

Connecting the Dots

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[0:00] It's such a pain. Hey, praise the Lord. Let's get in our Bibles now, Acts chapter 10. If you had something, you missed your chance. Acts chapter 10 in the Word of God.

And we're going to have quite a portion to read this morning, so please be patient, follow along, and make sure you get what's going on in this scene. This is a pivotal chapter here in the Word of God as a transition is taking place and unfolding as God is shifting incrementally how He's dealing with man.

And by the way, if that's foreign to you, God has changed how He deals with man over the years more than once, and He'll do it again in the future, and He's okay to do that. He's God.

It's just our job to study and to understand His working and what He's doing. I don't know if you care for mathematics too much, but most of you have taken a class in geometry.

And you know a little bit about probably basic geometry. I'll give you a real basic one. What do you call the figure, the polygon, as it were, that has three sides? Hey, okay, so we all understand, right?

[1:11] Triangle, nobody has a problem with that? We're all good? Can't call it anything else?

There is no other really way to do it. They're a triangle. A triangle is a polygon with three sides, and those three sides connecting at three points are vertices.

They make three angles, and the sum of those angles is 180 degrees. Everybody good so far? Or is this just getting a little too deep? Okay. Well, Russ, you're good, but these kids are like, come on. That's not until tomorrow. Well, I want to take you through that thought about a triangle. I'm going to keep that and just put it in front of you, and then we'll come back to it. And we're going to read here Acts chapter 10, and we're going to read the entirety of the chapter.

So stay with me, please, as much as you can. And if you don't have a Bible in front of you, just listen intently and try to understand and just capture and picture and vision this in your mind, what's taking place.

This is interesting. Verse number one says, There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band. Now understand, Cornelius is a Gentile.

[2:12] He is not a Jew. A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming into him and saying unto him, Cornelius.

When he looked on him, he was afraid and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thy alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter.

He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside. And he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. When the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually.

And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. On the morrow, as they went on their journey and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour.

And he became very hungry and would have eaten, but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

[3:32] And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake again unto him the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common.

Call not thou common. This was done thrice, and the vessel was received up again into heaven. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry at for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them. Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius, and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek.

What is the cause wherewith ye are come? Or wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel, to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

Then called he them in, and lodged them, and on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow, after they entered into Caesarea, and Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

[4 : 59] And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up, I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in and found many that were come together.

And he said unto them, You know how that it is unlawful, an unlawful thing, for a man that is a Jew, to keep company, or to come unto one of another nation. But God hath showed me, that I should not call any man common, or unclean.

Therefore came I unto you, without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me. And Cornelius said, Four days ago, I was fasting unto this hour.

And at the ninth hour, I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter, and he is lodged in the house of one Simon Tanner by the seaside, who when he cometh, he shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore, I sent to thee, and thou hast well done, that thou art come. Now therefore, are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee, of God? Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive, that God is no respecter of persons, but every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

[6 : 19] The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all. That word I say ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, with the Holy Ghost, and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed, of the devil, for God was with him.

And we are witnesses of these things, which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem, whom they slew, and hanged on a tree, him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly. Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify, that it is he which was ordained of God, to be a judge of quick and dead.

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all of them, which heard the word.

And they of the circumcision, which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles, also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.

[7 : 32] Then answered Peter, can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized, in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him, to tarry certain days.

Now in this chapter, we read about an angel showing up. We read about visions. If Peter falling into a trance, the word vision shows up several times. We read about the gift here, at the end of the Holy Ghost being poured out, and them speaking with tongues.

Understand, this is not a pattern, by any means, for salvation today, or for us to minister today. These are special circumstances, during a very unique time period, of a transition.

When God is moving from dealing, only with Israel and the Jews, to then opening up to the Gentiles. And as God shifts, and makes changes through this, there's an incremental shift, and process that kind of takes place, and we're right in the middle, of that going on.

So we are not going to dive, into Acts chapter 2, or Acts chapter 10, or really any of these chapters, and Acts, and follow certain things, and say that's how we should be doing it, and that's how we're going to do it.

[8 : 44] We need to understand, the whole entirety of the scriptures, and then understand what's happening, and where we are. But in this, we need to learn also, that there's no New Testament books, written at the time.

