



Why Cornelius? Why a Soldier? (Part II)

Acts 10:22: (NASB) *They said, Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you.*



A few weeks ago we began to tell the story of the dramatic events that led up to the conversion of the centurion Cornelius to Christianity. Because the expansion of Christianity to Gentiles was such a radical shift in God’s methods, radical measures had to be taken! Today we will finish the story and see how its conclusion would change the history of Christian faith by the inclusion of you and me!

There is an underlying theme of change and how to prepare ourselves for change.

 Introduction, *What to Do When Your Landscape Changes*, Tom Cummings, TedxTalk

- *How many of you like to be changed? That’s not so easy. Not so easy. How many of you have ever had the experience in your life where suddenly everything changed and nothing was quite the same? That you were barreling along, doing what you thought you should be doing and everything was going really well, and then all of a sudden the landscape shifted. Things then were completely different. You didn’t have a map.*

(Please refer to “Why Cornelius? Why a Soldier? (Part I)” from May 17, 2015.)
Let’s quickly review Part I: What about Cornelius?

He had four clear descriptive traits:

Acts 10:1-2: (NRSV) ¹In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort, as it was called. ²He was a devout man who feared (revered) God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God.

How did God move Cornelius? He was a Gentile and was therefore outside of God’s favor. How did God get his attention enough to get him to do something radical?

Let him know he had been noticed and blessed!

Acts 10:3-4: (NASB) ³About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come in and said to him, Cornelius! ⁴And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, what is it, Lord? And he said to him, your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

You instruct him and then you watch:

Acts 10:7-8: (NASB) ⁷When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants, ⁸and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Meanwhile, back at Simon the tanner’s house...

Acts 10:9-16: (NASB) ⁹On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. ¹⁰But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; ¹¹and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners

recap
recap



to the ground, ¹²and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³A voice came to him, Get up, Peter, kill and eat! ¹⁴But Peter said, By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean. ¹⁵Again a voice came to him a second time, What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy. ¹⁶This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.

As Peter is thinking and no doubt praying about this, the answer arrives:

Acts 10:17-18: (NRSV) ¹⁷Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate. ¹⁸They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there.

Once again the precise timing of God in the unfolding of His plan would bring clarity at the proper time. Peter was allowed to struggle with this revelation to help it sink in - to help him absorb the radical change which was to take place...and now answers were arriving!

Four things, *What to Do When Your Landscape Changes*, Tom Cummings, TedxTalk

- *I think there about four different things that we can pay attention to. Only four, can you remember four things? Should be easy, right? Okay so, the first one is pretty straightforward - when something happens to you is pause. Just stop. Pause, then connect, then reflect, then refrain. Now, those each have specific meanings for me and I'll say a little bit about that.*

Pause. Connect. Reflect. Reframe. We will later see how those four things played a part in this particular story of Peter and Cornelius.

How does Peter react when he meets the Roman strangers who want to take him away?

Pause, *What to Do When Your Landscape Changes*, Tom Cummings, TedxTalk

- *When we talk about pausing, it seems kind of absurd that in a middle of a crash we are pausing. It's completely counterintuitive. We're all talk, fight or flight or freeze. That's what psychologists say. I think in our repertoire we can find this moment of pause where we simply breathe or we simply say "take it all in, breathe."*

Acts 10:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹While Peter was reflecting on the vision (pause), the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them myself.



We see more precise timing and reassurance:

- God's Spirit communicated with Peter through a three-part command: Rise, kill and eat! That command was given three times.
- Three men were looking for him and yet another three-part command is given: Arise, get off the roof and go with them! Have no doubts!

Here we have some of the most amazing lessons of these remarkable events for both Cornelius and Peter. They have not yet met, nor has the main purpose of their visions come to pass; yet both were given profound insight into God's care, foresight, timing and plan! They were thoroughly prepared for what was about to happen.



