

## August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – ACTS – Chapter 10

Toady, we are starting in **Chapter 10**, its my favorite story in ACTS, it does not mean that because its my favorite is that it's the best story in ACTS, but because of my life lived so far and the way I see the world, there are elements of this story where I admire the characters and in the end, there is something that is deeply personal to me that plays out that I would like to share with you all, at the end of the message. BUT! I want to encourage you in how I read my bible, is to read through a chunk of scripture, sit on it, and then come back to it and see what I missed. So lets try that this morning and go ahead and grab your bibles if you have it here, or go on your phone, and if you don't have that, you can follow on the screens. I will be reading out of the ESV translation and we after we will start to unpack what we read.

1 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, 2 a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. 3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." 4 And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. 6 He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." 7 When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, 8 and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. 10 And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance 11 and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." 15 And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." 16 This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

17 Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate 18 and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. 19 And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. 20 Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." 21 And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" 22 And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." 23 So he invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." 27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. 28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any

person common or unclean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.”

30 And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing 31 and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ 33 So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.” 34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

Amazing eh!! I love this story, so lets go and explore what all took place in this chapter, ACTS 10 is the story of 2 men who are living far apart, from very different walks in life, and God bringing them together to do something incredible! Lets start in the beginning here... **Who is Cornelius?** In verse 2 we see that **Cornelius is a Centurion**. Now a Centurion was someone in charge of 100 soldiers, and we can see that he was part of the Italian Cohort, which would be part of a Roman legion that would consist of 6000 men and 60 Centurions all together. I find it interesting that most Centurions are cast in a positive light in the new testament... For example another famous Centurion is the one in Luke 7 where he comes and asks Jesus to heal his servant, not a family member, but one under his command and even when Jesus offered to go, the centurion said, just speak the word and he will be healed, and how Jesus replied “**I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.**” So not sure if Luke had a good reputation with them, but just something that I find interesting. But looking on, Cornelius was a devout man who feared God with his household. Again, he knew that there is a God out there that requires our worship and admiration and I really like the detail that Luke included here that it was not just Cornelius who kept this to himself, but he also included his entire household. Next we see that he gave generously to the people in need. And this was not just by his word, but this was something that even the Jews noticed and praise his actions in verse 22. Think about that, these are the people who would not sit down and eat with you because you are evil and have nothing in common. This is not a simple Coke vs Pepsi rival or Bombers vs

Riders or even Conservative vs Liberal. They come from vastly different walks and the opposition gives him praise for his deeds! Makes you think, what kind of man was he? Lastly, but certainly not least, he prayed continually to God! AND this is where it all starts to make sense. He lived a life of prayer, not just sometimes, but verse 2 says continually praying, so he had a comprehension of God, and how to walk in righteousness, but he did not have a full awareness yet of the faith. And looking at all these, I would say this man is an AMAZINGLY good, man! He has a good soul, he is kind, and even religious.

The problem we have here though people who live “good” lives and do all the “good” things we think that its good enough... But its not good enough! God already established this and we all have sinned and fall short of his Glory, none of us are righteous, not one good person! Romans 7:18 **For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.** Our human nature our flesh is not good. Even as impressive as the description of Cornelius is here, Good enough, is not good enough! This is very dangerous thinking when we believe we are good enough and even more so when we are currently in a culture that is blaring from the rooftops that we are good enough, that the only thing that matters is that I am enough. Let me explain, when we believe that we are good enough, then why do we need God? I do not need God, I am good enough! BUT If you believe that good enough is good enough, then what is good enough to be good enough. How do you know that its good enough? What do you measure it against? And that’s the problem! Now we all here know that only God is Good! Mark 10:18 **And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.** Doing good things will not get you to heaven. Contrary to popular belief, Christianity is not a performance based religion, it’s a grace based relationship with our God! It is based on the grace of what Jesus did on the cross already for me!

