

The Salvation of the Gentiles, Part 2

Scripture: Acts 10:21–33

Code: 1735

INTRODUCTION

A missionary was officiating at a communion service in Africa. Beside him sat an elder who was an old chief of the Ngoni tribe. His name was ManlyHeart. There were many Ngoni in the congregation. The old chief said that he could remember the days when the young warriors of the Ngoni would bloody their spears at the expense of other tribes. They left trails of burned and devastated towns and bloodied bodies. They left blood on their spears as trophies of their killings. The women were always dragged back with them as booty. The missionary recounted that the two tribes the Ngoni were forever fighting were the Senga and the Tumbuka. But gathered about the communion table of the Lord Jesus were the Ngoni, the Senga, and the Tumbuka. Once busily shedding each others' blood, they were now one because of the blood of Jesus Christ. They gathered not to fight, but to share their love. By the grace of God, all the barriers between the tribes had been broken down. The walls of hatred that had been built between those people were now crushed by love.

A. The Problem of Disunity

The carnal pride that existed in the early days of the church had warped the outreach of the Jew toward the Gentile. Prior to the church, the Jewish standard for interaction with Gentiles was zero. No Jew was to have anything to do with Gentiles. The problem of isolation from the Gentiles existed not only in the early church, but in Judaism as well. The Jews were especially proud of the law and their adherence to it. They stood firmly on that ground. In Romans 2:17-29 Paul essentially says, "The Jew thinks he is saved because of his nationality and his possession of the law." They considered the Gentiles to be pagans; they had nothing but contempt for them. The years had only widened the gulf. Even with the birth of the church, it was very difficult for the first Christians (who were all Jews) to reach out to the Gentiles. That demanded special preparation from God. The exclusiveness that God had designed for Israel for the purpose of holiness had become perverted and developed into a matter of pride.

The Jews hated the Gentiles, and the Gentiles hated the Jews. Some Jews said that the Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell. If a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, a funeral was held by his family. In return, the Gentiles looked on Jews as slave material; they persecuted, oppressed, and killed them. The Gentiles commonly said that the Jews were enemies of the human race. The contempt of the Gentile for the Jew is illustrated by Pilate's dripping sarcasm when he said, "Am I a Jew?..." (Jn. 18:35). You can sense the same sting of Gentile hate in the owners of the slave girl who was possessed by a spirit of divination (Ac. 16:16). When Paul and Silas came to Philippi and cast the demon out of her, her owners said, "... These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city" (v. 20). There was great hatred among the Gentiles for the Jews, as if they didn't even belong in the framework of humanity.

This deep disunity had existed long enough to present a real problem to the church. The Spirit of

God had to shatter that kind of attitude before He could weld the church together into one body.

B. The Purpose of Unity

1. THE THEORY

The Apostle Paul gives the theory of unity in the church in Ephesians 2:11-15: "Wherefore, remember that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For He [Christ] is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us ... to make in Himself of two one new man"

The idea breaking down the middle wall of partition was very vivid to the Jew. The Temple was composed of a series of courts. The largest court circled the perimeter of the Temple and the other courts got smaller in size as they moved toward the center. Only certain people could go into certain courts. Theoretically, the closer the people were to God by nationality or priesthood, the closer they could get to the center. For example, the Court of the Gentiles was the outermost court, and that was as far as Gentiles could go. The next court was the Court of the Women that was far as women could go. Then came the Court of the Israelites that was far as the Jewish men could enter. Then came the Court of the Priests, followed by the Holy Place and then the Holy of Holies. The Gentiles were on the outside. Paul is saying, "Jesus Christ has smashed the wall that always separated the Gentile from the Jew in the Temple." In fact, when Christ died, He leveled the whole Temple in a spiritual sense and left the Holy of Holies standing free and clear. Every man can now enter directly into the Holy of Holies. That's why the writer of Hebrews says, "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace ..." (Heb. 4:16). The veil has been torn in two (Mt. 27:51). The wall between Jew and Gentile came crashing down, and they were free to mingle in the grace of God.

