

The Conversion of or Cornelius or Peter?

Acts 10

ILLUSTRATION – Ford Motor Co. – 1912 – Production Manager knew they needed to change the Model T, but Ford wouldn't change anything. Ford went to Europe on vacation, Knudsen (Prod Mang) built a new sleeker model in a different color. Ford returned, walked around it 4X, ripped off the doors, smashed windshield, etc. Eventually he was forced into the Model A, but he didn't like it.

Most people don't like change in their lives any more than he did. One man once observed that the only people who DO like change are "wet babies" ... and even they aren't too excited about it.

Churches are notorious for that kind of attitude as well. You'll find church boards saying things like "we've never (pause to let them complete it) done it that way before"

Someone once said that when it comes to change the church is often like the snail riding on the back of a turtle (repeat for emphasis)...and do you know what a snail does when it rides on the back of the turtle?
It goes: "Whee!"

Many churches balk at even the slightest change in their routine. Even when they're fairly sure the changes would be something pleasing to God they still resist.

Illustration: 1) Gina's parents church bought church of old people. They didn't want to change. 2) Centerpoint...before we pat ourselves on the back, we still say "But we've never..." No church is immune to the disease of complacency.

NEED – Do you like change or does it make your skin crawl when you think about it?

TEXT – Today we are going to see that God institutes a dramatic change in the church—Gentiles are brought near. After some encouragement, Peter responds positively to the change.

vv 1-8 (Cornelius & Angel)

Caesarea – On Mediterranean 30 miles N of Joppa, Roman Govt & Military hub for Palestine (Peter will escape prison and Herod will be eaten by worms Ch 12)

Cornelius – Centurian (over 600+ men), devout, god-fearing, prayed & gave to poor.

Scene – Romans were occupying the Jewish land. Therefore, a gentile, Roman officer was not someone well liked by devout Jews. (Matt 8:11 – Peter may have been w/ Him)

Why do you think God chose to send a gentile, Roman officer to Peter instead of just sending Peter straight to him? (He wanted Peter and the other Jews to know that this is out of their control and it is of God. The church didn't just decide to start going to the Gentiles.)

vv 9-23a (Peter's Vision)

- The way in which God reveals what he is about to do through Peter shows how big of a *change* that this was going to be.

What does the fact that God had to say this three times say about Peter and about the news?

- Deuteronomy 14:6-8,10,12-14
- Up until this point, Christians had done away with sacrifice but they still lived like good Jews. They would not have eaten anything unclean. Consequently, they would not have entered into the house of a Gentile. They called them *Gentile Dogs*. If they purchased something from a gentile, they would have cleaned it before use. (Acts 11:2-3)
- Jesus got rid of any obstacle that would have been in Peter's way of going to a Gentile's house. It was as a short step to see that Gentiles were clean also.
- *They would accept Gentiles on one condition – circumcision.*

v. 14 – ***What does v. 14 say about the saying “If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all”?*** *Are there areas in our lives that we need to give control to the Lord?*

v. 19 – *Peter didn't get it. Could he have been thinking about Mark 7:19?*

vv 23b-48 (Peter & Cornelius)

- v. 28 – Peter's graceful entry. IRONY – ***Whose house had Peter been staying at?*** He was staying with Simon the Tanner (tanned leather, forced to be outside the city w/ the poor b/c of smell, combination of urine, animal feces [children normally employed for this] and decaying flesh), yet he wouldn't have eaten with a Roman officer.

Note how Peter stressed the universal benefit of Jesus' ministry in this message to Gentiles; it was for Gentiles as well as Jews. Not only is Jesus Lord of all (v. 36), but He went about healing all (v. 38). Furthermore He is the Judge of all (v. 42) to whom all the prophets bore witness (v. 43a), and God forgives all who believe in Him (v. 43b).

- v 45 – ***Why were they astonished?*** (not circumcised)
- v 44 – ***What does v. 44 say about some of our modern evangelistic methods?*** (don't need to pray a prayer, walk an isle, know every jot and tittle of theology, be baptized, etc.).
- vv 47-48 – ***What do you think the others there were thinking (we need to circumcise them first)?*** The Church had been opened up to Gentiles. They received the HS through belief in JC and so they should be baptized and considered brothers/sisters in Christ.
- This problem would not go away (The Council of Jerusalem, Acts 15 [vv 10-11]).

APPLICATION –

- God does not change, but His methods may change and we must be responsive.
- ***What ways has the church needed to change in the last 50 years and has/has not? What have been the effects?***

A Question we must continually ask ourselves:
Will we be a church that follows God or gets complacent?