Because God knows and executes His plan, His promises and care are never short:

Isaiah 65:23-24: (NRSV) *²³They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD - and their descendants as well. ²⁴Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.*



He guides and teaches those who truly rely upon Him:

Psalms 25:9: (NRSV) *He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble His way.*

Peter and Cornelius were both chosen for this mission because they had the humility to accept God.



He pays close attention to those who seek Him:

Psalms 32:8: (NRSV) *I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*

God will watch and give us counsel. What an amazing promise!

 **Pause story, *What to Do When Your Landscape Changes, Tom Cummings, TedxTalk***

- I once had this moment when I was going to get really angry at my daughter, a teenager. Any of you have teenagers? Well, you look like teenagers! Any of you ever been a teenager? I can ask that. So, we know what happens. All kinds of things happening and the Dean saw that I was going to get really angry at her. She provoked something in me and at that moment just as I was about to go forth, she said, "Stop," and I was shocked, and I kind of wheeled back and I said, "What?" and she said, "I know what you're going to do. I've seen it before. First, you are going to get really angry at me and then you're going to feel really bad about yourself, and then you are going to apologize to me." She said, "Go straight to the apology." (Laughter from the audience) I did exactly what you just did. I just started laughing. That pause shifted me out of my thinking and made me think, wait, maybe there's something else I could be doing at this moment. So, that's the pause if you think about that.*

Sometimes our immediate reaction is not the proper response. We can pause to be able to make an appropriate response.

selah
pause...
and reflect

Many Psalms end with *Selah*, meaning pause and consider/reflect. Just take a breath.



Acts 10:21-22: (NASB) ²¹Peter went down to the men and said, Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come? ²²They said, Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message (of salvation - see [Acts 11:14](#)) from you.

Cornelius' men quickly and accurately described him and the message he was given. They were imminently respectful of Peter - true messengers!

Acts 10:23: (NASB) So he invited them in and gave them lodging. And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

Think about the unusual event here - Romans going to seek out the Jewish Christian Peter. Peter hears their story and immediately, without thought, gives them lodging!

Peter is fearlessly breaking new ground because he sees God's hand in it. What a powerful lesson!

Both parties react with great confidence and anticipation at this meeting, for everyone knows that the answers to the visions and the future are before them - all they must do is to stay obedient.

(Source: Biblical commentary by Alfred Barnes) Verse 23: *And lodged them.* They remained with him through the night. Four days were occupied before Peter met Cornelius at Caesarea. On the first, the angel appeared to Cornelius; on the second, the messengers arrived at Joppa, Acts 10:9; on the third, Peter returned with them, Acts 10:23; and on the fourth, they arrived at Caesarea, Acts 10:24,30.

There is a lot of detail to this story in the preparation phase. We see that Peter's heart is exactly in the right place by hosting these people overnight.

So, what has Cornelius been doing these past few days?

Cornelius shows his heartfelt anticipation by gathering family and friends:

Acts 10:24-26: (NASB) ²⁴On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶But Peter raised him up, saying, stand up; I too am just a man.

THIS is the answer to, “Why Cornelius?” Observe the actions here: Cornelius must have previously witnessed to God's goodness as expressed through the Jewish Law to all friends and family in his home. Even without outward proof of God's presence and blessing in his life, he was not deterred in his worship and praise. His immediate response is humility! He loved God with all of his heart and shared with those around him.

 **Connect, What to Do When Your Landscape Changes, Tom Cummings, TedxTalk**

- *Then connect. Now, this is also counterintuitive to connect, but quite often when we are in a surprise situation what we want to do is we want to retreat, right? But connect in a particular way. We need to see the wider landscape that we're facing. So, we need to get a bigger picture of what's going on and connecting starts with noticing the surround. Really important to find that connect point and see that as an important step. But not only connect with the outside but connect with others and connect with yourself. This is what Robert Greenleaf called “listening to the quiet voice inside of you.”*



A caller from Connecticut suggests God is an “equal opportunity employer.” He meditates upon 1 Samuel 2:30: *They that honor me I will honor.* There is no greater experience than to be honored by God.