Paul knew about that wall. In Acts 21 Paul was arrested in Jerusalem. But that arrest, which led to Paul's final imprisonment, was based on the accusation that he had brought Trophimus, an Ephesian Gentile, beyond the wall of the Court of the Gentiles (vv. 27-29). When Paul wrote that Christ broke down the middle wall of partition, any Jew, or any Gentile who had been in Jerusalem, would completely understand what he was saying.

2. THE HISTORY

God designed the body of Christ to tear down all the barriers and bring about unity. The theory of that design is found in Ephesians 2; the actual history of it is found in Acts 10. Both theology and history accommodate one another. In Acts 10 God directs the momentous historical event when the church extends itself from the Jews and the halfbreed Samaritans to encompass the Gentiles. That is the final phase in the expansion of the church. However, this was not only the day that the Gentiles were added to the church, but also the day that Cornelius was saved. As we look at the history of the event, we will see the sequence of salvation as illustrated by the life of Cornelius. I believe this is a general pattern of how salvation occurs for anyone. That is typical of Scripture. Like a diamond, it has different facets whenever you see one part clearly, you discover another one. Acts 10 records not only history, but also timeless principles that apply to today. The first part of the sequence is a ...

I. SOVEREIGN CALL (vv. 120; see pp. xxxx)

God is sovereignly active in salvation. It is initiated by Him. Men don't say, "I've found that there's a God somewhere; I think I'll believe." God is sovereign in salvation. We saw that God chose Cornelius (the receiver), and He chose Peter (the messenger). God not only chooses who will be saved, but also chooses how he will be saved. He chooses the vehicles. God doesn't do His choosing apart from man's will but in conjunction with it. That is how salvation begins.

A. The Preparation of Cornelius (vv. 18; see pp. xxxx)

Cornelius turned his heart toward God, who then moved to stir Cornelius's heart. Cornelius began to search for Him because his heart had been turned toward Him. God then moved into Cornelius's life and gave him a vision that explained where he could get the information he needed. Cornelius lived up to the light he had, and God gave him more light. He even gave Cornelius the opportunity to exercise his faith by being obedient. God never does anything for man apart from his faithful response. Cornelius had to respond to God.

B. The Preparation of Peter (vv. 920; see pp. xxxx)

God had to make Peter a stubborn, tradition-bound nationalist able to open his heart to a Gentile. God sovereignly chose Peter because he was available. But God had to prepare him, so He gave him a vision. That vision broke down Peter's prejudices and prepared the way for his meeting with the Gentiles. But Peter had to have active faith, too. God's sovereign timing brought Peter and Cornelius's men together at a crucial moment. Peter's vision had just ended when the men arrived. There was no way that meeting could have happened by chance.

God: the Initiator of Salvation

1. ISAIAH 65:24 "And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer" Before Cornelius knew what he was looking for, God was giving it to him. Verse 24 continues, "... and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

2. ACTS 16:14 "And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened" The only power in the universe that can crack the sinful heart of man is God's sovereign power. The man lost in sin cannot open his heart to God by his own power.

3. LUKE 24:45 "Then opened He [Christ] their [the disciples'] understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." The comprehension of spiritual truth is sovereignly ordained by God.

4. JOHN 6:45 "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." Jesus was saying, "The only people who ever come to Me are those whom God has sovereignly taught." Salvation has to be of

God because the unenlightened natural man cannot grasp the truth of God. That makes grace all the more glorious. I once wandered in all my stupidity and sin, but God designed to teach me the truth. I praise Him for that!

5. EPHESIANS 2:4-10 All the vileness of sin in verses 1-3 is contrasted with these words: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive ..." (vv. 4-5). God moved in and gave us life. Don't ever think a person can be saved because he is intelligent enough. Verses 6-7 say, "And [He] hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." You say, "We haven't done anything yet. Don't we need to have faith?" Yes. Verses 8-10 say, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship [masterpiece], created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." God is sovereign in salvation.

6. 2 CORINTHIANS 4:4-6 "... the god of this age hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

7. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13 "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols Wherefore, I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." We can't say anything, know anything, or be anything apart from God.

II. SUBMISSIVE WILL (vv. 21-33)

The sovereign call is not the opposite of submissive will; they fit together in God's mind. Both Peter and Cornelius responded by activating their wills and immediately obeying the sovereign will of God.