In Acts chapter 10, they don't have any of the gospels written, or any of the accounts, or doctrines taught, by the Apostle Paul to the church. That's not even a thing. And we are not seeking to follow, or to imitate the actions, and the scene that we see before us, that we've just read.

It's not a blueprint, for soul winning. Angels, visions, speaking with tongues. But really, that's just the way it was, at the moment. Look back at chapter 9, briefly, and notice this, with the Apostle Paul, in his conversion.

Notice what God did there, beyond just the bright light, that shined upon him. Look at verse number 10, Acts chapter 9, verse 10, and there was a certain disciple, at Damascus, named Ananias.

To him said, the Lord, notice, in a vision, Ananias, and he said, behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, arise, go to the street, which is called Straight, and acquire the house of Judas, for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision, a man.

[9 : 55] So it's a very similar scene, just in chapter 9, where God gave one man a vision, to go meet another man, who he gave a vision to, and he tells him to go talk to him. And so there's things going on there as well.

And so just understand, this is not our pattern, or blueprint for soul winning, and seeking to minister today. I want to examine though, in chapter 10, three persons in this chapter.

I want to let these persons be points. They're all going to be points, that become vertices, if we make a connection between the points. And ultimately, we're going to end up with a triangle.

We're going to end up with a triangle. And it's not complete, until all the connections have been made. And so this morning, I just want to entitle this, Connecting the Dots. Connecting the Dots, here in this Acts chapter 10.

Point number one, is the man we're introduced to, in chapter 10, verse 1, Cornelius. And for now, Cornelius is just a dot, on the world. Just a dot on the map, in this, he's just a piece of dust.

[10 : 59] He's just a dot, nothing. No connection to nothing. He's a certain man in Caesarea, called Cornelius. And we're going to call Cornelius, point one, the truth seeker.

I want you to notice a few things, about Cornelius, that the scripture gives us. First of all, is his credentials. In chapter 10, in verse number two, he's a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house.

A devout man, verse number 22. Notice the servants that come, in chapter 10, verse 22, they said, Cornelius the centurion, they call him a just man, one that feareth God.

His credentials, Cornelius the truth seeker, was a good guy, a just man, fearing God, with all his house. He knew how to run his house.

The Bible talks about, a minister, or a bishop, in the New Testament, that he should, rule his house well. That's what Cornelius was, in that light. He took care of things, at home.

[12 : 02] He wasn't a hypocrite. He was a good man. And we'd probably just call him, an all around good guy, upright, honest, trustworthy, faithful. In the sense of, the scripture, to find a place for him, he would be, what, Paul used to be.

And, if you want to turn, Philipians chapter 3, keep your place in Acts. But in Philipians 3, Paul talks about himself, what he was. Cornelius, would have been, a righteous man, according to the Old Testament.

But something's changed. Cornelius was a just man, one that feared God. In Philipians chapter 3, if you're there, notice verse 6, Paul talks about himself, in the past, saying, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness, which is in the law, blameless.

The apostle Paul, had righteousness, that was, that the law, could give him. He obeyed the law, he followed the law, with zeal. And in verse number 9, Paul, though he got rid of that belief, and that law, and he turned from it, and trusted Jesus Christ, it says in verse 9, of Philipians 3, and be

found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through, the faith of Christ, the righteousness, which is of God, by faith.

So, let's just consider Cornelius, for the moment, a righteous man, according to the Old Testament law. He was a good guy. He was living it. He was doing his best, a just man, an upright, and faithful man.

[13 : 33] Now, back in Acts chapter 10, his reputation. In verse 22, we read, he was a just man, one that feareth God, and here it says, he's of good report, among all the nation, of the Jews.

This man has a reputation, among the Jews. Now, come on, this is rare. This is super rare. Jews don't have any dealings, with Gentiles. It's not even of their law, as Peter says later, when he goes into him.

This is not something, that it's lawful for me, to even be here with you. But this man, has a reputation, for being of good report, among all the Jews. And no doubt, Gentiles as well.

This is really abnormal. He must have been a kind man, to the Jews. He must have been merciful, to the nation of Israel, whereas, Jews and Gentiles, just don't mix. He must have been, compassionate to them, for them to like a Gentile, and to figure that he's a good guy, and have a good reputation, a good report, among the Jews.