Although the following text refers to idolatrous Jews, the same principles apply in drawing them back to God as in the drawing of Cornelius to God:

Isaiah 30:18-22: (NASB) ¹⁸*Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him. ¹⁹O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry, when He hears it, He will answer you.*

The magnitude of God’s character shines - He wants us to long for Him. He shows us why we need Him. For Cornelius, the wait was time “well-devoted” and he enhanced his life.

²⁰*Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. ²¹Your ears will hear a word behind you, this is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right or to the left. ²²And you will defile your graven images overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing, and say to them, be gone!*

The end result is abandonment of the gods of our lives and the embracing of the God of all life. We sacrifice our interests to do God’s will. Cornelius and the Apostle Peter had both put away their own interests. Now these two honorable men meet.

Peter shows his humility by keeping perspective:

Acts 10:27-29: (NASB) ²⁷*As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. ²⁸And he said to them, you yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him...*

This statement of fact reveals the act of faith taking place. Remember, Peter housed Cornelius’ servants the previous night! Peter’s vision was truly having its effect!

...and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. ²⁹That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me?

Peter now sees clearly - the vision was in triplicate, the unclean animals, the Law and the time for change, all at the command of God. He now understands the import of the vision as being much more than meat. He here has a large ready-made audience to witness the Gospel to and yet he does not assume anything, rather he respectfully asks for direction. This is important because we know Peter’s reputation for being impetuous in the past. Here he is humbly following the instructions of God and being blessed for doing so. He tells the “unclean” people that all men are acceptable in God’s sight, so he knows why he is here and now asks Cornelius to explain his side of the story.



What have we observed so far?



- **VISION:** All players in this drama seem focused on the higher purpose of this experience.
- **HUMILITY:** Peter and Cornelius are models of acquiescence!
- **COURAGE:** Peter steps out of the constraints of the Law with bold confidence in God’s will.
- **ENTHUSIASTIC EXPECTATION:** Cornelius gathers those closest to him to be taught of God.



Cornelius introduction, *Acts 10: Cornelius, Bagels, Bible Study and Brotherhood*, YouTube

- *Cornelius was a centurion and what we can figure out from the text is with the name “Cornelius” he was an Italian. Soldiers usually signed up for 25 years, and if they were not citizens they were granted citizenship. It usually took 12 to 16 years to be eligible for promotion to the rank of centurion, so he probably was around 30 years old and likely at least five foot eight in height. He was also most likely literate since he had some administrative skills, and he appeared to be in charge of the Italian Cohort.*



A CQ App user suggests the idea that Cornelius would have been recognized by the Jewish nation around him as a “God-fearing man.”

The name “Christian” comes into play in the next chapter of Acts while in Antioch. They were not known as “Christians” yet at this point.

There is a prophecy of this very witness experience at the birth of Jesus:

Luke 2:25-32: (NRSV) ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.



Reflect, *What to Do When Your Landscape Changes*, Tom Cummings, TedxTalk

- *You go to the next step, which is to reflect. So, if we reflect - again we’re talking about small amounts of time now - in the reflection what’s so interesting is that we have to start asking questions. So, this is not reflecting in a pool or in a mirror. This is really reflecting on what’s happening here, what surprises me, what stands out for me, what am I seeing, what am I observing? So, the reflection is in the reflection inventory of the questions that we’re asking and the way that we ask those questions.*

Remember, Peter asked why Cornelius called for him. He is asking Cornelius to reflect - to go back and recount all the pieces of the puzzle from Cornelius’ vantage point.



Cornelius assumes nothing and recounts his experience:

Acts 10:30-33: (NASB) ³⁰Cornelius said, four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments, ³¹and he said, Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³²Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea. ³³So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.



Observations:

- Cornelius is precise in his recounting indicating the impact this experience had upon him.
- He stresses the urgency he felt.
- He acknowledges Peter's honorable response.
- He doesn't ask questions - he simply positions his household to listen fully.