A. The Validation of True Faith

1. THE PRINCIPLE

A man must use his own will to respond to God. That is where human responsibility enters into salvation. God requires obedience. He requires an act of faith, which involves obedience. That is true at salvation, and it is true throughout the rest of your Christian life. You're saved by faith and you walk by faith. God expects continual obedience.

a. In the Gospel of John

A theme in the Gospel of John is that obedience validates true faith. It's like the recurring theme in a symphony you hear it again and again. For example:

1) John 8:30³¹"... many believed on Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples in deed [Gk. al[^]ethos = `for real']." Believing is valid only if it follows in obedience. The devils believe and tremble (Js. 2:19); true Christians believe and obey.

2) John 14:15"If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

3) John 14:21"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me"

4) John 14:23"... If a man love Me, he will keep My words"

5) John 15:10"If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love"

6) John 15:14"Ye are My friends, if ye do whatever I command you." Obedience must be the response.

b. In the Epistle of 1 John

1) 1 John 2:4"He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar" True faith is obedient.

2) 1 John 2:19"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Continued obedience will occur where faith is legitimate.

c. In the Epistle of James

James discusses the same thing in James 1. And in James 2:18²⁰ he says that faith without works is dead.

d. In the Gospel of Matthew

Matthew 7:21 says, "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father" Apart from willful obedience to Christ, there is no valid faith.

2. THE PARABLE

To teach the principle that God desires obedience, our Lord gave the following parable in Matthew 21: "But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said the same. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not. Which of the two did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you that the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (vv. 28³¹). The Pharisees were saying yes to God but never followed through. The harlots might have been saying no at first, but God was changing their life and they started doing His will. It's not the talkers

but the doers who legitimize faith. Salvation doesn't allow for you to be passive; there's an active part that your will must play, and that's willing obedience. Discipleship is obedience. Paul referred to himself as a bondsman. What one word characterizes the life of a slave? Obedience. A slave has no will of his own; he simply obeys his master's will.

3. THE PRICE

Luke 9:23 says, "And He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." That's submission. Jesus doesn't say, "If any man come after Me, let him stand around until God saves him." You need to be willing to make a commitment to move out.

a. Excuse #1

Luke 9:57-58 says, "And it came to pass that, as they went on the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow Thee wherever Thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." In other words, "There's not too much in it for you." The silence that followed Jesus' statement indicates that the man left. He wasn't interested in anything that had the prospect for a homeless future.

b. Excuse #2

Verse 59 says, "And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." You say, "What's wrong with that?" His father wasn't dead; he wanted to get his inheritance first. Verse 60 says, "Jesus said unto him, Let the [spiritually] dead bury their [physical] dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." The indication from the silence is that this man also left.

c. Excuse #3

Verses 61-62 say, "And another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, who are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Jesus knew the character of those men: They were fairweather followers who wanted to be in the Kingdom to get the benefits. Their faith wasn't real. Legitimate faith will immediately make the necessary sacrifices. In the cases of both Cornelius and Peter, their action was immediate. Salvation is a willing commitment to the lordship of Christ. There should be obedience no matter what the cost. You don't need to go home and collect your inheritance. You don't need to make sure that you benefit from your involvement in the Kingdom. And you don't need to make sure that you've set everything in order at home. You just need to obediently follow Christ. Cornelius was ready. When God moved, he responded immediately.

B. The Visibility of True Faith

1. THE ENLISTMENT (vv. 21-23a)

a. The Readiness of Peter (v. 21)

"Then Peter went down to the men who were sent unto him from Cornelius, and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek. What is the cause for which ye are come?"

Peter was ready. He had received the vision informing him that mixing clean and unclean animals was no longer a problem. Jew and Gentile were now one in the mind of God. Immediately Peter faces three Gentiles. Prior to this incident, any confrontation with Gentiles would have caused great trauma in him. It is very likely that he would have fought to make sure that they didn't cross the threshold.

b. The Righteousness of Cornelius (v. 22)

1) He Feared God (v. 22a)

"And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a righteous man, and one that feareth God ..."

