

Acts 10:1-23 Learning to Say Yes Lord!

Have you ever had this experience?

A)The Holy Spirit ministers to your heart - to do something- makes you uncomfortable?

B)Perhaps it is the prompting to sign up for a ministry opportunity -

1)maybe it is to go on a missions trip

C)Perhaps it is a prompting to walk across the coffee shop or the office hallway- the school campus

1)and tell someone - Jesus loves them?

D)When it happens - your heart is pounding - might start to sweat - mental gymnastics -

1)is this really the Lord ?

E)Am I the only one go through that? -

1)Unnerving - but when I respond - it can be so exciting

Vacation two weeks ago AZ - reading book - guy experienced that - at the mall - walks out of this store sees this guy sitting bench.

A)Go tell that guy that I love him and have a plan for his life/ -

B)No I am not going to do that - guy is minding his own business - I am at the mall

C)Resisted - Another store - comes out the same guy is there - Again prompting - again resisted

Happened a third time - Finally - Ok - I get it - walks up to the guy and says -

A)I don't want this to sound weird - but I am a Christian

B)And I sensed Jesus telling me - go and tell you God loves you and has a plan for your life

C)This is what the guys says to him - You would not believe this - but I woke up today - ready to commit suicide

1)I didn't believe in God - didn't believe that he existed

I told God today: If you are real - Show me prove to me that you are real

A)If you don't I am going to Kill myself because - I don't have anything to live for

B)So I came down here today - thinking the mall was as good a place as any for God to reveal himself to me

C)And you are the 3rd person who has come to me and said the same thing - God loves me and has a plan for my life

D)Guy ends up getting saved -right there in the mall.

Well in our text today - We are going to see that the Lord is going to send a message to the Apostle Peter

A)Like the guy in that story he is going to get this message 3 times

B)The Purpose of the message is to get Peter moving in the direction that God wants him to go
1)To bring the gospel to the Gentile world

C)Peter like us resisted at first. - But we will see him finally surrender and God does an amazing thing

1)Uses Peter to be the first one to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles

D)All of us sitting here today who are not Jewish - have benefited from the Obedience of Peter illustrated here in Acts 10

Note this: Whenever God is going to work in an area, or a persons' life it usually involves 4 things.

A)His Plan, A Time Period, A place and a people

B)There is the Person or the People he wants to reach -

1)and there is always the Vessel or the Person He wants to use.

C)God's Plan was put forth by Jesus in Acts Ch 1:8 - Jesus said, - *You're going to be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world.* There's the plan.

Now up to this point - His followers having only taken the gospel to the Jewish world

A) But now is the Time that is going to change - God wants them to go to Gentiles

B) Acts chapter 10 puts us about 10 years into the life of the early church.

C) The Place is Caesarea -

D) The Person God wants to reach is a Roman Centurion named Cornelius

1) The Person God wants to use to reach him is the Apostle Peter

Now in order for this to take place:

A) God is going to have to break through layers and centuries of both religious barriers

B) and social prejudices and tension that existed in the world at that moment.

C) I am dividing our study into two sections today - 1st Section - Cornelius' Calling
The 2nd Section - Peter's Conflict.

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

Who was Cornelius?

A) **His Background:** Cornelius is a Roman, which means he is a part of the class and country - ruling the world at that time.

B) The Romans were the oppressors -

1) they saw the rest of the world and ethnic groups as being beneath them - their servants

C) Rome was a Pantheistic society - they worship many gods.

1) This is the world and mindset Cornelius was born and raised in

D) He is a man who had progressed in that world

His occupation: He is a Roman Centurion

A) The Roman army was divided into legions of six thousand men.

B) The legions were divided into cohorts of six hundred men.

1) The cohorts were divided into six groups of one hundred men—each overseen by a centurion.

C) Centurions were the “master sergeants” of the Roman army.

D) They were brave of heart, sound of mind, and strong in discipline.

E) Cornelius was leading soldiers who were known as the most fiercely loyal to Rome and to the Emperor.

His Job was to enforce the rule of the pagan Roman Empire over the descendants of Abraham. Jewish people

A) Which would have made Cornelius the object of intense Jewish contempt.

