

The Conversion of Cornelius

(Acts 10)

- I. To better perceive the significance of Acts 10, one must understand the difference between regeneration and conversion.
- A. regenerate: v. *trans.* In religious use: To cause to be born again in a spiritual sense; to invest with a new and higher spiritual nature.
 - B. convert: v. *trans.* To turn in mind, feeling, or conduct; to bring into another state (of mind, etc.).
 - C. Regeneration transforms the sinner's Adamic nature from spiritual death to spiritual life. It is a quickening (making alive) by a higher power of that which has no power. **EPH 2:1-3.**
 - D. Conversion pertains to a turning of mind and/or conduct and is something which even regenerated believers need to do sometimes. It is not the giving of spiritual life but rather the proper response of spiritual life. **JAM 5:19-20.**
- II. **Acts 10** sets forth excellent examples of conversion.
- A. Cornelius and others present were converted to faith and discipleship to Jesus Christ. **ACT 15:7-8; 10:47-48.**
 - B. Peter was converted out of Mosaic dietary law, assumptions about Jewish circumcision, and presuppositions about the worth of Gentiles before God. **ACT 10:11-15, 28, 47-48.**
 - 1. Once Peter was converted, he was able to strengthen brethren, per **LUK 22:32.**
 - 2. He strengthened Cornelius and company with the gospel before and after their conversion to Christ. **ACT 10:48.**
 - 3. He strengthened Jewish brethren at Jerusalem with the good news of God's acceptance of uncircumcised Gentiles into fellowship. **ACT 11:17-18.**
 - 4. He strengthened the church, Gentile brethren and Paul's ministry by his testimony in **ACT 15:7-11.**
 - 5. Peter once retroverted and had to be strengthened by Paul. **GAL 2:11-16.**
 - 6. Peter's life shows that conversion is an ongoing experience as knowledge and conviction require it.
 - 7. If genuine apostles of Christ needed conversion while under the immediate supervision of the Holy Spirit, why should we think it a thing incredible that believers in general should have to convert from time to time?
 - C. Six other Jewish brethren were converted in Acts 10. **ACT 11:12.**
 - D. The *breaking down of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile* (**EPH 2:13-14**) and the abrogation of the need for fleshly circumcision unto God was underscored by the fact that, unlike in **ACT 2:1-4**, the Holy Ghost came upon *uncircumcised, unbaptized* folk in **ACT 10:44.**
 - E. Acts 10 represents the conversion of the entire kingdom program of God under King Jesus.
- II. Cornelius was a Roman centurion. **ACT 10:1.**
- A. Roman soldiers were the occupying peace-keepers of the day. Some of them were instructed by John the Baptist. **LUK 3:14.**
 - 1. violence: The exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, persons or property; action or conduct characterized by this; treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom.
 - 2. Peace-keepers, especially believing peace-keepers, should heed John's words.
 - B. Cornelius was a man who feared God and was at least remotely knowledgeable about the

- gospel message which began from John. **ACT 10:37.**
- C. The first uncircumcised Gentile convert to Christ was a decent, God-fearing policeman.
 - D. Upon conversion, Cornelius was under the yoke of both Caesar's and Christ's authority. He would have known his place, expectations and limitations. **MAT 22:21 c/w ACT 5:29.**
 - E. The chances of Cornelius troubling a church out of duty to Caesar would have been slim.
- III. The spiritual state of Cornelius before Peter came to him is often misrepresented. Many hold that Cornelius was unregenerate and in the full darkness of Adamic sin until his conversion by Peter. The evidences say otherwise.
- A. He feared God. **ACT 10:2, 35.**
 - 1. He thus hated evil. **PRO 8:13; 16:6.**
 - 2. Natural man has no fear of God. **ROM 3:18.**
 - 3. Cornelius must have had another law operating within, a benefit of the New Covenant. **ROM 2:14-15 c/w HEB 8:10.**
 - 4. God got to Cornelius before Peter.
 - B. He gave alms which God accepted. **ACT 10:2, 4, 31.**
 - 1. Godly alms are a mark of pure religion, undefiled. **JAM 1:27.**
 - 2. Godly alms are a mark of enduring righteousness. **2CO 9:9.**
 - 3. Godly alms are a mark of genuine love (**1JO 3:17-18**) and such love is a fruit of the Spirit of God. **GAL 5:22.**
 - 4. God got to Cornelius before Peter. **ROM 8:14.**
 - C. He prayed and God heard his prayers. **ACT 10:2, 4, 31.**
 - 1. God only hears the prayer of the righteous. **PRO 15:8, 29; 1PE 3:12.**
 - 2. God could only have considered him righteous in Christ (**2CO 5:21**) Who accordingly put His Spirit in Cornelius to regenerate his nature whereby he was crying out to God. **GAL 4:6.**
 - 3. God got to Cornelius before Peter.
 - D. He performed righteous deeds in acceptance to God. **ACT 10:34-35.**
 - 1. Those who do such are born of God. **1JO 2:29.**
 - 2. Those who do such are righteous. **1JO 3:7.**
 - 3. Those with only an Adamic nature do not do righteousness. **ROM 3:12.**
 - 4. God got to Cornelius before Peter. **PHIL 2:13.**
 - E. He was accepted with God. **ACT 10:35.**
 - 1. Sinners in their Adamic nature are unacceptable with God. They must be made acceptable by God in Christ by grace. **EPH 1:5-6.**
 - 2. The Spirit does this by changing the sinner's nature in regeneration. **TIT 3:5.**
 - 3. God got to Cornelius before Peter. The Spirit moves at His own will. **JOH 3:8.**
 - F. Once Peter preached Christ to Cornelius, he believed.
 - 1. Natural man cannot believe in Christ. **1CO 1:18; 2:14.**
 - 2. One who believes IS BORN of God. The new birth is first. **1JO 5:1; JOH 1:12-13.**
 - 3. God got to Cornelius before Peter.
- IV. Peter's preaching of Christ to Cornelius brought life and immortality to light. **2TI 1:9-10.**
- A. Cornelius' spiritual gift of faith (**GAL 5:22**) was activated. **ROM 10:17.**
 - B. Cornelius' ignorance of Christ's work for sinners was cured and he was able to follow Christ in grateful discipleship, making sure his calling and election to heaven. **2PE 1:5-12.**
 - C. Regeneration was Cornelius before Peter.
 - D. Conversion was Cornelius after Peter.
 - E. Bless God for electing grace in Christ, mercy, regeneration, His gospel which shows it all.