



## "REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

## "RIDING THROUGH"

### THE BOOK OF ACTS - LESSON 10

Acts 10 is an exciting chapter indeed. The salvation of Cornelius and his family was a turning point in the history of the church. Ten years prior, the apostles had been commissioned to go out and spread the Gospel to all the world. They had been through Jerusalem and Judea, and even up into Samaria (Acts 8), but had not yet crossed the barrier into the "Gentile world." In Acts 10, the door is now open to "all the world." Hey, guys, that's you and me! Gentiles are now officially invited to enter the Kingdom of God.

Before you begin, ask the Lord to cleanse your heart and prepare you to receive any correction He might have for you. So often we have preconceived ideas and prejudices that we are unwilling to let go of. This event was certainly an eye-opener for Peter. I pray that, like Peter, our eyes would be open to the truth of God's Word, and that we would be willing to re-evaluate some of our own ideas and beliefs.

#### First Day

1. Read Acts 10 in one sitting. Using two or three sentences, write a statement that summarizes the main point of this chapter. What is the key verse? What are the key words?
2. After reading Acts 10, why was it so important for God to detain Peter in Joppa in Acts 9:43? How was God preparing Peter even then?
3. Read Acts 10:1-8 and verse 22 again. How would you describe Cornelius? What kind of man was he?

4. Where did Cornelius live? (Acts 10:1)
5. What does the word "devout" mean?
6. Who appeared to him, and what was he told to do?
7. What can we tell about Cornelius from his response? (Does he ask any questions? Does he hesitate?)

Caesarea was 30 miles north of Joppa. It had become the administrative capital of Judea under Roman rule. It boasted of many large and beautiful buildings.

Acts 10:1 tells us that Cornelius was a centurion of a Roman Cohort, which is the Greek word for battalion. In Rome, the military was divided into groups of 6,000 men, which were called legions. In every legion, there were ten cohorts, consisting of 600 men. A cohort was then divided into six groups of 100 men, overseen by a centurion. They were called the "master sergeants" of the Roman army. They were considered to be dedicated, disciplined, and brave.

Verse 2 tells us that Cornelius was a God-fearing man. In a previous lesson, we learned that this term described a Gentile that didn't accept the entire Jewish law and circumcision, but had chosen to believe in the God of Israel. Most Romans were polytheistic, meaning that they believed in many gods. Cornelius obviously had been exposed to Jehovah God and was tired of serving the pagan gods that he had been raised with. He was not a true proselyte, so he was not allowed to offer sacrifices in the temple. Instead, he offered God his prayers and gave alms to the people.

8. There are a few other centurions in Scripture that are worth noting. Read the following Scriptures and answer the questions:
  - a. Matthew 8:5-13. What do we learn about this centurion?
  - b. Matthew 27:51-54. What powerful statement does this centurion make?

Centurions were men of authority. Cornelius was a centurion who was searching for the truth. We see the Savior, once again, meeting the searching sinner.

9. Read Proverbs 8:17. How is Cornelius proof of this promise?

I wonder if Cornelius felt sort of like a "fish out of water." On one hand, he was a Roman, but didn't believe in their gods any longer. He believed in the God of Israel, but was not accepted by the Jews either. He was considered a "second-class" citizen.

10. Can you relate to how Cornelius felt? Do you ever feel like you "just don't fit" or like a "nobody"?
11. How does the story of Cornelius remind us that we are all "somebody" in God's eyes?
12. What does Romans 5:8 tell us is the **proof** of God's love for us?
13. What hope do we find in Romans 8:38-39?

How can we ever doubt His love for us? He proved it on the cross. He reveals it to us daily through His Word. We experience it by His grace and mercy. His love is everlasting and unsearchable. Oh, what an amazing love!

Cornelius is another example of a good person who is still not saved. He was a God-fearing, praying man who did many good things. Yet, he was still lost, and he needed the Savior. Our goodness can never be good enough for God. Once more we are reminded that we only have eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

14. How about you? Are you a good person who is depending on your own "goodness" to save you? Read Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 3:23 and then ask yourself that question again.