That's a complete rarity, of this age. So he had a reputation. Thirdly, let's see his deeds. In verse number two, we read, he's a devout man, one that feareth God, with all his house.

[14 : 43] And it says, which gave much alms, to the people, and prayed to God, all the way. Giving alms, is a gift, by means of relief, or probably of the poor.

The beggars would ask alms. I think that's back in, I think it's chapter three, where there's a beggar, sitting there asking alms, of Peter, and John, as they go into the temple, to pray. It's a gift.

It's charitable. It's giving. It's helping out. And this is one of his deeds. He's a giver. He's got a good reputation. He's a just man. He's not greedy. He doesn't despise the poor.

He cares about them. He's got a good heart, is what we'd say. It also describes him praying to God, all the way, in verse two. In verse number 30, he said that, four days ago, I was fasting, unto this hour.

So this man has some deeds, to back up his reputation, and his credentials. He is praying to God, on a consistent basis. Probably faithfully praying, and seeking God.

[15 : 53] He is fasting, that is humbling himself, before God Almighty. He's a sober thinker, Cornelius is. He's point one, Cornelius, the truth seeker, but there's something missing, with Cornelius.

Yeah, he's just. Yes, he fears God. Yes, he prays to God. Yes, he fasts before God. Yes, he gives to other people. But there's something missing. Cornelius is missing, the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ Jesus, alone.

And that's something, he's not going to get, by giving his money, to the poor. And by just praying to God, and fasting, and afflicting himself, before God. He's never going to attain, righteousness.

The righteousness of God. He's missing something. And I'm going to read a passage, from Romans 10, briefly here. Paul says this about Israel. And this is kind of matching, Cornelius at the time, in chapter 10, of Romans, verse 1.

Brethren, my heart's desire, and prayer to God, for Israel, is that they might be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant, up here in their head, ignorant of God's righteousness, are going about, to establish, their own righteousness.

[17 : 11] And he talks, Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness. They have not submitted themselves, unto the righteousness of God. That righteousness, is obtained by faith, in Christ Jesus.

Cornelius is a truth seeker. He's got the credentials, he's got the reputations, he's got the deeds, but there's something missing. Look at verse 25, of chapter 10. As Peter was coming in, to his home, meeting him for the first time, as Peter was coming in, he fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. You know what that tells me? That he's a good guy, but in front of his family, in front of his friends, he's not worried about, what they think about him.

He sees this man come in, and just on his face. But it also shows us, he doesn't have a clue. This guy is lost. He's falling down, and worshipping a man.

Now, I think he's just respectful, I think he fears God, I think this is, he knows God's doing something here, but Peter's like, get up. We don't do this. This is not how things are done. [18:16] But Cornelius is open, and he's seeking the truth. Look at verse 33, chapter 10, verse 33, immediately, therefore, I sent to thee.

So, immediately, he's not questioning, like Peter was. He gets a vision, he hears instructions, he acts upon it, he's seeking, and in the end of the verse, now therefore, are we all here present, before God, to hear all things, that are commanded thee, of God.

This man, is seeking the truth, and he's anticipating, some truth from God, out of this. In chapter 11, 14, when Peter recalls this later, he says, who shall tell thee, words whereby thou, and all thy house, shall be saved.

Peter's telling the story later, and he uses the term, that I'm going to tell him, how to be saved. Although, that didn't come up, at all in chapter 10, when Peter puts it all together, he understands, what this is all about now, a chapter later.

But at the time, Cornelius, a good guy, but not good enough. Not good enough. Devout, yes. Just, yes. Upright, fear God, praying, fasting, giving, check, check, check, but something missing.

[19:32] Not good enough. He lacked what God requires. Cornelius is just a dot. Just a dot. Today, there's a lot of Corneliuses.

It'd be a better world, if there'd be more Corneliuses. But there is a lot. I took a little research, of the term Christian, this week.

And I know, I know what it is already, before I saw it, but I was even just disgusted, how much of what I saw. And as I searched a little bit, the term Christian, it's not, it's definitely not used today, like it's biblical usage.

People today, well, some would just lump themselves, they say, well, if I'm not an atheist, I believe in God, then I guess I'm a Christian. They don't know. Some would say that they think, if they were polled, and said that the Bible, do you believe the Bible is, is the word of God, and the ones that would say yes, because that's like a Christian belief, they would think, okay, I'm a Christian then, because I believe something, Christians believe.

