



**Mission Focus- Keeping Our Eyes on the Prize  
Anticipating Potential Landmines While Doing Ministry and Remaining Obedient  
Acts 10:23-48**

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Why Peter? Why not Philip, or someone else more oriented to Gentiles to do this mission to Cornelius?  
Why Peter? The Lord knows what He is doing.

It all has to do with qualifications and the perceptions of others. As well as pitting Godly stubborn against un-Godly stubborn.



Yes, Peter was a fisherman, a serious blue-collar worker there in the culture of Judea. He was also raised Jewish in a Jewish, not Hellenistic, home and environment. I suspect if you or I saw what his choices in attire were, we would immediately recognize his Jewish background.

As we listen to him talk, yeah there is the Galilean accent, but he knew his Torah and he was rather familiar with the verbal law of the pharisees as well. No expert like Paul, but passable.

He is not a Hebrew of the Hebrews as Paul would later self identify, but he is the leader of the Messianic Church and knows what this means to those who are in his fellowship back home.

You see, the church is still growing and learning just what it means to follow Jesus Christ. This is part of the lesson plan.

Peter had also been uniquely commissioned by Jesus. First as a result of his honest observations at Caesarea Phillip (Matthew 16:16-19), followed with his humbling (John 18:15-27) which took place during the events of the crucifixion, and then his recommissioning by Jesus there at Galilee (John 21:15-23). His history is no mystery. Before the Holy Spirit, he was impetuous and routinely stuck his foot in his mouth. But once filled with the Holy Spirit, he is fearless for Christ.

Peter is the one who spoke up at Pentecost and was being used by the Holy Spirit to heal others. He was also a complete Hebrew Jew and who better than to be used to open the door to the Gentiles.

Peter at this time was regarded as the leader of the establishment apostles. Along with James and John, he was characterized as a "pillar of the church" (see Gal. 2:9). When the issue of Gentile conversion comes to a head later in Acts 15, it is Peter's theology, forged initially in the house of Cornelius, that sets the tone for the final decision. (Wagner 2008, 195)

Onward to Caesarea. Why was this city so beyond Peter's comfort zone? Partially, because it was Roman, I mean really Roman.

Caesarea was a prized city, named after Caesar Augustus. It was the most Roman of all cities that was connected with Judea. Its architecture and its culture were distinctly Roman, as evidenced by the aqueduct ruins that can still be seen there. Cornelius had most likely been appointed to serve in Caesarea for the rest of his life. His appointment in Caesarea, as well as his membership of the most illustrious Roman division in the legions, underlines the fact that Cornelius was no average soldier with an ordinary military posting; he was a man of esteem. (Mohler Jr. 2018, 142)

Caesarea bore two distinct features from its inception. First, it was clearly intended to be a Roman and pagan city. A temple to Roma and Augustus was built on an elevated podium facing the harbor (Ant. 15.339), and some decades later, as the well-known Pilate inscription attests, a temple to the emperor Tiberius was also erected in the city. In addition, Herod constructed a theater and amphitheater-hippodrome there, and these facilities played an important role in Caesarea's quadrennial games organized by the king, which included musical, athletic, gladiatorial, and horse-racing events (Ant. 16.137-38).

A second feature of the city was the commercial-economic importance of its elaborate and impressive harbor facilities. These included a broad promenade, storerooms, lodgings for sailors and travelers, as well as several colossal statues atop columns and a tower named Drusion (probably a lighthouse) flanking its entrance (J.W. 1.411-14). (Levine 2010, 453-454)

At this time, it is a sizeable mostly pagan city. Probably as large or larger than Jerusalem. It is very Roman.



Acts 10:23–24

“So he invited them in and gave them lodging. Now on the next day he got ready and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.” (NASB 2020)

It was too late in the day to immediately return, thus the invitation to remain there in Joppa at Simon the Tanners house for the evening.

The trip back also will not be as fast as the trip to. You now have added to the Roman military members, 7 Jewish men who do not have the same discipline or travel speed as the Romans.

Peter decides he needs to bring witnesses. The law says two or three witnesses would work, he brings six as we will learn later in Acts 11:12.

Peter knows that God is in this and He knows how stubborn he has been on this topic of outreach to the Gentiles and engaging in table fellowship with them. His returning to Jerusalem, without evidence, would be an problem. So he opted for overwhelming indisputable evidence. Peter knows he would have difficulty in convincing the Jerusalem church to accept Gentiles as brothers and sisters in Christ. Peter will have the witness requirement wired, x3.

