

Acts 10

Another gear shift in the pace of the Church

Up to Chapter 9, we were seeing the birth and growth of the church from Jerusalem to surrounding regions, chiefly among Jews. So, it was slowly growing as a sect within the Jewish faith, and would have remained so, if it hadn't been for the evangelization to the gentiles.

It was a taboo for the Jews to associate with gentiles and so such evangelization wouldn't have taken place unless there was a change in outlook among the Christians. Every change in outlook requires unlearning and relearning. God started that by the vision to Peter and evangelization of Cornelius and his household.

In this chapter, 2 people receive visions – Cornelius and Peter. Peter receives a vision of a carpet carrying unclean animals and is puzzled. God's statement makes him wonder what is the connection. The connection is realized once he connects with Cornelius. Cornelius also receives a vision, about a hitherto unknown stranger; connecting with whom, will make his life change.

Acts 10:1-8

V1

Caesarea – an important Roman city, headquarters of the Roman governor of the province of Judea.

Centurion of the Italian Cohort – so could be seen as an occupying force and disliked by the Jews.

V2

A man of another religion, yet devout and giving alms. Cornelius was in the category of what the Jews called God-fearers (one who feared God). These were Gentiles who loved the God of Israel; they

were sympathetic to and supportive of the Jewish faith. Yet they stopped short of becoming full Jews in lifestyle and in circumcision. Jewish people of that time respected and appreciated these God-fearing Gentiles, but they could not really share their life and homes and food with them, because they were still in fact Gentiles and not full Jewish converts.

Cf Luke 7:1-10 – healing of centurion's servant – recommendation by the Jews regarding the centurion.

V3-8

Vision in which angel of God commends his faith and asks him to send for Peter.

V9-16

Peter's vision

Peter's history with being confronted by God's truth 3 times – denial of Jesus 3 times, being asked "do you love me"? thrice. So when he is confronted by this vision thrice, he realizes God is trying to tell him something important that will change his life and convictions.

v17-23

Peter meets Cornelius's men.

V24-33

Meeting Cornelius and sharing of stories.

V34-43

Peter's realization and sharing of the gospel to gentiles

V34,45 - 34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

I understand that God shows no partiality and neither should I. Two characteristics of a person acceptable to God – devoid of layers of religious or cultural moorings – “anyone who fears him and does what is right” – anyone who treats God with reverence and treats people with justice are ready for the grace of God.

V44-48

V44 – Holy Spirit falling on gentile hearers - on Cornelius, his family and friends - even before being baptized. Earlier only Cornelius showed faith pleasing to God, but now God shows favor on all the gentiles listening to Peter’s message.

V47 - “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”

“Just as we have” – no difference between Jew and gentile when it comes to God’s grace and the gift of receiving the Holy Spirit.

Emphases

1. **God’s lessons for us** - Often against our pre-conceived notions, often against our desires, often against our comfort zones.
It requires discernment, learning and unlearning.
2. **Significance of the Cornelius incident**
First incident of evangelization of the gentiles.
Prepared the church to understand the gospel better, address further issues that arose in the church. e.g. Acts 15 Council at Jerusalem addresses question of circumcision of gentiles.

Questions

1. Does God favor a nation? Israel? US? UAE?
2. Is it possible that God’s vision of who is part of “God’s people” is broader than mine?