They really have no concept, many, of the word Christian, of what it is, and where it comes from, and why it is. One who believes in the teachings of Christ, is what a definition pops up for a Christian, believes in the teachings of Christ.

[20:54] Well, you know what that encompasses? Here's an example. Mormons, Catholics, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Charismatics, Presbyterians, Seventh-day Adventists, Methodists, Eastern Orthodox, and all of that, and Anglicans, and that's a whole other branch, and Jehovah's Witnesses, and Unitarians, and Christian Science, and it can go on.

Looking on, I think it was Wikipedia perhaps, not that I put too much stock in anything, but it tried its best, to separate denominations, and to group them.

And under the term Christian, the very first thing is, Roman Catholic Church. And it sorted this by their membership, I guess. So that's the highest membership of anything that they categorized as Christian.

And there's Roman Catholic Church, huge number. And a few, where the Catholic Church, are different branches of that even, if you believe that.

Underneath that, I don't have this memorized by any means, but there is distinct denominations, and then subcategories for each denomination. For instance, where it said Baptist, I would say there's easily 30 to 50, something like that, separate beliefs under Baptist.

[22:16] And then you just, it's too much for me to even remember and recall, and I almost printed it off, and I thought, why would I want to read that list? In front of church. So I'm not doing that today, but I gave you enough list right now.

The term Christian, that's what it means to the world. It's something to do with Bible, or Christ, or God, or something. But what does it mean? You know what, Cornelius? He's not a Christian. Not according to the book, but the world would say he was. The world would say, yeah, he's following Christ, he fears God, he's praying, he's a Christian. No, he's not. He's not a believer. That's the term I use, just to keep the distinction. He's not a believer, in the Lord Jesus Christ. There's something missing. Cornelius is just a dot. Secondly, there's another dot. And on the other side, if there was a dot over here, over here is another dot, and that is Peter.

And Peter's the soul winner. Peter shows up, in verse number nine, and he's going up to a housetop, to pray, about the sixth hour, which in their time, that's twelve noon.

[23 : 22] Their day starts at six in the morning, so the sixth hour, for them, is twelve o'clock noon for us. And he became very hungry. Now notice the soul winner here, Peter, in verse 14, when he's commanded of God, in this vision, to rise, Peter, kill and eat, Peter's response to God is, not so, Lord.

Nope. I'm not going to do that. I want us to see a few things, about Peter, our second point. Peter, is slow to obey.

He's arguing with God, while he's praying, in verse number, nine. He's, he went up in the housetop to pray, he's talking to God, and he's going to end up, fighting with God, resisting God, is when God responds to him, in this, trance that he's in, he's going to argue back with him.

Remember back in Matthew 16, verse 22, when Christ made some comments, to him, he told him that he's going to, suffer many things, and be put to death, and rise again. Peter's like, far be it from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee, that's not going to happen.

Really, Peter? When Christ said, I'm going to be killed, Peter argues, argues with Jesus Christ, and says, no, it's not happening, you got it all wrong. You see this again in Peter, when God says something, he says, not so, Lord.

[24 : 49] Peter's quick to argue, and quick to open his mouth, before he thinks, and this is, while he's praying, and I, I understand, I suppose, why, because this didn't match, this, this vision he's having, what he's told to do, doesn't match, what he's thinking, is how he's been brought up, and what he's comfortable doing.

He's slow to obey, but he's quick to say no. Now, I just can't help but pause, and say, does that sound like anybody? Anybody in here, that's slow to obey, and quick to say no, God, not so, Lord. When the Lord says, get your Bible opened, not so, Lord. The Lord says, go hand the track, not so, Lord. Get ready for church, it's time to go.

Not so, Lord, the kids, not so, Lord, my job, not so, Lord, excuse, excuse, excuse. Does that sound like anybody? That's Peter. The soul winner, he was slow to obey.

He was also slow to perceive God's working. In verse 16, it says, this was done thrice. Can you, now, I just read through this, and don't ever catch that.

[25 : 56] I don't ever envision that, as I'm picturing it. This happened once. Not so, Lord. What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

Down comes the sheet again. Rise, Peter, kill it. Not, not doing it. I told you once, and I told you twice. It's not happening. I'm clean.