B) That contempt would have been amplified because of all the Roman troops in the land.

But amongst his superiors Cornelius is a man who was held in high esteem and trust -

A) He no doubt had an impressive battlefield record

B) The reason I say that is he has been stationed in a great place -

C) Caesarea was a beautiful city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

D) It was an important spot too

During the time of the reign of Caesar Augustus Caesarea served as the Roman Capital of the Province of Judea.

A) Caesar Augustus gifted the city to King Herod -

B) who in turn to honor Caesar Herod built a Huge Palace right on the beach

C) And an Amphitheater that was even bigger than the coliseum at Rome

Caesarea housed the Jewish Navy - that aided the Roman army at that time.

A) So Cornelius is living in a place that would be similar to Coronado today -

B) Beautiful and Strategic -

C) While there God began to do something in his heart

Cornelius' Spiritual Orientation: Notice how he is described: V.2

A) A devout man, and one that feared God...

B) This is amazing to me. "As a typical Roman Pantheist he had been exposed to the Pantheon Roman gods—Jupiter, Augustus, Mars, Venus,

C) Cornelius feared God. Something is happening in his heart - drawn to Judaism - Jehovah

Think about it - Cornelius was raised in an utterly pagan Roman culture.

A) He - grew up in it, was trained in it, lived in it, worked in it.

B) There was nothing inherent in his life or culture that pointed Cornelius to the true and living God.

C) But Cornelius was seeking the one true living God because

1) God had worked in his heart to show him that without fail, idols always fail, and that idols always lie.

So Cornelius turned toward Judaism in hopes that he would find salvation in the one true and living God of Israel.

A) Cornelius got as close to Judaism as one could get without actually becoming a convert to Judaism

B) with all his house... Somehow he was able to convince his family to forsake the gods of Rome!

C) Seek the true and living God!

D) And to serve this God by V.2 by doing good deeds and praying to God

I have met so many people like Cornelius in my life - often Catholic people - Mormon people

A) Good people - pray to God try to live good lives

B) Who because of their religious affiliation, practices and good works think they are in a good place with God.

C) But they have the same problem that Cornelius did - they don't know Jesus -

1) They haven't embraced Jesus as the only way to salvation

D) Still believe that their good works and or their religious affiliation is going to save them and get them into heaven.

E) The Life and story of Cornelius flies in the face of that mentality

The Vision of Cornelius

3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?"

So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. 5 Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. 6 He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."

A few of things to notice here:

A) 1st God meets us where we are at - Cornelius is a military man who is used to giving and receiving marching orders.

B) God deals with Cornelius in a military way - sends him and Angel who gives him marching orders.

C) But the 2nd thing I want you to notice is that the **Angel isn't the means through which the Gospel is going to be shared with him**

D) Because it is not the job of angels to share the gospel.

1) It's ours. - God has chosen to reach lost people with saved people like you and me

God could thunder the gospel from heaven if He so desired.

A)But He's chosen to use you and me as instruments to tell people His good news.

B)His Love / forgiveness / Salvation –

Daniel 12:3 says “those who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever.”

C)If you're a soul-winner, a Good News-sharer, you're going to shine—

1)not only in heaven, but here on earth as well.

D)Good news Share – it – Invigorating !

Cornelius' Submission

7 And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. 8 So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Note that Phrase again in V.6 God says send for Simon - He will show you what you must do?

A)Cornelius your marching orders are going to come from a Jewish man named Simon.

B)That had to have been humbling for Cornelius to hear and embrace.

C)This is something that we are going to see on both ends of this story - that in order for the plan of God to be carried out

D)It was going to involve a humbling and a submission in the heart of the Person God was calling - Cornelius

E)As well as in the heart of the Person that God was wanting to use as his vessel - Which was Peter.

One more thing: God says send for Peter and Cornelius responds immediately -

A)Recurring theme in the book of Acts - God moves in power and wonder when we don't procrastinate.

B)So in Cornelius and his family, friends, we have the people that God wants to reach.

C)As Pick up in V.9 we have Peter the person that God wants to use.