This does not mean he has addressed every objection, nor does this forestall the rise of the Judaizers in the church who wanted to force circumcision and other things on Gentile converts. By the way, this still exists today in the Hebrew Roots Movement. “Those of the Hebrew Roots belief hold to the teaching that Christ’s death on the cross did not end the Mosaic Covenant, but instead renewed it, expanded its message, and wrote it on the hearts of His true followers. They teach that the understanding of the New Testament can only come from a Hebrew perspective and that the teachings of the Apostle Paul are not understood clearly or taught correctly by Christian pastors today. (Got Questions Ministries 2002-2013)

As opposed to what they would claim, the teachings of Paul are incredibly clear and self-explanatory. I bring this up because I have had to deal with the recent past which tells me there are some followers of Jesus Christ, Gentiles, which this movement is made up of predominately, who have been sucked in.

The Hebrew Roots Movement is “dangerous in its implication that keeping the Old Covenant law is walking a “higher path” and is the only way to please God and receive His blessings. Nowhere in the Bible do we find Gentile believers being instructed to follow Levitical laws or Jewish customs; in fact, the opposite is taught.” (Got Questions Ministries 2002-2013)

Romans 7:6

**“But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.” (NLT)**

“The Bible does not support the idea of Gentiles becoming “spiritual Jews” when they believe. rather, they are spiritual Gentiles when they are controlled by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual Jews are Jews who believe and who have a proper relationship to the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, the Bible does not say that all distinctions between Jew and Gentile are erased when they believe. While it is very true that the way of salvation is the same for both, this does not mean that all other distinctions have been eradicated as well, anymore than all distinctions between bond and free and



male and female have ceased to exist. The way of salvation, Body membership, and spiritual maturity are the same for both Jews and Gentiles. But in other areas distinctions remain.” (Fruchtenbaum 2011, 32-33)

Yes, the lessons continue on today.

With witnesses in tow, Peter and the entire group travel to Caesarea arriving on the next morning.

Acts 10:24–25

“On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him.” (NASB 2020)

Peter arrives at a home, most likely well-appointed home since it is a Roman Centurion who lives there, and it is filled with people, all waiting to hear Peter.

One wonders what the conversations had been like for the entirety of the trip.

Cornelius is waiting for them. He knows how long the trip would be going both ways and he gathered all to come and hear believing that Peter would indeed come. And boom, as Peter enters the home he is hit with cultural differences immediately. No Jew would ever bow down to a man, but a Gentile would have a very different background, especially a Roman Centurion, in other words, a pagan being a pagan.

It was an impulse of reverence and thankfulness, under a strong sense of the supernatural. His mind, too, had been for some hours on the stretch. It is possible also that some of the thoughts, connected with what he had been taught as a Heathen concerning deified heroes, were lingering in his mind. (Schaff 1880, 363)

Peter does not have that same background and to him, as reflected by what Doctor Luke tells, he thought this man was worshipping him.

The word translated worship is προσεκύνησεν (prosekunesen). “The verb προσκυνέω can mean obeisance, of the sort offered to rulers, especially Persians and others in the East. Yet Greeks and Jews often refused to offer it to the Persian king precisely because of what it signified. Perhaps in Cornelius’s mind it differed little from falling at benefactors’ feet to grasp their knees, the normal posture of a supplicant.” (Keener 2012-2013, 1781-1782)

Acts 10:26–29

“But Peter helped him up, saying, “Stand up; I, too, am just a man.” As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. And he said to them, “You yourselves know that it is forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with or visit a foreigner; and yet God has shown me that I am not to call any person unholy or unclean. That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask, for what reason did you send for me?”” (NASB 2020)

Peter is horrified. He does not chew Cornelius out, but tells him to stand up as I am a man like you. We will also see this horror revisited in just a few chapters when the people of Lystra attempt to worship Paul and Barnabas.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we need to take note of this. We have a tendency to, at times, place Pastors and Teachers on an elevated platform and provide them with unearned deference.

I learned a lesson very early in my time in Bible School where a professor intentionally made a false statement just to see how many non-Bereans were in the room. It was pretty packed with them. The



message he gave was clear, test the scriptures for yourself always. Whether the one teaching is a Bible School professor, or a pastor, listen, then check the scriptures for yourself. Those who do not, fall into various false teachings such as Hebrew Roots Movement or the Prosperity Gospel, or any other false teaching.