I abide by the law. I don't touch those unclean animals. Third time, no, God, no. Forget about it. Three times, Peter is slow to obey.

He's slow to perceive that God is working here. It's just not getting through. And so, the next verse, in verse 17, Peter's doubting in himself what this vision, which he had seen, should mean.

I imagine he was, because this was something real. I mean, he's praying, God's showing him something here, and he's saying, nope, nope, no. And now he's just like, it's gone.

[26 : 55] It evaporated. It's out, and now what in the world just took place? And he's trying to make sense of it. It doesn't make any sense to him. Because all Peter knows is, I've been raised a Jew.

We abstain from unclean things. We keep the law of Moses. Now, Jesus Christ had some really great stuff going on in his ministry that he was a part of. But this concept of unclean things, it's still very real to him.

And he's just sitting there mulling it over, doesn't quite get what God's doing, and he's wondering about, what does that mean, what God hath cleansed? God cleansed something?

He cleansed these animals? What does that mean? He's fighting, he's struggling, he's doubting in himself. Because that's unclean. So what did God cleanse?

Because I know that's unclean. And he doesn't know what to do about it. He's slow to perceive what God's doing. So the Spirit speaks to him. In, what verse was that?

[27 : 59] Verse 19, While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. So God speaks to him again. And he's moving him. And now look at verse 21.

Then Peter went down to the men, which were sent unto him from Cornelius, and said, Behold, I am he whom you seek. Question, what's the cause we're with your come? What are you doing here?

Now, the Spirit already told him, Go down, go with them, doubting nothing, I sent them. And so they show up, and he's like, What are you doing here anyway? You know why? Because Peter has no idea what's happening.

He's really clueless. He's slow to perceive. Come down to verse number 29. Even after he makes the trip, which took more than a day, to Caesarea, a 35 mile trip along the seacoast, the Mediterranean, Peter goes all the way there, no doubt, thinking about this, with six Jews, from later in chapter 11, it shows us there were six men that accompanied him, and these three that he's going with, and nine of them making this trip, 35 miles, the whole time thinking, What am I doing? Why am I with these guys? Why am I following them? Why is God telling me to go here? In verse number 29, he comes to meet the man. Cornelius bows down, he says, Get up. And in verse number 29, Therefore came I unto you, without gain saying, as soon as I was sent for, I ask therefore, another question, for what intent you have sent for me?

[29 : 28] Why am I here? Of course you don't know Peter. God's tried to declare it to you. He tried to open your eyes in a vision already, and you fought. You said no.

And now God says go, and so you go, but you're just, you're completely blind to what's happening. He is slow to perceive God's working, because what Peter hasn't connected yet, the verse in verse 22, notice the end of the verse, these men are telling them about Cornelius, and they say that he was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house to hear words of thee. Peter, you're going to tell them something. You're going to instruct them about something. And Peter making that whole trip, what are the words? What am I going to say? What is it, what am I supposed to say?

And he shows up, and why am I here? Now, Peter's a preacher. Peter's a preacher. He is the preacher at this moment in time in the scriptures.

There's, there's other men God use, other to say, but if there's anything recorded about anybody, he's the one in chapter one, two, three, four, and five. He's the one doing all this stuff.

[30 : 38] But here, I'm supposed to go speak words to them. He can't associate what that would be. Now, far be it from a preacher not knowing what he's supposed to say, unless he's just slow to obey, slow to perceive what God's doing here.

There's some doctrine that's been circulating around in this time. It's in chapter 15, verse 1, and don't turn if you don't have time, but let me just catch this quickly, that there's men coming down from Judea, taught the brethren, saying, except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved.

So even in that age, they're still preaching, you've got to be circumcised if you've got to be saved, submitting to the law. Later on, in chapter 18, we learn of a man named Apollos, born in Alexandria, eloquent man, mighty in the scriptures.

He was instructed in the way of the Lord, being fervent in the spirit and spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. So one's still teaching Moses for salvation, another one's teaching the baptism of John, which is preceding the ministry of Jesus Christ.

This man Apollos was mighty in the scriptures, but he still didn't know what was going on. There's doctrines circulating, and men preaching different things, Peter's not sure what he's doing here.