A Godfearer was a class of Gentile to the Jews. They classified Gentiles into three groups: one, those who were not interested in the God of Israel; two, those who had become proselytes to Judaism; and three, those who were attracted to the God of Israel. The last group were not proselytes because they had not been circumcised. They were called "Godfearers." That's what Cornelius was. He saw the God of Israel as the true God. He had lived up to as much information about Him as he had been given. He was righteous in the sense that his deeds were honest, good, and sincere. He sought to know God.

2) He Befriended the Jews (v. 22b)

"... and of good report among all the nation of the Jews ..."

Even the Jews thought highly of Cornelius, which indicates much concerning his relationship to Judaism. He must have been involved in it since the Jews regarded him as an outstanding Gentile.

3) He Desired More Information (v. 22c)

"... was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee."

Cornelius was searching for more light. And whenever a man wants more light, God gives it to him. John 7:17 says, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" Cornelius wanted more information, so God gave it to him. He sent an angel with a message for him to go find Peter and hear what he had to say.

c. The Reception of Peter (v. 23a)

"Then called he them in, and lodged them...."

God didn't say, "Peter, you've got to lodge the Gentiles." The fact that Peter did lodge them shows that the barrier was coming down. No self-respecting Jew would have done that. It was never done for Gentiles, and least of all for a Roman soldier. But Peter invited them into the house. The word "lodged" is *exenisen* in the Greek text. It means, "to entertain as guests." The same word is used in Hebrews 13:2: "... some have entertained angels unawares." Be careful how you treat people because some have entertained angels without knowing it. Peter rolled out the red carpet for his Gentile guests. That must have been a great experience for them to be received by a Jew like that. God hadn't even told Peter to do that. When Peter invited them in, he showed that the wall had come down. But he had already demonstrated that to some extent because he was living in the house of Simon the tanner, who practiced a trade that was despised by the Jewish people.

2. THE EYEWITNESSES (v. 23b)

"... And on the next day Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him."

The fact that certain brethren from Joppa accompanied Peter is amazing for two reasons: First, that meant that Jews traveled with these Gentiles; and second, the presence of those brethren would become pivotal to what was going to happen.

a. They Were Strategic

Now God didn't say, "Peter, take certain of the brethren with you"; He just told him to go. Peter took them without any direct command from God, yet their presence in the house of Cornelius was the key to everything that happened. According to Acts 11:12 there were six orthodox Jewish Christians present. Acts 10:45 says that they were of the circumcision. These men became the key ingredient in unifying Jew and Gentile. God not only led Peter through the direct communication of the vision, but also led him through Peter's own desires and ideas. God didn't say, "Peter, take these six men." You say, "Did Peter want to take them along?" Of course he did, but where do you think he got that desire? God gave it to him because He knew it was crucial to have them present when Cornelius was saved.

The Desires of Your Heart

God doesn't work in the life of a believer through voices and visions anymore; He leads us through our desires. We see that in the case of Peter. It was just as important to have the six Jews present when Cornelius was saved as it was for Peter to see the vision. One thing was communicated by God directly, but the other one was communicated by God indirectly through His Holy Spirit. It was critical that those Jewish Christians go with Peter, but there was never any command given about that.

God works in us the same way today. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." God is working to cause me to fulfill His good pleasure. How many times have you made what seemed to be a very insignificant plan, but when you carried it out, found that it was a tremendously significant event with eternal results? For example, suppose you

met someone who didn't know Christ, and were able to lead him to Christ. The course of that man's history was changed. Suppose you plan an outing, but the car broke down so that you couldn't go. Then the neighbor shows up at your door and is desperate. So you lead him to Christ. How many times has God not only established our desires, but also arranged the circumstances to accommodate them? Today He leads the available Christian through his desire and will, not through visions. As God acts on our wills, we respond. The will of God is not given to us in some ecstatic way; He orders our desires. The psalmist said, "Delight thyself ... in the +LORD, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Ps. 37:4). He will not only fulfill your desires, but also give them to you to start with. Peter had the desire to take along some Jewish Christians. He may have had no reason for taking them, but all the time he was working out the will of God through his desires.