We end this section with Cornelius taking some of his men with him to travel to Joppa. It's exciting to see God preparing Cornelius for a divine appointment. Tomorrow we see God prepare Peter for that appointment too!

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." Acts 10:35

### Second Day

**Review your memory verse.**

As Cornelius' men were traveling to Joppa, God was at work in Peter, shaking up his theology.

1. Read Acts 10:9-22.
2. What was Peter doing when he received the vision? (Acts 10:9)

The housetops in Israel had flat roofs which were used for privacy, sleeping, or getting a breath of fresh air.

3. Why do you think the Holy Spirit lets us know that Peter was hungry?
4. Describe Peter's vision in your own words. What did he see?
5. What was Peter told to do? (Acts 10:13)
6. What was his response? (Acts 10:14)
7. Why was it so difficult for Peter to understand? Read Leviticus 11:1-31 for your answer.

Jews did not eat food that was considered unclean by their law. Peter couldn't even imagine eating unclean things. We must remember that Peter was brought up a strict Jew and he didn't want to disobey the ritual laws of Israel. Even so, Peter's response was an example of his old nature showing through. This was not the first time Peter said to the Lord, "Not so!"

8. Read these Scriptures and explain why Peter told the Lord "not so."
  - a. Matthew 16:21-23:
  - b. Matthew 26:32-35:
  - c. John 13:6-8:

How often we say "no" to the Lord when He asks us to do something new or something we don't understand. What an interesting contrast we see between Cornelius, who obeys God immediately, and Peter, the great apostle, who hesitates.

9. Have you said "not so," or "I'd never do that," or even "I would never do that" to the Lord? Are you saying it right now?

10. What should be our response? (Luke 5:5)

11. What was Peter told to do in Acts 10:15?

Peter didn't fully understand what God was trying to show him. If we read ahead, we learn that God was using this example as an illustration of how He was breaking down the walls between the Gentiles and the Jews. It is important to remember that the Gentiles were thought of by the Jews as "unclean." They were taught to hate the Gentiles. They wouldn't speak to their women in public, nor would they go into their homes. You were not even allowed to help a Gentile woman give birth because it would bring another Gentile into the world.

**Alfred Edersheim** describes the extent of the inbred prejudice that the Jews held against the Gentiles. "Every child, as soon as born, was to be regarded as unclean. The Mishnah goes so far as to forbid aid to a Gentile mother in the hour of need, or nourishment of her babe, in order to not bring up a child for idolatry. It was not safe to leave cattle in their charge, to allow their women to nurse infants, or their physicians to attend the sick, nor to walk in their company. They and theirs were defiled, their houses unclean, their feasts, their joyous occasions, their very contact was polluted by idolatry. They couldn't be left alone in a room, without security, because they might defile the wine or meat on the table, or the oil or the wheat. They might touch it."

In the vision, Peter refused to eat the contaminated food. This vision pronounced all things clean and was repeated three times to stress its importance. While he was pondering the meaning of the vision, the visitors arrived (Acts 10:17). The Spirit directed him to go without hesitation. God's timing, as always, is perfect.

12. Did the visitors come all the way to the door? (Acts 10:17)

God was already working in Peter's heart, because a Jew would not usually even let a Gentile come in, much less allow him to spend the night (Acts 10:23). Many times God puts our faith to the test after He reveals something to us, or calls us to obey a command. The temptation to disobey is put right under our nose! But Peter passes the test with flying colors!

### 13. What did the men ask Peter to do? (Acts 10:22)

Acts 10:20 says that the men were sent by God. God is responsible for setting up all our divine appointments. This is why walking in the Spirit and asking Him to direct our steps is so vital. We want to walk down His path, in His direction, not ours.

This ends our lesson for today. Did you find a "**Reason to Rejoice**" in today's text? I love the fact that God is in charge of my appointment calendar and I can check in with Him every day!

### Third Day

#### What's your memory verse? What does it mean?

Today we will see how Peter comes to a full understanding of the vision He was given.