[31 : 57] And so he shows up, and he has the right message. He has what Cornelius needs, but he's slow to perceive that God is calling him to go somewhere he's never been.

Look at chapter 10 and verse 27 and 28. And as he talked with him, he went in, into Cornelius' home, and found many that were come together.

So it's not just Cornelius, it's many, many Gentiles. And you know what his first response is? What hits him hardest is that he said unto them, you know how that is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to come to keep company or come unto one of another nation.

I mean, that slaps him right in the face when you walk, Gentiles everywhere, it's a Gentile's house. You know this isn't lawful. You know I'm not supposed to do this, right? You do understand that. Me coming across that threshold into your home, speaking to you, I've never done before in my life.

This is the first time for this, but God showed me something. He showed me that I'm going to do this. This is the first time in the home. Lots of them there. Had to be awkward. He's a fish out of water.

[33 : 11] And again, he's slow to perceive. I remember as a kid going to my grandparents' home and they were a Catholic family in Chicago.

We'd visit there all the time. And walking into that home, there'd be things on the walls that were not in my home growing up. It was foreign to me. These pictures of Mary and her, you know, over top of Jesus Christ.

They're just Catholic stuff that they believed. There'd be crucifixes with Jesus on the cross on the wall. That was never in my home. I was never around that in my life, my upbringing. There was booze and a booze cabinet and a wine containers and alcohol.

That was never in my home. But these are my families, my grandparents, where my mom grew up or where my dad grew up. And so coming into that home on vacation, it was like good to see them but it was always like surrounded by just different settings.

It was so unfamiliar to me to be around liquor right there. Like, ah! I'm a kid. I'm seven, eight years old. That's like the wickedest thing there is.

[34 : 16] And then these weird pictures of Mary, it just felt weird. I remember feeling that, just this is awkward. I'm out of place here. I think Peter felt out of place.

I remember being in a, going to visit a family that came to our church in Pennsylvania once and they were from South Africa. Like South Africans, real South Africans.

and they had a real hard kind of speech to them. It was, it was hard to discern in some cases. It was just different but they lived really close. They came and I went to visit them and I remember walking into the home never thinking anything until I got in there and I was like, oh, they decorate way different than the way I decorate or my wife decorates.

I should clarify that. And it stood out to me. Now, I didn't think this when I'm knocking on the door and they greeted me and I went in and sat down with them. Never crossed my mind until I got in. I was like, ooh, I'm in a different place.

Different culture, different backgrounds, different things like that. It stood out. I don't doubt for a moment that it stood out big time to Peter. A man that it is unlawful for him to keep company with someone from another nation.

[35 : 28] When he crossed that threshold, walked into that house and saw all these Gentiles, he is not in his element here. This is a first time for him.

And he's slow. He's slow to perceive what God's doing because he's out of his comfort level. This is new territory for him. Now, consider this with me that Peter is slow in both of these ways for the same reason.

Because this is new to him. He's slow to obey. He's slow to perceive God's working because he's not been here and he's not comfortable. And it seems valid to us, right? It seems like we'd sympathize with that.

I mean, Peter, you're trained this way and now God's saying do something against that. But folks, God's telling him to do it. God said, rise, Peter, kill and eat.

Not so. Peter made an excuse that he doesn't have a right to make. When God's telling you, you obey. Peter's not a good example here right now.

[36 : 27] He's just a dot for now. He's just a dot. God's telling him to do something and he makes an excuse that's not going to hold water or be valid to resist God. We make excuses.

I've never done that before. Oh, pastor, I couldn't do that because I just don't feel comfortable doing that. It's just an excuse. Oh, I don't think that we've never done that here and I just, so what?

I'm not claiming to be God and directing your life. Don't miss the thought here. But come out of your comfort level. If God's trying to help you and move you and get you to do something, don't resist it. Don't excuse yourself saying, I don't think I could ever do that. Obedience is what God wants to see, not excuses. The Bible says, I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

Let that be your answer instead of, oh, I can't. Say, you know, I've never done that but I think I could do that through Christ who strengthens me. I think I could do something like that if God wants me to do that.

[37 : 34] The Bible says, it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. So Peter is slow to obey, he's slow to perceive but there's something about Peter that I think we should all take into account here.

Verse number 10, Peter was hungry. In verse number 10, it says, he became very hungry and would have eaten. Now, what do you make of this?