On the flip side, some of us have the opposite problem, where I wish I was like Cornelius where I have the issues of struggling with good enough, but I am so bad. I have done terrible things, if you would only know of all the bad things I have done in my life you would run away. Let me tell you some good news! Bad enough is not bad enough... I know its not proper English, but I am from South Africa and a pastor so its double bad enough for me! Bad enough is not bad enough, not a single person in here this morning is bad enough! Romans 8:38-39 **For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.** You are not bad enough, nothing you do can take you away from Jesus love, just like nothing we do can get us into heaven, its by Grace alone! Our salvation is in Christ Alone, and that’s the key here with Cornelius, does not matter how good he was or how bad he was, salvation is only found in Christ Alone! Ephesians 2:8-9 **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.** Do not fall into the enemies lie to think that being good is good enough or that you are bad enough not to receive salvation... Either way, God calls us to himself and pursue Jesus above all, WHY, because our salvation is in Christ alone!! He is our cornerstone, our salvation is not found in just our deeds, or in our marriage, or in our social status, but found in the one who can deliver us and rescue us, but more importantly as we see in John 14:6 **Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”** Again in this description of Cornelius, I would say he looks like a incredible man of faith, but its not good enough... How do we know this, because God sent an Angel to him telling him that, saying, you are missing a big piece, go get Peter, he will fill you in. Which brings me to another point... Maybe this is just me, but I wonder, why did the Angel just not simply tell Cornelius all he need to know? I mean

he was there, and he gave clear enough instruction on where to find Peter, why not simple share the Good News there? Do you know why?? Because this is a tale of not one conversion that is needed, but 2 conversions that are needed. See this is as much about Peter getting a heart change as well as Cornelius. Don't many of us sometimes say, Lord, can you just send an Angel and tell me what to do, or send an Angel to Uncle Bob to minister to him because he is so difficult? Well, let me respond with saying that perhaps God has leader laid it on your heart to go minister to Uncle Bob and in the same time do something in your heart as well, not just his!! Here we see, God sent an Angel to help Cornilius, but now God has to start the work in Peter's heart as well. So what happened?

**Let's take a look at Peter who is a Jew.** Why does it matter that he is a Jew and Cornelius is a Gentile, why the big fuss? See in the beginning God used Abraham to start a new nation that was set apart from all other nations called the Jews, and everyone else are Gentiles (someone who is not a Jew). Very simple eh, Jews, are God's chosen people, and the Gentiles are everyone else... The Jews are God's chosen people to reveal God to the rest of the world and ultimately the Messiah who would save the world from sins. The difference their cultures are vast, and not only what they believe in religion, but in how they would dress, eat, washed, bathed, art, academics, language and many social customs including how they would build their houses. SO Gentiles were completely removed from the Jews... What makes Acts 10 so amazing is that we get to witness the first Gentile conversion in scripture without that Gentile becoming a Jew... It was inconceivable to Peter for a Gentile to receive the Holy Spirit, because they are unclean. So lets review, Peter is praying on the roof, and its not like our roofs today here in Manitoba, they had flat roofs which was an extension of the house, they would use it for various different things and Peter was praying there at the 6<sup>th</sup> hour or noon hour. Now I say that, because this is not the typical time for the Jews to pray, Jews would practice and pray twice a day but we see Peter and other people in the bible like Daniel pray 3 times, so Peter is praying above and beyond of what it normally required. Not only that, he is doing it over lunch. Now this passage has given me much comfort over the years because we get a glimpse into Peter's life, not to only view him as this amazing apostle, but also that he is human! Look here again at verse 9 **The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. 10 And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance.** Honestly, to anyone here who has fasted and prayed, this reminds me that I am not the only one to fall into a trance like state thinking about food while I am praying, and the cool thing is, God totally used it!!

One time, this is when Gideon was still a baby and we had our January Prayer and Fasting, and during that time as with a lot of babies we did not sleep well, and we where in the prayer room doing staff prayer, there was an hour left and me and Joel W sat in the back cubicles. I sat there discouraged, because I was hungry, tired, and about to fall asleep with an hour to go. I remember sitting there thinking, Lord give me strength, and as I said it I heard people getting up and leaving. I look up, and Joel says, dude, you where praying intently, you did not budge this last hour... and coincidently, I felt a lot better, but I was so confused on where the hour went... Well, I slept for an hour and I felt refreshed, so God answered my prayer as I was resting in the spirit! But this is what I love about our Bibles and what I love about the Lord, He meets us where we are at in our frail and weak moments amen!

