

A Certain Man Called Cornelius.

Acts 10:1-8

Sunday morning, May 16, 2010.

I. A new chapter in redemptive history.

- A. The calling of Cornelius marks the first time that one who was not a Jew or a Samaritan, or a proselyte to the Jewish faith, is called out by the gospel and made a part of the Christian church. There may have been others before him, but he is the first one recorded by Luke in the book of Acts.
- B. The Ethiopian Eunuch would have been a proselyte, that is a gentile converted to Judaism, and accepted into Judaism by way of Circumcision, Baptism, and an animal sacrifice made for him.
- C. As such Cornelius is directed to call upon Peter.
Peter, was especially given the keys to the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 16:19.
 - 1. On the day of Pentecost when the holy Spirit came, it was Peter who opened up the Kingdom, and with it the promise of the Holy Spirit, to the Jewish people by way of his sermon in Acts 2.
 - 2. It is Peter, in the company of John, who has to go to Samaria, to the folks who heeded the preaching of Philip, so that they too might receive the fullness of Kingdom life, by way of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:14-17.
 - 3. And now it will be Peter who will be instrumental in adding gentiles to the Church without going through the rites of circumcision, Old Covenant baptism (although they would be baptized into the Name of the Father Son and Holy spirit in New Covenant baptism), or animal sacrifice. The gift of the Holy Spirit will come upon them just as it had come to the Jews and the Samaritans.

II. The man Cornelius.

- A. Considered in terms of his worldly employment.
 - 1. He was a centurion, a man in charge of a hundred men, and was part of a larger army unit called a regiment or a cohort consisting of a thousand men. Five such regiments would have made up a legion.
 - 2. He was part of the Italian regiment, an army unit comprised of native Italian soldiers who would have distinguished themselves with a greater affinity and loyalty to the Caesar. Many other army units were made up with conscripts from the occupied territories. This man was no doubt a true gentile
 - 3. He was stationed in Caesarea, a port city on the Mediterranean, about 35 miles North of Joppa where Peter was at the time.
- B. Considered in terms of his spiritual state.
That the Holy Spirit had done a great deal of work preparing Cornelius for this day suffers no doubt.
 - 1. He feared God with all his household, even down to his servants and (some) soldiers under his command, see vs. 7.
 - This means that the Lord had become Cornelius' most treasured possession. If Cornelius was going to have anything in life, it had to be the Lord, the living God. Safeguarding his walk with the Lord was his primary concern.

Application:

Can you affirm this about your own life? Is the Lord your chief possession? Is safeguarding your walk with Him your primary concern?

There are two sides to this issue:

1. The believer is being preserved by the Lord Himself. "You, who are being kept by the power of God for salvation ready to be revealed at the last time." 1 Peter 1:5.

The issue viewed from this angle could lead a believer not to worry about his safe-keeping at all. In order to prevent sloth and carelessness in us there is the other side to this issue. The believer walks in union with the Lord; that is why there are to just about all issues in the Christian life a human and a divine side. Here follows the human side to this issue:

2. The believer perseveres.

The necessity of such perseverance is seen in such exhortations as those of the Apostle John: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21 and from Jude: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Jude 21.

It is to the issue of perseverance that the term "the fear of the Lord" is particularly addressed. "Fear the Lord you His saints, for those who fear Him lack nothing." Psalm 34:9.

2. He was a devout man; that is a man devoted to the things of the Lord. This is shown in our text in two ways:

- We are told plainly that "he prayed to God always." Vs. 2.
- The angel appeared to him at the ninth hour which was the hour of prayer in the temple when the evening sacrifice was brought. The angel reminds him that his prayers and alms have been remembered by the Lord. No doubt Cornelius was in prayer when the angel came, and the Lord met him in his praying.

Application:

The Lord would still meet with His people in their employing the means of His grace. Do you employ the means of grace like Cornelius did and do you expect the Lord to meet you in that way? Avoid formalism in employing the means of grace!

3. He was a man of charity; Cornelius was not only rightly related to God by the fear of the Lord, and by being a devout man, but he was also rightly related to people around him by way of a charitable disposition. True piety before God manifests itself always in true charity before the people around us. This is true because he who would be rightly related to God must also be rightly related to His people.

Application:

1. Would your disposition be accurately described as charitable toward the people around you; especially toward those in need around you?
2. We have here in the life of Cornelius an illustration of the truth taught by the Lord in Matt. 13:12 and 25:29 that to everyone who has (the beginnings of the work of grace), more will be given, but to those who do not have (the beginnings of the Spirit's work), even what they do have (by way of position and possession in this world) will be taken away from them.
3. Pray then for the Spirit's work in yourself and in others.