Well, this is, God takes advantage of the circumstance to open his eyes to something or to use that. It's no coincidence to the timing of Peter's hunger at 12 noon when they're making ready and he's

very hungry that God instructs him to eat.

Peter says, I can't. God says, yes, you can. Not so, Lord. Peter, kill and eat, I'm telling you. What God hath cleansed, you can eat this, you can partake because Peter thought he couldn't because his appetite was only for the clean, the sanctified but realize what this message is not about food, it's about souls and Peter had already been used of God in an incredible way.

He is, this is not a strange thing for him, for God to use him. Not just the ministry of Christ with the power they received but it carried on in the book of Acts in Acts chapter 2 he stands up and preaches and 3,000 are added to the church.

[39 : 03] 3,000. Peter's got that experience. Acts chapter 4 it's 5,000 men are hearing his message from there at the temple when they healed somebody and then they're believing.

Peter's got people in Acts chapter 5 dropping dead at his feet because they're lying to God and he's standing there calling them on the carpet and they drop dead. I mean he's, this is him and he's seeing this happen.

He's healed people with his very shadow in Acts chapter 5. His shadow and people are being healed. Peter's got some experience in the ministry and God is using him.

He's had an appetite for what this is to be used of God and to serve him. In Acts chapter 9 it closes with him raising Tabitha a.k.a. Dorcas from the dead.

Raised a woman from the dead. Who else did that? He's keeping company with a very select few including the Lord Jesus Christ. So Peter though he has this taste for serving God.

[40 : 10] He's been used of God. He's been ignorant though of what God's trying to convey to him. Peter, they're all clean. It's not just these Jews in Jerusalem and Judea that you're preaching to. They're all clean, Peter.

You can have them all. You can go to them all. And maybe Peter remembered the words of Christ in John chapter 4 to lift up your eyes and look on the fields.

He said that to them when they were dealing with a woman of Samaria. One that the Jews don't have dealings with. I think he remembered those words and said, oh, is that what's going on?

Point number two was Peter, the soul winner. He was slow to obey. He was slow to perceive what God was doing but he was hungry and God used that.

Now point number three and let this be the one on top is God. The third person in this story in this chapter is God, the matchmaker. God, the matchmaker.

[41 : 10] He's not a sovereign thing going on where he's forcing one to come to this one and making them come together to trust Christ or he's not forcing a man to be saved but it's God that we see working and arranging matching his preacher with a prepared heart.

A man that's got a prepared heart that's seeking the truth, God raises up the preacher and brings them together and makes a connection. God, the matchmaker.

We read it of Cornelius and we're almost finished here in verse 22 that Cornelius is a centurion, a just man, one that feareth God of good report among all the nation of the Jews. It says that he was warned from God by a holy angel.

Cornelius got a message from God, warned of God and then he sends men immediately and they travel those 35 miles to the south to Joppa and the next day they neared a city.

Before they even got to Peter, God starts dealing with Peter. God the matchmaker is working behind these scenes but showing, bringing these two together God then has a vision for Peter.

Peter sees a vision and hears a voice and he's doubting what it means that we read in verse 17.

[42 : 24] The Spirit speaks to him again in verse 19 and in verse 28 Peter says this to those, God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

So God is warning, Cornelius, warned of God by an angel. God is showing something to Peter over here and orchestrating the events to bring them together.

Peter abstained from contact with Gentiles and he didn't care for their souls but God did. And so God set some plans together and set something in motion to open Peter's eyes and to ultimately glorify Jesus Christ by getting the truth to a lost man and to his family.

Now, the triangle. The triangle is there's three dots, there's three points this morning and Cornelius is praying to God in verse 4 he was afraid or no, he prayed to God always.

It's in verse 4 when he looked on him he says, what is it Lord? And he said, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. Later when he recalls this in verse 31 it says that thy prayer is heard.