Now, God used food to help Peter when he was hungry to start changing his heart. God met him where he was at... HUNGRY! This sheet was lowered at the four corners, maybe God told four angels to each grab a corner and said we are going to do this at least 3 times, its Peter we are dealing with here, once isn't going to cut it! So this sheet was filled with animals that we Jews are prohibited from eating to this

day. So we do not know what animals are all in there, but I am guessing some pigs and shellfish were probably in there among others and in verse 13 we can pick it up again **And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."** 14 But Peter said, **"By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean."** 15 And the voice came to him again a second time, **"What God has made clean, do not call common."** This happened 3 times! 3 Times God used Peter's own words of common or unclean to reverse it to saying "what God has made clean, do not call common. This is actually not new to them, Jesus said this already in Mark 7:18-19 And I love how honest this verse starts **"Are you so dull?" he (Jesus) asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? 19 For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body."** Here Jesus declared all food is good!! AMEN!! Pulled pork and bacon is good!! So a lot of what Jesus already taught them, is now starting to and finally becoming to take root in their hearts! Just took a little while, just like us when we don't get it the first time right! Again, why is this that the Jews had these laws in the first place? Well, its simple, God wanted his nation the Jews would be separate from all the other pagan nations and that the message they gave was distinct and unique like their lifestyle that there is only one true God! The old Testament laws can we grouped into 3 groups, dietary law, ceremonial law and the moral law. The moral law is and always will be intact, and we are upholding that moral law even today, especially in our times today. But the dietary and ceremonial laws have been fulfilled in Christ Jesus with His death and resurrection. We see this in Colossians 2:16-17 **Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.** So we can see that God used these in the past, but today, we uphold the moral law still through Christ and the Holy Spirit. So a lot of you have heard this, and we learn this in Sunday School, but remember, this was NEW territory for Peter he has practiced and done these things all his life and now God is challenging him and probably connecting the dots for him... I wonder if Peter was reflecting on how Jesus said *"remember, its not what you put in your body that makes us holy... RRRRIIGHT..."* So in this hunger vision God is telling Peter that the Gentiles are not some outcasts, they are not to be abandoned, but Jesus came to die for both the Jews and the Gentiles. Salvation in Christ for ALL People! Do not call the Gentiles unclean or common. There was another hint I wonder if it fell into place for Peter where Jesus laid the ground work in **John 10:16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.** Again, this is just me reading this, but I wonder when Jesus was speaking this, if he sat close to Peter and winked, or looked at him, Peter, listen, listen to what I am about to say, it might not makes sense now, but it will!! Salvation in Christ for ALL people, just not the Jews.

I realize that we have hindsight, and we have the luxury of scripture, but its easy to look at this and go, come on Peter, its so obvious, just go to the Gentiles, why is it so hard? Did you know that we struggle with this very same thing today? We DO! See, it was a lot easier for Peter to remain with his people, the Jews, because its his people, they know each other, they get along, just like we do here when we have a clique, when we have a group of people we are comfortable with. Its hard to go and be loving to others when we already have our people right!! I am guilty of this too!! When I go to the café, I look for people I know and I go join them, nothing wrong with it, but if I do it all the time and I never take the moment to reach out to others, I am guilty just like Peter was. For us as Christians we are tasked to complete the great command and great commission, and to love the people around us! What better place than right here at church to practice that, when we see people that are alone, go out and extend a welcoming hand, be the light!! Maybe we can even expand on that and ask, what about the Gentiles in your life

that are hard to love, if not you? WHO? You might pray that an Angel will reach them, but we saw here that God loves using his kids to show His love and in so doing grow us too right!

Lets move on, Peter arrives at Cornelius house... Now, imagine with me a bit here, Cornelius must have been on pins and needles waiting for Peter to arrive. I mean, who is this man who has an Angel announcing to go and get him!? So its no doubt when Peter walks in that Cornelius falls to the ground to worship him as we see in verse 25, but I want to bring your attention to verse 26 where Peter says **“Stand up; I too am a man.”** Church I think this is a cautionary tale for all of us not just for today, but it also happened back in Acts is where its so easy for us to worship other people or we put them before God. We listen to other people more than we listen to God! Remember, We have direct access to God through Jesus where we can receive a word from Him, the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2) People are not the authors or perfectors of our faith! They can be tools and instruments that God use, but just remember, and this goes doubly for me, as God’s instrument, I can be out of tune, and I am still working on that too, so when I am talking I am but one interpretation, and I am out of tune yet... Go and listen to the amazing orchestra that is found in scripture and in your prayer life!