Another Old Testament Prophecy that foreshadowed this moment:

Isaiah 42:6-7: (NRSV) ⁶I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, ⁷to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.



To truly listen to the true Gospel is a sign of a true heart!

Proverbs 9:9-10: (NASB) ⁹Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning. ¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Now comes one of the most historic moments in all of Christian history...what would be said?

So, all becomes quiet as Cornelius, his household, his friends and those six Jewish Christians who accompanied Peter wait for the Apostle's godly words:

Acts 10:34-35: (NASB) ³⁴Opening his mouth, Peter said: I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, ³⁵but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

Peter in a few words proclaims what God has shown him.

It is very different from what had been:

Amos 3:3: (NASB) You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.



Reframe, What to Do When Your Landscape Changes, Tom Cummings, TedxTalk

- There's one more thing to do and that last thing is perhaps the most critical one for all the things that we've been talking about over the course of today because it relates very much to how we're going to deal with big crises as well as small crises and it's to reframe. Literally reframing means to step out of



the frame and to see another perspective and to notice that perspective. And in reframing, which is not again an easy thing to do, we have to look through different lenses at the situation we're in.

Peter continues by summing up the earthly ministry of Jesus the man:

Acts 10:36-39: (NASB) ³⁶The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) ³⁷you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. ³⁸You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹We are witnesses of all the things he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put him to death by hanging him on a cross.

Peter establishes that he and his brethren personally witnessed these events of Jesus and observed the glory of his life.

⁴⁰God raised him up on the third day and granted that he become visible, ⁴¹not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with him after he arose from the dead.

Again, the confirmation of the eyewitnesses who were there - this time of Jesus the spiritual being.

⁴²And he ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the one who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³Of him all the prophets bear witness that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.

Now Peter confirms their responsibility to represent Jesus as judge, forgiver of sins and the promised seed. So, the words that everyone waited for firmly established that Jesus as Messiah and Lord was being revealed to them through Peter and his brethren, and that Cornelius and his brethren were invited to be a part of that representation of Christ!

This was a transferring of responsibility of what believing in Jesus means. It is not an emotional response that makes you feel good. It is a dramatic change in your dedication and the way you live.

The finale of the experience - the evidence of God's favor overflows out onto the Gentiles:

Acts 10:44-48: (NASB) ⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. ⁴⁵All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God...

God showers His influence on the Gentiles! If there was any doubt, it was gone now. They were all to fully embrace this new change.

...Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he? ⁴⁸And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.



Great faith in God and great patience towards God are rewarded with great favor from God!



2 Timothy 2:19: (NASB) *Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are His...*

So a new era begins! How does the rest of the Jewish Christian community receive it?

What have we observed so far?



- VISION: All players in this drama seem focused on the higher purpose of this experience.
- HUMILITY: Peter and Cornelius are models of acquiescence!
- COURAGE: Peter steps out of the constraints of the Law with bold confidence in God's will.
- ENTHUSIASTIC EXPECTATION: Cornelius gathers those closest to him to be taught of God.
- MUTUAL RESPECT: Neither Peter or Cornelius vies to claim any position - they both simply want truth.
- THANKFULNESS: Thankful receipt of God's direction. Both recognize and follow God's clear direction.
- PROPHECY FULFILLED: Peter is privileged to open a door that God had long ago foretold.
- MIRACULOUS CONFIRMATION: The pouring out of God's Spirit left no doubt!
- EXPANDED BROTHERHOOD: The Gentiles are baptized into Christ.

The immediate reaction of the other Jews who followed Christ:

Acts 11:1-18: (selected) (NASB) *¹Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ²And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, ³saying, you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.*

Generations of tradition and following the Law needed to be educated.

 **Through, *What to Do When Your Landscape Changes*, Tom Cummings, TedxTalk**

- *So, we've got to find these different ways that we can step up and step in because there is no way back once we get into that moment of truth. I have a little sign on my desk. It's been there for about fifteen years actually, if I'm honest, and it says, "The only way out is always through."*

The Jewish Christians had to go through this experience. They could not argue with it. They needed to put those four points in place: Pause, connect, reflect and reframe.

