

“Good Men Need Jesus!”

1. **Intro:**

- 1.1. We all have a friend, acquaintance, or a family member that we would call “pagan” w/a capitol “P” that we’ve tried to witness to. - **But what about “good people”?**
 - 1.1.1. I mean those who are “moral, well-disciplined, prayerful, religious, devout, virtuous, reverent, church-going, influential, giving, obedient, & whatever else.” – **How do we talk/witness to them?**
 - 1.1.2. **Maybe that’s you this morning?** “I’m a good person. I believe in God. I do my best. I help when I can. Etc.” [Large % of unchurched Americans today]
 - 1.1.3. **This morning we’ll see:** Christianity is for *good people* as well as for “sinners”; *Good people* need Jesus; the *best people* need a Savior.
- 1.2. The bible address many of these “good people”: [I know none “good” no not 1]
 - 1.2.1. **The elder brother in the prodigal.** He was in no less need of his fathers love then his little brother; even though he hadn’t sown his wild oats.
 - 1.2.2. **Also, the Rich Young Ruler & the Ethiopian Eunuch.**
- 1.3. C.S. Lewis used to say, “You cannot go on being a **good egg** forever. You must either hatch or rot.”
- 1.4. Now we meet **Cornelius** – whose conversion marked the beginning of the church’s *missionary activity* among **gentiles**!
 - 1.4.1. **They knew** that God so loved “**the world**” & not just the Jews.
 - 1.4.2. **They knew** Jesus would be “a light to **the Gentiles**” as Simeon said.
 - 1.4.3. **They knew** they were “to be witnesses to **the end** of the earth”.
 - 1.4.4. **But what were the precise terms of entrance?** Become a Jew 1st, **or** come direct on same terms as Jews?
 - 1.4.5. Remember the evangelistic message of the day was *“Find God, be a Jew!”*
- 1.5. Also note the **most space is given** to this story in Acts, showing its **importance!**

2. **GOOD MEN NEED JESUS! (1-48)**

- 2.1. **A GOOD MAN IN NEED OF A SAVIOR!** (1-8)
- 2.2. **Cornelius** – known by God 😊 (& by His messenger)
 - 2.2.1. And what *sterling character!* One of the *finest characters* in the NT.
- 2.3. **Feared God** – i.e. a *God-fearer!*
 - 2.3.1. Most scholars agree this was a **technical term** describing a Gentile who attached himself to Judaism **but** chose not to undergo formal conversion (which included circumcision & public immersion) [i.e. a proselyte]

- 2.3.2. The Jews would call them “*proselytes of the gate*”. They were attracted to the Jewish form of worship, monotheism, the high moral standards, their lifestyle, **but** for various reasons didn’t become Jews.
- 2.3.3. **Gentiles that became proselytes were no longer Gentiles.**
 2.3.3.1. **God-fearers were still Gentiles, thus still considered unclean.**
- 2.4. **Caesarea** – 30 miles north of Joppa/Jaffa. In 6 ad, became the official home of the Roman procurators (admin official)
 2.4.1. It was their seat of government. Political capitol. (Pilate stone found there)
- 2.5. Though a Gentile, he was a worshiper of the one true God.
- 2.6. Connect end of vs.6 to 11:14. (**what you must do...to be saved!**)
- 2.7. **PIGS IN A BLANKET!** (9-16)
- 2.8. **Divinely Synchronized Visions!**
- 2.9. God has to prepare both Peter & Cornelius.
- 2.10. Funny – it’s lunch time. He’s starved for a *shwarma*. God speaks to him in food.
 2.10.1. Hunger, always a nice medium for teaching.
 2.10.2. **One of the reasons Jews didn’t associate with Gentiles, who did not observe Mosaic dietary laws.**
- 2.11. Lev.11 tells which animals **could** be eaten & which ones **couldn’t**.
 2.11.1. **Could** – whatever has a **divided hoof & chews its cud** can be eaten.
 2.11.2. **Couldn’t** – if only had 1 couldn’t. [e.g. **pig** has divided hoof doesn’t chew cud; **rock badger** chews cud, no split hoof]
- 2.12. **Old habits die hard!**
- 2.13. (14) God was about to do a new thing & Peter wanted to hold on to the old.
 2.13.1. It’s interesting how the unbeliever was more flexible than the believer!
 2.13.1.1. **Cornelius**...immediate obedience; **Peter**...“**not so Lord!**”
 2.13.1.2. The unbeliever, *ok Lord!*
 2.13.1.3. The believer, still trying to catch up to the heart of God!
- 2.14. **We are not any different today when God wants to “do a new thing.”**
 2.14.1. **You don’t think so?** – **Grade yourself.**
 2.14.1.1. **Show Christ’s love** to a Muslim the week after 9-11.
 2.14.1.2. **Show Christ’s love**, & pray for, the Palestinians in Gaza, as much as you do the Jews in Israel.
 2.14.1.3. **Show Christ’s love** to a homosexual, or transvestite as you would a heterosexual person.
 2.14.2. **Yes**, we passionately hold to our **timeless truths**, **but** what if He wants to change our methods to be...**timely methods?**
 2.14.3. **Yes**, we are to be **Biblically faithful**, **but** what if he wants to change us because we are no longer **culturally fruitful?**