Peter's Background: He is Jewish

A)So he is a part of the people who are being oppressed by the Romans

B)The Romans invading their land, occupying their land and controlling their land

C)The Romans have placed upon them a heavy taxation -

D)Needless to say - the average Jew would have viewed Cornelius as off the radar of God's grace, love and mercy.

On top of that -Peter has grown up in a religious system of Judaism that has taught him to live by strict dietary laws

A)Where certain foods were deemed as clean and other foods were deemed as unclean.

B)If you ate the unclean foods - they would make you unclean like the Gentiles

In the first century, Jews and Gentiles were separated by pedigree, circumcision, Sabbath worship – but above all, they were defined by diet.

A)*A kosher Jew was religiously superior to a non-kosher Gentile.*

B)And that kosher Jew would never in a million years pull up to a table-full of God-forbidden food.

1)Nor would he eat with folks who occupied the table.

C)But kosher laws were part of a bigger picture.

1)God had conditioned Israel to approach life in a certain manner.

All of life was to be DIVIDED as clean and unclean – holy and unholy - pure and impure – acceptable to God and unacceptable to God.

A)This distinction was a grid that went over every dimension of life - food, sacrifice, washing, houses, even people.

B)The Jewish Law provided them a means to differentiate, good from bad.

C)And Kosher Jews were reminded at every single mealtime that there was such a thing as right and wrong – holy and unholy.

1)Good guys ate “*clean*” foods. Bad guys ate the “*dirty birds.*”

D)The Jewish rabbi’s took this distinction to a level that God never intended by teaching this:

1)Gentiles were good for one thing and one thing only - that was to fuel the fires of Hell!! - WOW!!

E)See a Big Gentile man - thought was - that Log will burn for a long time!

Well God is going to breakthrough all of that prejudice and misconception by giving Peter a Vision

A)A Vision that is going to shake him up - cause some consternation in his heart

B)But through this vision - God is going to reveal to Peter that he is his chosen vessel to bring the gospel to the Gentiles

1)He is the chosen vessel to break through centuries of prejudice and false teaching among his people.

C)And through this vision - God is going to reveal to Peter that apart from Jesus everyone - both Jew and Gentile is unclean

The Conditions of the Vision

⁹The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. ¹⁰Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance

So Peter is in the seaside town of Joppa.

A)It’s a pretty day. A gentle breeze is blowing in off the ocean. He goes on the roof top to Pray!

B) Quiet place, quiet time, and quiet heart – often key to hearing the Lord.

C)I can relate to Peter here – I often find that anywhere by the ocean is a good place for me to pray

D)I can also relate to what happens next – Peter is praying – he gets hungry –

1)it is lunch time and his stomach is growling -

E)So hungry he falls into this sort of half sleep half trance thing –

1)and that is when he has this vision that is going to rock his world.

The Content of the Vision he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

Suddenly the heavens open and a picnic blanket descends from the sky.

A)All kinds of incredible edibles are on the menu. “Wild beasts, creepy things, birds of the air” are the featured entrees.

B)But all these tasty entrees fly in the face of everything Peter was taught by his religion he could consume.

The Command in the Vision ¹³And a voice came to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”

C)Vision a blanket full of beast and creepy things - birds - God is saying Dig in

1)I love to share this passage with my Vegan friends - Biblical to eat meat ☺

Peter’s conflict because of the Vision

¹⁴But Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.” ¹⁵And a voice spoke to him again the second time, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.” ¹⁶This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

Now it is understandable why Peter at first found the VISION revolting—and the command to kill and eat shocked him even more!

A)A kosher Jew would never in a million years pull up to a table-full of God-forbidden food.

B)Nothing un Kosher had ever touched his lips that is why he balked at such an unholy smorgasbord!

C)His protest was understandable in the light of his upbringing.

1) Any serious Jew would have reacted in the same way.

D) When God told Peter to eat these non-kosher foods it was as if 1500 years of tradition, and the Law of Moses,

1) and a thousand rabbis, and his entire Jewish family was screaming in Peter's ear to ask for another menu.

E) Peter was wrestling with his tradition, his training and with HIS CONSCIENCE.