People will say to me, "John, why did you come to Grace Church?" I say, "Because I wanted to." One man said to me, "You mean you didn't pray and beseech God to go? Don't you think that's selfish?" I said, "I trust that God gave me the desire." I believe that's how God works if you're the right vessel. If your desires are consumed with yourself, then you will have problems filtering out God's desires.

b. They Were Submissive

As the seven Jews meet a houseful of Gentiles, history comes to a monumental moment. Two men come together from two different worlds. They are sovereignly prepared and submissive to God.

1) Cornelius

Cornelius completely believed the only vision he had ever received. What would happen to you if you had a vision? You'd probably say, "I must have eaten something bad." If I had a vision, I probably wouldn't think that I really had one. Cornelius knew that he had a vision. That was a mark of his faith. He was going to completely uproot his life as a result of the only vision he had ever received. He was full of faith and willing to seek help from a Jew.

2) Peter

Scripture doesn't record that Peter received a vision other than this one. He believed what was probably the first one he ever had. And that vision went against everything he had ever been taught in his life, yet he believed it completely and did what it said. I like that kind of submissive spirit. How many times has God moved on the heart of a Christian, but says, "I've never done that, and I don't know that I could"? Peter was willing to accept uncircumcised pagans and travel with them without knowing what was going on. That's how available he was.

3. THE ENCOUNTER (vv. 2433)

a. Ignorant Worship (vv. 2426)

1) Cornelius's Eagerness (vv. 2425)

"And the next day after, they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called

together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshiped him."

I like Cornelius's eagerness those four days must have seemed like eons as he waited for this meeting to come about. When Peter arrived, Cornelius left his house and fell on his knees worshipping Peter. Imagine, a Roman centurion worshipping a Jewish fisherman!

2) Peter's Elusiveness (v. 26)

"But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man."

Peter is saying, "Don't worship me!" It was wrong to worship Peter, for He was only a man. He stopped Cornelius's worship at the very start. No Christian is ever to be worshiped. In Acts 14:12-14 the people of Lystra began to worship Paul and Barnabas, thinking they were the gods Jupiter and Mercury. In verse 15 Paul said, "... why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you" Isaiah 42:8 says, "I am the +LORD: that is My name; and My glory will I not give to another" The only One in the Bible who ever accepts worship is God. There's only One in the New Testament who ever accepts worship, and He is Jesus Christ. Then who is Jesus? God. Peter didn't want worship from anyone.

b. Important Friends (v. 27)

"And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together."

Cornelius had brought a group of people together, too. No one told Cornelius to assemble them. God didn't say, "Cornelius, make sure you have many Gentiles present." God worked through the desires of Cornelius just as he had through Peter's desires. The other Gentiles were there because it was important for more than one Gentile to get saved. Can you imagine Peter going before the council in Jerusalem saying, "A Gentile was saved." The council might think he was only an exception. It was very important that many Gentiles were present when the Spirit of God descended so that this incident couldn't be labeled as an exception. The leaders of the early church would have to see that this was the pattern. God didn't tell Cornelius to bring the additional Gentiles, but He worked through his desires.

c. Improved Understanding (v. 28)

"And he [Peter] said unto them, Ye know that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean."

Peter was saying, "I not only understand that the dietary laws have ended, but also that the separation between Jew and Gentile has ended." The word "unlawful" is *athemitos* in the Greek text. It means "taboo." The Old Testament ceremonial law didn't say that it was unlawful for Jews to keep company with Gentiles; the rabbis added that. The rabbis said that going into a Gentile home resulted in a seven-day defilement. The only seven-day defilement that is referred to in the Old Testament came as the result of contacting a dead body. Many Jews believed that Gentiles put aborted children down the drain. As a result, they thought that any contact with a Gentile home

resulted in a seven-day defilement. Since such a defilement was so serious, Jews would not enter into Gentile homes. Interestingly, all the people gathered at the crucifixion of Christ wouldn't go into Pilate's house; they stayed outside so they wouldn't be defiled (Jn. 18:28). Can you imagine that! They could kill their Messiah, yet they worried about becoming defiled by going into Pilate's house! But Peter was no longer burdened by those defilements. He marched right into Cornelius's house without any problem.

d. Immediate Obedience (vv. 29-33)

1) By Peter (v. 29)

"Therefore came I unto you without objection, as soon as I was sent for. I ask, therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me?"

