

037 - Conversion of Cornelius Part 1 - Acts 10:1-48

Call to Worship: Psalm 108:3-4

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-14

Sermon: Conversion of Cornelius Part 1 Acts 10:1-48

Benediction: 1 Timothy 3:16

-The cruel Roman army conquered our once-free nation a hundred years ago, and has ruled over us ever since.

-Here on the coast, in Joppa, Israel's ancient seaport, we have watched in horror as Herod and his Roman engineers and soldiers have built that concret monstrosity, the artificial port, and has named it, of all blasphemous names for a city in Israel---Caesarea. Now all the trade comes and goes at that harbor, and we in Joppa are deprived of our previous wealth, and nearly of our livelihood.

-There in Caesarea, the Roman proconsul sits in his garish luxury, doing the bidding of the emperor. There the Roman army marches under its pagan banners by day, and revels in sinful indulgence by night.

-The city of Caesarea, and the Roman officials there, have become like a cancer to us.

There is one, though, the centurion called Cornelius

-he has respect for our God

-he gives to the poor

-but he is still a Roman soldier, and even a native Italian from near Rome itself

-he is uncircumcised; he is an alien from Israel

-he is a stranger to the covenants of promise

-he has had no hope for salvation, unless he were to become a Jew first

But the strangest news has come, with some brothers here in Joppa. They have gone with Peter to see Cornelius---in Caesarea---in the gentile's house!

(read the text: Acts 10)

I. How God in His Grace Loves and Saves All Kinds of People (34-35)

A. In chapter 8 we saw God saving

1. the Samaritans from their state of religious corruption and confusion
2. one Ethiopian man, a high government official, a eunuch, who was reading the bible, not able to understand it

B. In chapter 9 we have been studying about how God saved Saul of Tarsus, the most zealous Jewish Pharisee of his time, who had been persecuting the church

C. Now we get to read of how God, in His grace, loves and saves a Roman army officer, along with his whole household

1. this man had left the pagan religion of his home in Italy
2. he had come to worship and fear the one true God; and had taught his household to do the same
3. he gave alms generously to the poor among the Jews
4. and he prayed continually to God
5. yet, for all this, he did not know the Savior
6. but God, on the day appointed since before time began, sent a preacher of the Gospel to Cornelius, so that he could trust in Jesus Christ

D. Let us take this account of Cornelius and use it to help us understand a verse of scripture that sometimes troubles people: 1 Timothy 2:1-6

1. we see here two beautiful statements of God's grace in Christ Jesus
 - a. v. 4 God desires all people to be saved
 - b. v. 6 Christ Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all
2. often a wrong interpretation is given to these ideas
 - a. that God wants every person to be saved, but He will only do so much for a person, and if that person is not willing to be saved, but instead resists God, He will not make the person be willing, but will leave him in his sins
 - b. that Christ Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for every single person, but not every person so ransomed will actually be set free by that ransom price
 - c. dear brothers and sisters, these ideas are sadly deficient in their appreciation of the nature of God and the work of Christ
 - i. if you envision God wanting someone to be saved, trying to get him to be saved, but stopping short of actually saving him, then up til now you have not grasped what God has revealed to us about His power; God does what He pleases to do, and everything He pleases to do is perfect; so when he wants someone to be saved, He saves him; of course that means God must change that sinners heart, so that instead of desiring only evil all the time, that heart will desire to know and follow Jesus Christ; and that's exactly what He does; He does not try to change the heart, but stops short if the heart resists; no, He simply changes the heart, let it resist all it wants to!
 - ii. if you think of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, dying as a ransom price paid, to set a sinner free from bondage to sin; and then God the Father letting that person live and die still in bondage, never to be set free, because he did not make a certain choice, you have, up til now, failed to grasp the love of God the Father for the Son; God the Father loves the Son so much that if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed; the ransom price having been paid in the precious blood of His Son, the Father will stop at nothing to ensure that the one ransomed at so high a price will indeed be set free from his slavery
3. but see in this account of the conversion of Cornelius the right interpretation of these verses
 - a. as to what God desires, the truth is not that God desires every single person to be saved, but that God desires all kinds of people to be saved
 - b. as to Christ Jesus giving Himself as a ransom, the truth is not that Christ Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for every single person, but that Christ Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all kinds of people
 - i. not just Jews, but also Gentiles
 - ii. not just the poor, but also the rich
 - iii. not just the weak, but also the strong
 - iv. not just civilians, but also the military

E. So, then, let no one ever think, "God doesn't want someone like me." or, worse, "God doesn't want someone like him over there."

II. How God Saves Sinners Through the Means He Has Instituted

- A. God purposes to save someone, and all the work necessary to save him or her ultimately is done by God and for His own glory
- B. He could do all of this without any human agency
 - 1. He sent an angel to Cornelius, who could have just told the good news to him
 - 2. He Himself appeared to Peter; He could have just appeared to Cornelius Himself, as He did to Saul
- B. Yet He is pleased to save sinners by use of human means, which He has ordained
- C. See these means come into play in the account of Cornelius
 - 1. prayer
 - a. Cornelius v. 2
 - b. Peter v. 9
 - 2. preaching of the Gospel
 - a. including the sending of or sending for the preacher v. 22
 - b. including the preacher's willingness to go v. 29
 - c. including the inviting of people to hear v. 24
 - d. including the listening on the part of the hearers
 - e. of course including the preaching of the true Gospel v. 38-43
- D. God saves sinners; we do not; we cannot; but we are to pray, and we are to preach the Gospel; and we are to do everything else, also, that the Lord Jesus has commanded us to do; and it is through these things that we do that God will save sinners

note Cornelius' prayer

-a great spiritual blessing upon him and his whole house came upon him in answer to prayer

-if he, who did not know Jesus, prayed like this, what about us?

MacArthur

-God chose Cornelius to be the receiver

-"great things always happen when people are in prayer"

-"he is abolishing the OT Jewish dietary laws"

God's commitment to means

-prayer

-travel

-preaching of the gospel