⁴But Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying, ⁵I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me... ⁹But a voice from heaven answered a second time, what God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy...



Peter was not defensive. He describes the vision as a clear but puzzling message from heaven.

¹¹And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea. ¹²The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house. ¹³And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house...

Peter describes a clear but still puzzling direction from God's Spirit.

¹⁵And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as... upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he used to say, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as he gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?

Now a crystal clear conclusion from the entire experience God had provided.

When something changes and is different, those of us who do not understand will typically react just like these people did. The Apostle does not get rattled because he had proof and credibility of the experience.

¹⁸When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.

This is a great start for what would prove to be a rocky path.



Centurion described, Acts 10: Cornelius, Bagels, Bible Study and Brotherhood, YouTube

- Philippus is a historian that wrote in history that centurions are required not to be bold and adventuresome so much as to be good leaders, of steady and prudent mind, not prone to take offense or to start fighting wontonly but able when overwhelmed and hard pressed to stand fast and to die at their post.*

Why a Roman centurion? This man had the discipline of a soldier, the track record of responsible behavior, was educated and had a mighty heart for God. Such a man of pagan background being called to be the first non-Jewish follower of Christ surely shows us the magnitude of God's love and mercy towards ALL!

He was a dedicated man of faith long before he was brought to Christianity. What faith he had!

Romans 8:31: (NASB) *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?*

This would begin a new era of Christianity. It would be an era of growth and faithfulness as well as trial and difficulty.

**So, why Cornelius? Why a soldier?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**

**And now even more to think about...
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Why Cornelius? God called him so it was on purpose!

In comparing the two main players in our story we see that Cornelius' desire to worship God more fully was easily recognized and responded to by the Lord. Therefore, Cornelius was given instruction as to how to accomplish his intent. Cornelius' faith was evident throughout the experience because he did what he was told to do. He sent for Peter and prepared for his coming by enthusiastically assembling family and friends. Upon Peter's arrival he humbly received him. Acts 10:24-27

On the other hand, Peter was asked to be the first Jew to override the Law of Moses and carry that shocking news to others. He, too, was “obedient to the vision” as he put his faith on the line not only by entering the Gentiles' house, but also by teaching them, baptizing them and welcoming them as brethren of equal stature.

Peter was courageous. God strengthened his courage three times. Here we have a wonderful and final lesson regarding the mercy of repetition. The Father knows our frame and may give us an experience multiple times, first to get our attention, next to help us ponder its meaning and finally to provoke us to action.

Dealing with this dramatic change in the call of Christianity was a very difficult task. Much of the New Testament letters are written to help with this challenge:

Ephesians 2:11-16: (NRSV) ¹So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called the uncircumcision by those who are called the circumcision—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— ²remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ⁴For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ⁵He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ⁶and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

Essentially recapping all that Peter had relayed at the conversion of Cornelius!

Cultural differences abounded!

Romans 14:1-10: (NASB) ¹Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. ²One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. ³The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. ⁴Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ⁵One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. ⁷For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. ¹⁰But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again,



why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

There were contradictory influences within the true church - even then:

Galatians 3:1-5: (NASB) *¹You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? ²This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?*

For us, when we must travel roads that are difficult to navigate we must always bring our map:

Psalms 119:105-112: (KJV) *¹⁰⁵Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. ¹⁰⁶I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. ¹⁰⁷I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word. ¹⁰⁸Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments. ¹⁰⁹My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law. ¹¹⁰The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts. ¹¹¹Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. ¹¹²I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.*

Let's review one last text to show how the humility of the Apostles (in this case Paul) was a shining example of a true Christian.

This text has a similar theme as the meeting with Cornelius but in a much more dramatic and pressure filled event:

Acts 14:11-16: (NRSV) *¹¹When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, the gods have come down to us in human form! ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates; he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice. ¹⁴When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, ¹⁵Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways.*