1) From birth, it had been drilled into Peter's conscience to keep kosher.

Pause here and say something we need to hear

A) Listen Church we must not measure our Christianity by what we do and don't do.

B) And as Parents we must not teach our kids - that we do not do XYZ simply because we are Christians

C) We need to teach our kids and grandkids - the what of scripture and the why -

D) They need to understand the heart of God behind the command

We also need to clearly differentiate between what we might call our own person house rules and God's rules.

A) This is a personal conviction and this is why - but this is what the Bible says about this subject.

B) Reason is we are trying to prepare our kids to live as Christ followers and to **be salt and light in a world that doesn't worship Jesus**

C) So it is important that our kids don't see the Christian faith as merely a series of Do's and Don'ts

Where they grow up thinking well - Non Christians Do XYZ - because that is what Non-Christians Do

A) And Christians don't do XYZ - because we are Christians

B) but they have no idea why we don't do those things - we just don't

C) Here is what happens as they get older -

1) they have no idea or concrete reasons why they are abstaining from certain things

D) They can't articulate it

It makes them completely unrelatable to the very people God is wanting them to reach and be salt and light to.

A) Their unsaved friends classmates - people they work with

B) Example 21 - Blake I am a Christian - I don't drink

1) - that was my default mechanism in High School to avoid temptation

C) Wrong message - Tim

Peter's heart is in Conflict here because this vision is challenging everything he has been trained to believe

A) So Peter responds to God's commands to **"Rise, Peter; kill and eat** With the ultimate oxymoron, **NOT SO LORD?**

B) Not so pal - not so Son - Not so Dude - Not so Lord! - THAT DOESN'T COMPUTE

C) Sees this vision Three times

Point: Jesus is sharing this reality that it's not as though the Jew is clean

A) and the Gentile was common, or unclean and distant from God.

B) The reality is both are UNCLEAN- Both needed to be brought near to God through faith in Jesus.

C) A sovereign God is stepping out of the box, and he's recruiting Peter to step out with Him.

D) God is doing the same with us - what will it take for this to happen?

E) One Word - Surrender!

The Surrender and Submission of Peter to the vision v.17-23

17 Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant,

A) God is going to reveal it to him on the way

behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. 18 And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

19 While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you.

20 Arise therefore, go down and go with them, **doubting nothing**; for I have sent them." (Don't over analyze it - just go)

21 Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"

22 And they said, "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." 23 Then he invited them in and lodged them.

On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

To be continued..... Next week see how unfolds

Question: Do you want to be used by God?

A) Do you want to see breakthrough in your life/walk?

B) Do you want to see the power of God unleashed in you and through you?

C) Here is how it happens: Stop saying no to the promptings of the Lord and start saying YES LORD!

What have you been saying no to the Lord about?

A) Prompting you to share - No not doing that - not going there

B) Prompting you to sign up for _____ No - I don't think so - not in my comfort zone

D) Prompting you to make a change - give up something you are doing -

1) not sin issue - but just a grey area - weighing you down - Saying no

E) He is not going to force you.

Maybe God has been Prompting you to lay down and surrender a bad attitude - No

A) Listen all of that resistance is hindering the work of God in your life - He loves you - he has a plan -

B) His Workmanship - plan for you to walk in - but he is not going to force you to walk in it

B) What if Peter held his ground - sorry Lord - I am not going to Caesarea - not talking to that guy!

C) Cornelius would have still been saved - Here is what is interesting -

1) Philip the evangelist met back in Acts 6 - Deacon

D) Acts 7 he is in Samaria - Acts 7 Ethiopian Eunuch first Gentile - Philip was already in Caesarea

E) But Philip is not the Vessel God wants to work through it is Peter -

1) If Peter would have resisted - Ok - I will get Philip - he will be blessed

E) I have literally had that happen to me - God was calling me - I said no

1) Picked someone else - they were used - I saw it - missed a blessing

What have you been saying no to Jesus about? Today that needs to Change - Yes Lord

A) Not saved - Prodigal son or Daughter - Yes Lord and I am ready to surrender

B) Communion - Not in an Unworthy manner