- 2.14.4. **Yes**, we must **contend for the faith** (Jude 3), **but** how do we respond when He asks us to **contextualize** our approach? [i.e. become all things to all men that we might by all means save some]
 2.14.4.1. (e.g.) Paul to **Jews** in synagogues, vs. **Greeks** at Mars hill.
- 2.15. Some hold their hands **open** to both **doctrine** & **Practice** (anything goes).
- 2.16. Others are so rigid they have a **closed** hand to both **doctrine** & **practice** (good for doctrine, but “we’ll never change our practice, we’ve been doing it this way for 100 yrs”).
- 2.17. **Jesus** showed us the best way is was to have a **closed** hand on **doctrine** & an **open** hand w/**practice**. (That’s what the religious folks accused Him of before they murdered Him, in the name of religion)
- 2.17.1. **Are you read if God wants to do a new thing in your heart & life?**
- 2.17.2. Recommendation, don’t say “**not so**” & “**Lord**” in the same sentence!
- 2.18. Peter was making progress in working through his prejudices, but he was far from liberated. – **How are you doing with yours?**
- 2.18.1. **Color prejudice, denominational prejudice, class prejudice** (caste system)
- 2.18.2. Some are so into their **political party** I wonder if they would witness to someone in one of the other parties?
- 2.19. **Peter’s vision denied any distinction between “clean” & “unclean”.**
- 2.20. **NEXT STEP!** (17-23)
- 2.21. **Seemed Peter learned best in “3’s”!** [3 cock-crows; 3 denials; 3-fold restoration; Now 3 sheet drop; 3 gentiles at gate]
- 2.22. **MEETING PETER!** (24-33)
- 2.23. They debrief each other on their *divinely synchronized vision*.¹
- 2.24. **MEETING JESUS!** (34-43)
- 2.25. **Jesus an equal opportunity Savior!** (34,35)
- 2.26. No respecter of persons(34), no respecter of nations(35).
- 2.26.1. **God offers Himself to all men who will fear God & do what is right.**
- 2.27. **Peter’s 3 Keys!** (Mt.16:13-19)
- 2.28. **Peter** was told he would possess **the keys** and be able to **bind** and **loose people**.
- 2.28.1. These were decisions Peter was to implement as he received instruction from heaven, for the **binding and loosing occurred there first**. [Peter simply carried out God’s directions]
- 2.28.2. This privilege of binding and loosing was seen in Peter’s life as he had the privilege on the day of **Pentecost** to proclaim the gospel and announce to all those who responded in saving faith that their sins had been forgiven.
- 2.28.3. He was able to do the same thing in **Samaria** (ch.8).
- 2.28.4. He was able to do the same thing with the household of **Cornelius**.

¹ Peter Wagner; pg.232.

- 2.29. **Interesting each deal w/breaking cultural barriers:** At **Pentecost**, gospel transition from Hebrew speaking Jews to Greek speaking Jews; In **Samaria**, gospel transition to ½ Jews ½ Gentiles; Here, gospel transition to Gentiles.
- 2.30. (39) I talked about **contextualizing** earlier. Here is a **good example** how he doesn't *change* the gospel but *tailored it* to the Gentiles.
2.30.1. **They killed by hanging/nailling on the tree.** [He didn't use this earlier to Jews]
- 2.31. (43) Cornelius already a worshipper of true God, so accepted in order to obtain further blessings of Christ. [now religion + relationship]
2.31.1. Ever speak to someone so ripe? *"I'm ready to pray the prayer!"*
- 2.32. **What a strong affirmation** – *"to Him all the prophets witness"*
2.33. **One way** – *"that, through His name"*
2.34. **Simple means** – *"whoever believes in Him"*
2.35. **Definite statement** - *"will receive remission of sins"*²
- 2.36. **MEETING THE HOLY SPIRIT!** (44-48)
2.37. Here is the **Gentile Pentecost!!!**
- 2.38. Peter never got to finish the sermon.
2.38.1. When he said, *whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins*, they believed & were saved.
- 2.39. (44,45) **Sign from heaven** just like when the Jewish believers were admitted (Pent).
2.40. (47) Peter immediately called for **baptism**, pointing to their **full inclusion** into the Christian community.
- 2.41. **End:**
- 2.42. **John Wesley**(founder of the Methodist movement) was saved while reading the introduction to **Luther's commentary** on Romans.
- 2.43. **Easter morning** (a few weeks ago) we had a gentleman drive by the church in the morning when 1 of our ushers was setting out the **orange cones** in the street. He stopped & asked what was happening. He explained Easter service at 8am. He came. He gave his life to Christ that morning when the invitation was given!
- 2.44. The most critical issue facing **Christians** today is not abortion, pornography, the disintegration of the family, moral absolutes, MTV, drugs, racism, sexuality, or school prayer. The critical issue today is **dullness**...the good news is no longer **good news, its okay news!** Christianity is no longer **life changing**, it's **life enhancing!**³ ☹️
- 2.45. The most critical issue facing **unbelievers** today is one thing...**Jesus!!!**
2.46. **"You cannot go on being a good egg forever. You must either hatch or rot."**
2.46.1. Anyone ready to **hatch** into His kingdom this morning?

² Griffith Thomas; pg.190.

³ Jason Jones; Sermon Spice Sermon quote