#### 1. Read Acts 10:23-33.

Peter and his companions traveled the 30 miles from Joppa to Caesarea to meet Cornelius. I wonder if this was the first time that Peter actually traveled with Gentiles. What was he thinking? Was he amazed that they weren't as bad as he thought? Maybe he kind of liked them!

#### 2. Who was waiting for him when they arrived? (Acts 10:24)

#### 3. What did Cornelius do when he finally met Peter face to face? (Acts 10:25)

#### 4. What was Peter's response? What did this reveal about Peter's character? (Acts 10:26)

#### 5. Define humility:

#### 6. What does Titus 3:2 say about humility? How does it relate to the vision?

Chuck Swindoll shares with us a great definition of humility that was found on the wall of a kid's clubhouse. It read:

**Nobody act big.  
Nobody act small.  
Everybody act medium.**

**Andrew Murray** says about humility, "Humility toward men will be the only sufficient proof that our humility before God is real. We can only humble ourselves when Jesus has taken the place of self."

7. Are you a humble person? Do you like when others put you on a pedestal? Does it make you feel good? If so, ask God to forgive you of pride and teach you humility. (This is something that God will be teaching us the rest of our lives.)

Peter now introduces himself to the group who has eagerly gathered to hear what God has to say to them (Acts 10:33). Peter may have felt a little uncomfortable speaking to this group. He's never shared the Gospel with a room full of Gentiles before. But Peter is very candid with them about his natural hesitations (Acts 10:28).

8. What statement does Peter make in Acts 10:28 that shows us that he finally understood the meaning of the vision?

In Acts 10:30-33, Cornelius now explains the reason he sent for Peter. Cornelius must have been so excited! I picture him sitting at the edge of his chair, leaning forward, eyes wide with anticipation!

9. What does Acts 10:30 say that Cornelius was doing when the angel of God spoke to him?

Verse 31 says that "his alms were remembered." A person's works are never accepted by God as the basis for salvation, but they are accepted as an evidence of his faith. The prayers and alms of Cornelius could not have secured him salvation; the blood of Christ alone could do that. But they were accepted as a token of his faith, and as evidence that when he had more light he would instantly respond to it." (John Phillips, Exploring Acts)

10. Read Ephesians 2:11-22. Answer the questions below:
- a. Describe a person before Christ (Gentile).
  - b. How did He make us near?
  - c. After we receive Christ, what are we considered to be?

11. Read Romans 10:12-13 and 3:22-23. Once we become believers, is there still a difference in God's eyes between the Jew and the Gentile?

God is not a respecter of persons (Galatians 3:26-29). It doesn't matter to God if you are male or female. He isn't concerned with your race, culture, age, or sex. He doesn't even care about how bad your past is, because He wipes it clean anyway!

12. Are you a respecter of persons? Does where people go to church, or how they dress, or how they worship matter to you? Do you treat some people differently than others, depending on who they are?
13. If God gave you a vision of a sheet, filled with people that you didn't particularly like, or care to witness to ... who would be on it? Would it be a family member who you're sure will never change? A neighbor who thinks she's too good for you? A person who has hurt you in the past?

Christ died for everyone on that sheet. God's grace is available for all! In our flesh, we sometimes think that perhaps God shows too much grace to some people, maybe those we don't care for, or those we don't think deserve it. But then we must remember, do we honestly think that we deserve God's favor?

14. Read Ephesians 2:8. Is God's grace something we earn, or that we deserve, or is it a free gift?

This ends our lesson for today. I **rejoice** that Jesus is our peace and has broken down every wall! Oh, what a God! Oh, what a Savior! He truly is Lord of all!

### Fourth Day

**Review your memory verse. Do you fear Him?**

Let's begin today's lesson by reading through Peter's message to this room of Gentiles.



1. Read Acts 10:34-43.
2. Peter's message was powerful and concise. The following points are included in his message. Give the verse that supports each statement:
  - a. Jesus was sent by God.
  - b. Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit and received power.
  - c. Jesus had a ministry of healing.
  - d. Jesus was crucified.
  - e. Jesus rose from the dead.
  - f. Jesus forgives our sins.