I like the fact that Peter came right away. Psalm 119:60 says, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." Are you in a hurry to obey God? Are you not able to wait until you get the next order from Him? That's the spirit of obedience. Those who have the spirit of obedience say, "Lord, I'm waiting. Where's the information I need? I've got to get started!" The spirit of obedience is the same as spiritual maturity; one is eager to do what God wants. Spiritual immaturity is just the opposite.

2) By Cornelius (vv. 30-33)

"And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send, therefore, to Joppa, and call here Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon, a tanner, by the seaside; who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately, therefore, I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now, therefore, are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

Cornelius had gathered all his family to hear Peter. A man's salvation is no accident. God orders the whole sequence, but a man's submissive will must be involved. Where do you see the submission of Cornelius? It is found in the word "immediately." His will was ready. The first two things that are necessary in salvation are a sovereign call and a submissive will.

In verse 33 Cornelius says, "... we all are here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." He is saying, "Peter, give us everything!" Have you ever had an audience like that? What an opportunity for evangelism! Peter was used to fighting for the opportunity in Jerusalem. All those open hearts must have taken him by surprise.

We have seen how God works in salvation, but we have also seen that He demands submission of the will in man. Those two aspects come together in the miracle we know as the new birth.

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1. What were the Jews especially proud of? (see p. 1)
2. Describe the mutual contempt that the Gentiles and the Jews had for each other. (see pp. 12)
3. Describe the theory of unity that Paul proposed in Ephesians 2:11-15. (see p. 2)
4. Describe the various courts that made up the Temple. What was the middle wall of partition? Why is it significant that Paul says that Christ broke it down? (Eph. 2:15; see p. 2)
5. Explain some verses that show that God is the initiator of salvation. (see pp. 45)
6. At what point does human responsibility enter into salvation? What does God require? (see p. 5)
7. Cite and explain verses showing that obedience validates true faith. (see pp. 56)
8. Why did Jesus mean when he told the Pharisees that tax collectors and harlots would enter into the Kingdom of heaven before them? (Mt. 21:31; see p. 6)
9. What were the excuses that three men offered to Jesus for not following Him in Luke 9:57-62? What did that reveal about their character? (see p. 7)
10. In what sense was Cornelius righteous? (Ac. 10:22; see p. 8)
11. What is significant about the fact that Peter lodged the three Gentiles sent from Cornelius? (Ac. 10:23; see pp. 89)
12. For what two reasons did the "certain brethren from Joppa" accompany Peter to Cornelius's house? (Ac. 10:23; see p. 9)
13. Describe how God works in Christians today. (Ps. 37:4; see p. 10)
14. What was significant about the visions that Cornelius and Peter received? What was significant about their response? (see pp. 10-11)
15. Who alone deserves worship? Explain. (Is. 42:8; see p. 11)
16. What did God do through Cornelius's desires? Why was what He did important? (Ac. 10:27; see pp. 11-12)
17. In what ways do both Peter and Cornelius reflect immediate obedience to God? (Ac. 10:29-33; see pp. 12-13)

+ponder

1. Look up the following verses: John 8:30-31; 14:21; 15:14; 1 John 2:4. Are you validating your faith by obedience, or do your actions raise questions about your faith? On a scale of 1-10, rate your obedience to the commands that God has given in Scripture. When you know you haven't been obedient to God, what has been your response? Do you confess your disobedience as sin? If there are some areas where you have been disobedient but have not yet confessed them as sin, do so now. Ask God to give you a greater sensitivity to times when you are disobedient, and a greater desire to obey Him in everything.

2. Read Luke 9:23. What three commands does Christ give to would-be followers? In what ways have you been faithful to obey those commands? What areas of your life have you not turned over to Christ? Plan some practical methods for turning over those areas of your life to Christ. Be faithful to pursue that goal.

3. When you are sure that a command of God applies to a situation you are in, how quick are you to obey it? How quick are you to obey when you know that Scripture clearly forbids you from doing something that you like to do? Why do you think that God wants immediate obedience from you? Why do you want immediate obedience from your children when you command them to do something? Think through your responses to God's commands. Commit yourself to get in the habit of immediately obeying God's commands.

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