

Attitudes From The Conversion Of Cornelius

Introduction. Acts is one long narrative of the spread of the gospel in Europe, Asia Minor, North Africa, and Palestine. There have been many sermons preached about Cornelius in Acts 10. Usually, such sermons take into consideration his goodness; he was devout, prayed, gave alms, etc. And, it is shown that, in spite of all of these, he was still lost. Therefore, goodness alone will not save anyone. But in this study of Cornelius, we are going to use a different approach by looking at the attitudes involved in this account.

I. The Change Of Attitudes

- A. The first change was the attitude of Cornelius (Acts 10:3-6).
 - 1. He had to realize that even though he was a “good” man, he was still seriously lacking. He had to hear “words” to save him (Acts 11:13-14).
 - 2. A very real problem today is that people think they are already saved.
 - a) There will not be an angel sent to them as was done for Cornelius.
 - b) The gospel is the only means by which their thinking can be changed.
- B. The second change was the attitude of Peter (Acts 10:9-16).
 - 1. The vision taught Peter that he was not to call any “man” common or unclean (Acts 10:28).
 - 2. God was opening the door of acceptance to all those who “feareth him, and worketh righteousness” (Acts 10:34-35).
- C. The third change was a miracle (the outpouring of the Holy Spirit) changing the attitude of six Jewish Christians who went with Peter, and the Jews at Jerusalem (Acts 10:36-48; 11:1-4, 12).
 - 1. Acts 11:18 shows clearly why God sent the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his household — to show that the Gentiles were now granted repentance to life.
 - 2. They could now be accepted into the kingdom, and could now receive the blessings of the New Covenant.

II. The Attitude Toward The Preacher

- A. Cornelius met Peter and worshiped him (Acts 10:25).
 - 1. Obviously, Cornelius goes too far, and is rebuked by Peter. However, Cornelius was trying to show respect for God’s messenger.
 - 2. The Jews had shown great disrespect for God’s messengers (Jeremiah 38:6; Matthew 23:34-36).
- B. Peter’s importance was not in his person, but in his message (Acts 10:34-43).
 - 1. “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace” (Romans 10:15). “Beautiful” means “pleasant, lovely, or fair” (cp. Genesis 2:9; 3:6). Look how exalted you are when you spread the gospel!
 - 2. The same is true today with gospel preachers. We need to have a good attitude toward any true messengers of God’s word.

III. The Attitude Toward The Word Of God

- A. Cornelius’ attitude toward the word of God can be seen in Acts 10:33.

1. He and the others wanted to hear what God commanded. There would be no doubt that when Cornelius learned what to do, he did it (Acts 10:48).
 2. Baptism in the “name of the Lord” is “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38) which washes away your sins (Acts 22:16).
- B. The word can marvelously work within us (Psalm 19:7-11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).
1. The word of God will judge us in the last day (Revelation 20:12).
 - a) All the dead will be judged by the Scriptures according to their works.
 - b) The Bible will read then, just as it does now.
 2. The all-important question for us is, “Are we following the word of God?” Have a humble, submissive attitude toward God’s holy word.

IV. The Attitude Toward The Friends And Relatives

- A. Cornelius had the proper attitude toward the salvation of his friends and relatives (Acts 10:24, 27, 33).
1. We can imagine how he told his people regarding the angel who appeared to him and told him to send for a man who would tell them how to be saved.
 - a) He would add, “That man is on his way here now. Come and hear him!”
 - b) We, too, are to compel people to hear the words of life (Luke 14:23).
 - (1) “Compel” means “to use strong persuasion” (2 Corinthians 5:11).
 - (2) There is no more important work than to save ourselves and others.
 2. Fascinating findings:
 - a) Several years ago, more than one study showed large percentages of people would consider attending a worship service if someone simply invited them. The problem is not the attitude of the unsaved; rather, it is often the failure of church members to invite others. When Them Rainier asked church members about their reticence to invite others to church, here are the responses often heard:
 - (1) “I just don’t think about it.”
 - (2) “I’m afraid I’ll be rejected.”
 - (3) “The singing isn’t that good.”
 - (4) “The preaching isn’t strong.”
 - (5) “We’ve got too many church problems right now.”
 - (6) “Nobody ever challenged me to invite anyone.”
 - (7) “I don’t know how to start the conversation.”
- B. We must shed our spiritual lethargy, inclusivism, busyness, fear of rejection, our desire to be tolerant, and our failure to invite if we are going to see growth (Proverbs 11:30; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 3:15).

Conclusion. The right attitude toward the messenger, toward the word itself, and toward his friends and relatives, brought spiritual life to Cornelius. If we develop the same right attitudes, we, too, will obtain salvation, both now and in eternity.