[43 : 45] So Cornelius is praying and he's praying to God and he's praying to God and there's a connection made. The prayer was heard. There's a line that's been drawn and God warns Peter. He speaks to Peter and instructs him in verse 13 a voice rise Peter kill and eat the voice spake again in verse 15 it's done three times the spirit in verse 19 speaks again to him and later as Peter recalls this in chapter 11 in verse 7 he says I heard a voice saying to me and so the line the connection is made from God to Peter the line is drawn it went from Cornelius to God now God spake to Peter Peter heard there's one thing left one thing left is for the last connection to be made to make it complete Peter goes to Cornelius and in verse 33 immediately therefore I sent to thee now done well he says now therefore we are here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God then Peter opened his mouth and said of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons Jews Gentiles none of it and off he goes preaching and teaching the Lord Jesus Christ there's a completion it was Cornelius to God it was God to Peter and now that dot connects to that dot whereas he would never do that not so Lord but now his eyes are open and the triangle has been completed and by way of closing and considering this chapter and the circumstances and what God is doing I wonder how many incomplete triangles are out there or in here how many have been seeking to fear God or do right or pray or just give or do what they know to do and it reaches God and they're not saved they're still missing that righteousness of Jesus Christ and then God says hey go tell him go give him a track go invite him to church and another connection is made to his children to you and I but I wonder how many incompletions are made because we don't go to them they've called on God for something they're seeking truth God's looking for his preacher how shall they hear without a preacher God finds one and he puts it on their heart and says you tell him you be a testimony you reach out to him and we say not so Lord not so I wonder how many incompletions are out there there's plenty of Cornelius's and they need a Peter to preach the words of life to them to open their eyes to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the free gift of eternal life I wonder if you're willing to obey the voice or are you quick to argue are you quick to say nope don't do it that way God will speak to you if your heart's open God will reveal to you what to do and who to do it to and how to say and what to speak even not so Lord I can't speak that sounds like Moses it's like who made the mouth Moses I can put these words in your mind and in your mouth just go

God's looking for a vessel and he wants to use you I wonder this morning are you hungry to be used of God do you have a desire to be used of God Peter did but he was just too slow to receive it and to perceive that God's telling me to do something he was too quick to make excuses you know who that is that's me that's this preacher right here quick to make excuses and quick to say not so Lord I'm just as guilty and there's a lot of connections that haven't been made that need to get made for Jesus Christ let's bow our heads together today and this morning in a moment we'll dismiss for Peter it started with prayer Peter had to get to prayer and God he didn't even know it but God was already at work in the life of Cornelius the lost and Cornelius was already following the light that he had but Peter had to say yes to God to allow him to be used and God wanted to win that soul and the soul of his family and his house and all those that came to meet him

[48 : 35] God cared about those souls but Peter didn't because Peter said I'm clean I don't go there I don't do that would you admit this morning that your first reaction is to argue with God when he moves in your heart to tell somebody about the lost when God's seeking to make a connection a completion in their soul to save them for eternity to bring them to Christ to the gospel of Jesus Christ and sometimes it's you and I that say not so Lord I wonder this morning is God speaking to you about this does he want you to affect somebody for their eternity maybe their entire family are you going to resist it or are you too slow to receive this and perceive

God is telling me to work God wants to save somebody's soul when you leave this place will you grab a stack of tracks and keep them in your car keep them on your person will you say Lord I'll do something for you this week God's already put somebody on somebody's mind this morning a family member a co-worker a neighbor put them on your heart and said you've never talked to them you've never tried to make that connection will you surrender to God say I'll make that connection because Christ died for their sins and he wants to use me to make that connection to glorify his son I hope you'll open your eyes this morning and realize that God's in the business of saving souls and you are the one that needs to make the final connection father please use these words use this story this chapter what we've seen of these three persons to understand your work in this world today and how we can be in on what you're seeking to do

God forgive us for our laziness forgive us for not caring for caring more about entertaining ourselves or checking our phone than about the eternal souls of men God I think we're all guilty so Lord I pray that you'll put something in our hearts that you'll revive us again for a zeal and a passion to win souls to witness to the lost may Jesus Christ be deemed worthy in our sight to look like a fool for if that's the case to put aside what they might say or might think about us God give us a desire invite you this morning if the Lord's dealing with your heart about this to come and pray and talk it over with God don't be ashamed but just be honest with him if you say I'm quick to make excuses and I'm even quick to say no God ask him to give you victory over that let's stand to our feet together we're going to sing just as
I am it's number 249 and as we sing I invite you to come and pray don't be ashamed ask the Lord to work a work in your heart for Jesus sake say and pray or whatever you