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

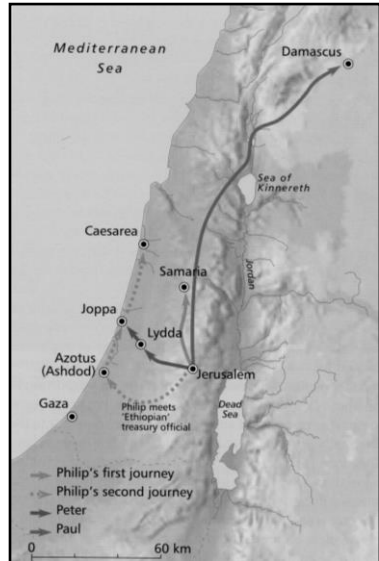
¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."¹⁶ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

¹⁷ While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate.¹⁸ They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you."²⁰ So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."²¹ Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

²² The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say."²³ Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.¹



¹ The New International Version. (2011): Zondervan.

1. Serving

Acts 9:32-43

"This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord." Verse 42

A. Healing and reviving the dead

Lydda and Joppa are Jewish towns

Generosity, Giving, Helping ἐλεημοσύνη (*eleēmosynē*) A Greek noun used 13 times in the NT 8 of those in Acts (3:2, 3, 10; **9:36**; **10:2, 4, 31**; 24:17) It means charitable gifts (not only money) or actions of mercy for the poor (**Mt 6:2, 3, 4**)
Translated in **Acts 9:36**: NIV, NLT, Helping the Poor; ESV, NASB, NKJV, Acts of Charity; KJV, Almsdeeds. **Acts 2:4**: NIV, NLT, Gifts to the Poor; ESV, NASB, NKJV, KJV, Alms;

B. Echoes Jesus

Luke 5:24 Paralyzed man

Mark 5:40 Jesus raises Jairus' Daughter

Luke 7:14 Jesus raises a young man

2. Searching

Acts 10:1-8

"Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God." Verse 4

A. A Roman Army Officer

Acts 10:1-3

A very respectable person whose status was granted by Rome

Devout and God-Fearing family

B. The Obstacle of Jewish Conversion

He would be interested to convert to Judaism

Except for circumcision – not the pain but the status

C. God's Response

Acts 10:4-8

Angels always command respect

Attentiveness and acceptance – Exodus 3, Revelation 8:4

3. Starving

Acts 10:9-18

*He became hungry and wanted something to eat,
and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.* Verse 10

A. Peter

Get Up (Acts 9:34 – sick; 40 – dead; 10:13 & 10:20 – reluctant)

Trance ἔκστασις (*ekstasis*) A Greek noun used rarely in the NT (7x and 4 in Acts the last 3 all recount the same event (Acts 3:10; 10:10; 11:5; 22:17) It means to be amazed, bewildered or to be in a trance. The root word is 'stand' and this is descriptive of some form of dissociative state. Translated: NIV, ESV, NASB, NLT, NKJV, KJV, Trance

B. The Obstacle of Jewish Observance

Cornelius and some awkward surgery (Genesis 17:9-14)

Peter and the Big Blanket Buffet and Food Laws (Leviticus 11)

Impure κοινός (*koinos*) A Greek adjective used less commonly in the NT (14 times and 5 in Acts 2:44; 4:32; 10:14, 28; 11:8) It means unclean, impure, unholy thus making something of little or no value in the Jewish worldview.

Translated: NIV, NLT, Impure; ESV, NKJV, KJV, Common; NASB, Unholy

Unclean ἀκάθαρτος (*akathartos*) A Greek adjective used commonly in the NT (32 times and 5 in Acts 5:16, 8:7; 10:14, 28; 11:8) It means religiously impure or unclean.

Translated: NIV, ESV, NASB, NLT, NKJV, KJV, Unclean

3 and Peter John 13:38 – Denials; John 21:15-17 – Do you love me
4 corners Isaiah 11:12; Revelation 7:1, 20:8 (Acts 1:8)

C. Perplexed

Indignant over what God has asked

Peter's dilemma: Identity in Christ apart from Identity as Jewish

3. Starting

Acts 10:19-23

*Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for.
Why have you come?"* Verse 21

A. Timing

Acts 10:19-21

The convergence is timed for Peter and the vision he has seen

B. Invitation

Three (again) visitors invited into the house

What could God ask us to do that we might not like?

Some kind of sacrifice of time, money, pride, comfort, safety

The challenge is to remove the resentment that we can harbor

What are the upsides?

Serving God brings blessing and affirmation from God

Being obedient to God is the key. Listening to him. Ahead of our preferences, or prejudices, or ideas of what is best. We may be surprised as we listen to him and hold to the word.

Study Questions

For your personal study or with family, a friend, mentor or Life Group

Beginning:

1. What insight, idea, question or principle from Sunday's message did you find most helpful, eye opening or troubling?
2. What are some of the most difficult things people do in the service of Jesus?

Learning:

3. Food debates occurred regularly in the Early Church: Read Mark 7:19; Romans 14:1-20; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:25; Galatians 2:11-21; 1 Timothy 4:3-5. The Jewish ethnic food restrictions ran very deeply. However it wasn't about food so much as it was about the people you might associate with.
4. A tanner worked with animal carcasses to produce leather. The smells associated with this were nasty. The trade was usually practiced outdoors and near water. It is no coincidence that Simon's home is located "by the sea" (10:6). Even more important for Jews concerned religious purity, Simon may have been ritually unclean because of the nature of his work (Leviticus 11:24, 39)² Peter may have felt he was already 'pushing the envelope'.
5. Saul's conversion recurs three times in Acts. Cornelius' conversion also recurs three times: Acts 10:1-48; 11:1-18; 15:7-11? Cornelius' conversion is three times longer than Paul's. What is so important about this conversion?
6. Read Acts 13:16, 26, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7 and note how the terms of devout and/or God-fearing are important in Acts.
7. Peter sees heaven open and knows it signifies an important communication from God. Check out Ezekiel 1:1; Matthew 3:16; Luke 3:21; John 1:51; Acts 7:56; Revelation 4:1; 19:11.

Applying:

8. What activities are you engaged in that reflect Jesus?
9. Where is God challenging some of your preferences, bias or even prejudice as he works through you to bring others to Himself?

Praying:

10. Pray for people that they would develop spiritual hunger, perhaps like Cornelius and that you would have openness to God's working like Peter.
11. Pray that God would employ you to help meet that spiritual hunger.

Mentoring: God made Peter puzzle and ponder the meaning of the vision. Share a time when God made you do some hard thinking. Why do you suppose He does that? What was the value of the lesson? Where have you had to rethink a previous bias or prejudice?

² Adapted by PT from Pinter, D. (2019). *Acts*. (S. McKnight, Ed.) (p. 244). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.