


Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 10:1–23a

Read Acts 10:1–23a.


1. Luke introduces us to a centurion (an officer in charge of 100 men) named Cornelius.
 - a. How does Luke describe Cornelius? (vv. 1–2)
 - b. What kind of reputation does Cornelius have in the community? (v. 22)
2. Luke uses the term “God-fearing” (v. 2) to refer to “Gentiles who expressed interest in Judaism and attended worship in the synagogue but who, because they had not yet fully converted to Judaism by circumcision, had to sit in the back as observers rather than as full participants in the community.”¹ Nevertheless, Cornelius is faithful to observe certain Jewish disciplines and in this particular time of prayer has a most startling encounter (vv. 3–6).
 - a. How does Cornelius react when an “angel of God” (v. 3b) appears and calls him by name? (v. 4a)
 - b. How does the angel encourage Cornelius? (v. 4b;  * Lev. 2:1–2)
 - c. What does the angel tell Cornelius to do? (vv. 5–6)
 - d. Why is he told to do this? (v. 22c)
3. How does Cornelius respond to the angel’s directive? (vv. 7–8)

What does his response tell you about his faith in God?



4. For what has God been preparing Cornelius? (Jn. 3:16; 5:24; Acts 4:11–12)

Review Acts 10:9-16.

5. The next day, thirty-some miles to the south in Joppa, Peter is praying. He, too, has a most startling encounter with God. Describe what he saw. (vv. 10–12)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Acts: An Expositional Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 174.

6. This vision and the interchange between God and Peter are repeated three times (v. 16).
 - a. What does God tell Peter to do? (v.13)
 - b. What is Peter's response to the Lord's command? (v. 14)
 - c. Why do you think he responds in this way? ( Lev. 11)
 - d. How does God address Peter's protest? (v. 15)
7. For Jews like Peter, the issue of clean and unclean extended far beyond food. What else did Jews consider unclean? (Deut. 7:1–6)
8. God is preparing Peter to participate in the radical new era that God is bringing about. What greater purpose does God want Peter to understand through this vision? (Gen. 12:1–3; Gal. 3:6–9, 26–29; Mt. 28:19–20a;  Eph. 2:11–19)
9. How does Jesus make both Jews and Gentiles clean and holy? (Col. 1:19–22)

Review Acts 10:17-23a.

10. Cornelius's envoy reaches Joppa and locates Simon the tanner's house. Spirit-led and still pondering his vision, Peter greets the men and listens to their message. What is the evidence that Peter is beginning to accept God's greater purpose for the Gentiles? (v. 23a)
11. Look back over this passage. How do you see God orchestrating all the details to accomplish his purposes?
12. Like Peter, what beliefs do you hold onto that might stand as a barrier between you and others and hinder your gospel witness? How does what God is doing in this passage challenge you to see others differently? Ask God to enable you to see others from his point of view and to make you obedient to follow his call.