Acts 10  

"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 then 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.”


2.14.1.1. 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 the 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.

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.

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1 Peter Wagner; pg.232.
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.

(39) I talked about contextualizing earlier. Here is a good example how he doesn’t change the gospel but tailored it to the Gentiles.

They killed by hanging/nailing on the tree. [He didn’t use this earlier to Jews]

(43) Cornelius already a worshipper of true God, so accepted in order to obtain further blessings of Christ. [now religion + relationship]

Ever speak to someone so ripe? “I’m ready to pray the prayer!”

What a strong affirmation – “to Him all the prophets witness”

One way – “that, through His name”

Simple means – “whoever believes in Him”

Definite statement - “will receive remission of sins”

MEETING THE HOLY SPIRIT! (44-48)

Here is the Gentile Pentecost!!!

Peter never got to finish the sermon.

When he said, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins, they believed & were saved.

(44,45) Sign from heaven just like when the Jewish believers were admitted (Pent).

(47) Peter immediately called for baptism, pointing to their full inclusion into the Christian community.

End:

John Wesley (founder of the Methodist movement) was saved while reading the introduction to Luther’s commentary on Romans.

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!

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!

The most critical issue facing unbelievers today is one thing...Jesus!!

“You cannot go on being a good egg forever. You must either hatch or rot.”

Anyone ready to hatch into His kingdom this morning?

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2 Griffith Thomas; pg.190.
3 Jason Jones; Sermon Spice Sermon quote