In Acts 10:35, Peter says to fear God and do works of righteousness. Peter was not teaching that they are saved by works. Fearing God and working righteousness is a description of the Christian life.

3. What does it mean to "fear God"? Write a brief description using these verses: Proverbs 8:13, 14:26-27, 9:10, and Psalm 19:9.
4. What do the following verses say about the fear of God?
  - a. Jeremiah 10:7
  - b. Psalm 130:4
  - c. Hebrews 11:7
5. Do you fear God? Do you show reverence and honor for Him? Does that reverence motivate you to holiness?
6. Explain the difference between the fear of God and being afraid of God.

Peter reminds them that the Gospel was sent to the Jews first, but now He is the Lord of all. (Acts 10:36)

7. Which John was Peter referring to in Acts 10:37? Read Matthew 3:1-16. What was John's message?
8. When did God anoint Jesus with the Holy Spirit? Read Matthew 4:23-25.

Peter shows them that the death of Jesus Christ was a historical fact. Many people knew about it. In Acts 26:26, Paul says that "this thing was not done in a corner"!

9. Why do you think it was so important that the apostles saw Him eat and drink? (Acts 10:41)

In verse 42, Peter calls Jesus the Judge of the living and the dead (Read 1 Peter 4:5). He is not only the Judge, but He is the standard of righteousness by which all are to be judged.

10. What do we receive after we believe on Him? (Acts 10:43)
11. What does the word "remission" mean?
12. What does Hebrews 9:22 say about the remission of sins?

That's it for today. What did you learn? I was reminded that without the blood of Jesus Christ, the remission of my sins wouldn't be possible. Aren't you glad that He makes us white as snow? (Isaiah 1:18)

### Fifth Day

**Write out your memory verse. No peeking!**

Today we wrap up chapter 10 with Peter getting a Heavenly interruption. Pretty awesome, don't you think?

1. Read Acts 10:44-48. Describe the situation.
2. Who interrupted Peter? (Acts 10:44)
3. This isn't the first time Peter had been interrupted. Read Matthew 17:1-5 and Matthew 17:24-25. When was he interrupted and by whom?
4. What was the reaction of the Jews that were with Peter? (Acts 10:45)

The *Gentiles* immediately spoke in tongues when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, magnifying God. Tongues are always directed to God for praise and worship of Him (1 Corinthians 14:2). Tongues are never directed toward men for delivering messages, evangelism, etc.

5. After being baptized by the Holy Spirit, do all believers speak in tongues? Read 1 Corinthians 12:4, 11 and 28-30.
6. What did Peter suggest they do as evidence of their faith? (Acts 10:47)  
(Acts 10:47)
7. Did any of the other Jews have a problem with that? (Acts 10:47)

They were not baptized to be saved, but as proof of their faith. This text does not teach salvation by baptism.

Peter didn't tell them that they had to be circumcised. Circumcision identifies the man with Judaism, while baptism identifies them with Christ. If Peter had insisted that they be circumcised, Christianity may have become another Jewish sect.

On Pentecost, Peter had to exhort the listeners to repent, be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, and to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). On this occasion, the order was changed. The Holy Spirit came upon them before they were baptized. This was not a new, or second Pentecost, but simply an extension of the original Pentecost to include the *Gentiles*. (Wycliff Commentary)

8. Did Peter do the baptizing? (Acts 10:48)
9. Why do you think they asked Peter to stay there for a while? (Acts 10:48)

We end chapter 10 with Peter staying in Caesarea for a few days. This is a very important, life-changing chapter. Let's review for a minute, shall we?

10. In what way did this week's lesson speak to your heart?

11. How can you apply what you've learned?

12. Are there any changes you desire to make in your life as a result?

13. What did you learn about *God* this week?

I pray that the Lord is speaking to your heart each and every day as you spend time in His Word. I hope you are really "eating it up," like it says in Jeremiah 15:16.

**Are you rejoicing?**