OK, how did we get here? How did this Jew and Gentile meet up? Is there something in common that they both shared that brought them here to this point where they met? God Yes, but it was PRAYER! In the beginning of the chapter in verses 2 and 9 we see that they where both praying when the Angel appeared to Cornelius and the Sheet to Peter. Not everything is about prayer, but we can see here in Chapter 10 that this ordained meeting came out of prayer. Its during these prayer times were they where seeking God’s face that they received there direction. Now I understand that we do not always know what to pray or even how to pray right? BUT Jesus in His grace shows us how: Matthew 6:9-13 **“This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”** Now I would love to go into and pull this apart, but we do not have the time, let me just say that when you get stuck, come to Matthew 6 and take it one sections at a time, divide it up and start praying through there... Let me show you and we will only look at the first few words here, because even how the prayer starts have huge implementation on Acts 10 and in our lives. Lets read that first part again, **Our Father in heaven. OUR FATHER.** Wait, how can we who are from different nations, different tongues, different cultures, Jews and Gentiles all start this prayer with Our Father in heaven? HOW is this possible? Thanks to the Holy Spirit and the obedience of Peter and Cornelius, this is only possible through us being adopted into God’s Kingdom! Romans 8:14-17 says: **For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.** We ALL here this morning, Jew or Gentile, we all get to cry out Abba Father, we all get to pray Our Father in Heaven, because we have been led by the Holy Spirit to receive adoption into God’s Kingdom.

AND this is what I talked about when we started the message, this is my lenses I see scripture through and because we have adopted kids, reading ACTS 10 makes me think very early on, what an amazing story of Adoption where God calls any one to be part of His family! Let me explain... Adoption is the legal process by which a person gives the status of a son or daughter to another person who is not his or her

child by birth. The New Testament uses the term to describe the act by which God makes people who believe His children through the atoning death and resurrection of his one and only true Son, Jesus. Which our world needs so badly, because WE are in a broken world, and that is why we need adoption here with earthly families and adoption into God's Kingdom. The story of Cornelius to me at least is a beautiful story of Adoption and how people who are lost and on the outside are invited in. What a beautiful image! But unfortunately, adoption is not only beautiful, its also very tragic, and its tragic because of the broken world we life in.... Families go through terrible crisis or bad things happen to them where kids are either left alone or abandoned, and then there is something like adoption to come and connect them with a family. And here is the thing, adoption is not an after thought for God or a plan B for him. Look at Ephesians 1:3-5 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,** We have an inheritance with God and he chose us before the foundation of the World! This is the big difference, being adopted into God's Kingdom gives us an inheritance with God for all eternity in heaven because we are heirs of God. Let me put it into more world terms. When me and Andrea adopted our kids, their last name changed to Gunter! Now one day when we die, they will inherit all me and Andrea own. If a kid who is "good" and comes over to visit us all the time, they will not receive an inheritance from us because they are not part of the family. Adoption into God's kingdom functions in the same way that if we simply come to church or simply do good things, but never accepted adoption into His Kingdom, we do not get the eternal inherence with Him. This is why the Angel was sent to lead Peter to Cornelius, because they were missing that last piece. Now with my kids at home, because they are adopted, guess what, they do not need to come to me everyday day and try and do good deeds to stay adopted with us. They are legally ours, they live with us, now, they do good deeds in our home and to us because they love us, and one day they can choose to walk away from our family and change their names, but because they are now part of us, even if they where not born into it, we are a family and we get to grow together, make mistakes together, and yeah, face some hard moments where we have to deal with the reality that they are not our flesh and blood, but in the end of the day, when we are together in our home, we are still a family and they are our heirs!

I would like to close off with an invitation to you all... Romans 10:12-13 **For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** I do not know how else to close a message like this but I would like to pray for you, and give Him the last word....

Maybe you are here this morning, and you think I am....

1. **good enough**, I do not need anything else, but like Cornelius you need Jesus!
2. **bad enough** that no one wants me, but there is a Savior who is reaching out!
3. **already saved**, but like Peter you **stay in your clique**, you love those who love you, maybe there is a Gentile that God is asking you to go to and love them.