We study the Bible chapter by chapter and verse by verse to understand the full counsel of God. All of it. As we learn truth, guess what happens, the false we hear, we clearly identify since we know the truth. Satan is subtle and deception is the name of the game here in the last days. Never has there been a need to be Berean's, per Acts 17:11, more than today.

We also learn something here about how to share Jesus with those who do not know Him, do not overlay what you know to be truth, onto someone who does not know the truth. Give them the bandwidth to be pagans. If we don't, then we tend to alienate them before even giving out truth.

Peter allows Cornelius to be a pagan Roman.

We see something else too, God has allowed Peter to be around some Roman gentiles for the past 24 hours or more. They have eaten together and traveled together. He has seen how they honor Torah, and they have seen how he honors Christ. I suspect they have even prayed together.

Because of that, the conversation is flowing much more naturally than it would otherwise. I think what Peter says next is more for the benefit of the six men who traveled with him from Joppa than for all of the others in the room or even Cornelius.

Those in the room though are God fearers and some may have been at the local Synagogue trying to learn more and may have been discriminated against as a result of being Gentiles. Peter also needs to address that with the group as well.

By the way, his language seems to indicate he was surprised at the reception and also by the number of people who had gathered there in the room. Cornelius is, what we would call today, an influencer.

Not only because of his position, but also because of how he was living his life and giving honor to God. When Peter says forbidden, he is refereeing to oral tradition, not to Torah.

Peter reveals he too had a vision, and, in that vision, his preconceived notions of personal holiness was dashed to pieces. Not only did Cornelius have a vision, but so did Peter.

This is an appointment scheduled by the Holy Spirit and done His way. Without the Angel showing up, there would have been no invitation. Without the vision given to Peter, there is no way he would have been willing to even engage in civil conversation with the Romans who showed up, but the Lord put this appointment together.

When we are fully surrendered to what it is God wants to do in and through us, we also have to be willing to give Him our calendar and schedule as well. Peter did not have, see Cornelius on his daytimer, God did.

As you and I walk with the Lord, we must be listening and looking for those opportunities that He brings along from time to time. What are those divine appointments He has for us today? Peter listened and obeyed.

And with that, comes the question of the day, why have you asked for me to come?



#### Acts 10:30–33

“Cornelius said, “Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining clothing, and he said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your charitable gifts have been remembered before God. Therefore send some men to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner, by the sea.’ So I sent men to you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear everything that you have been commanded by the Lord.”” (NASB 2020)

I have never had anyone ask for me to come to their home and tell them, their family and all their employees about Jesus. But that is what Cornelius is explaining to Peter and essentially what he has done. He isn't asking for salvation, just a message from God.

He tells Peter that while he was praying, literally four days ago, “I saw a man in shining clothes who told me my prayer had been heard and those gifts I have given have been remembered by God. Then I was told to send for you, and I immediately followed the commands provided to me.” Peter knows that is rare since he is still struggling with that kind of obedience. And Cornelius even says thank you for coming.

Cornelius has been talking this up with his family, friends and employees now for four days. There is a sense of expectation as they have all gathered to hear someone that God told him, through an angel, to have come and talk to him.

They are ready to hear God's word, whatever that might be. Talk about preparation. There was no worship band to warm everyone up. There was no pre-event prayer with the advance team. There was just the simple obedience of two men to what the Lord had instructed them to do.

I am sure Cornelius has been praying about this and might have also prayed with everyone else as well. Talk about prepared hearts.

What Peter is about to do has international and geopolitical ramifications that are still echoing today. He gives the basics of the Jesus story here which includes the message of forgiveness.

#### Acts 10:34–43

“Opening his mouth, Peter said: **“I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him.** The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—you yourselves know the thing that happened throughout Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was witnesses of all the things that He did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He be revealed, not to all the people, but to witnesses who had been chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. **And He ordered us to preach to the people, and to testify solemnly that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify of Him, that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.**”” (NASB 2020)

What is it Peter states here?

- God shows no partiality which is a restatement of Deuteronomy 10:17-19.
- God welcomes everyone from anywhere in the world who honors Him. This is not based on works but faith.
- Jesus who preached peace is Lord of all.





- Yes, the ministry of Jesus was controversial to those in the established religious hierarchy of Judea. But God was with Him in all He did.
- Jesus died on the cross but then was resurrected three days later. Peter is a witness to that and ate and drank with the resurrected Lord.
- He commanded us to go and tell others that He is the one appointed by God as the judge of all.

Then Peter moves to talk about how Jesus was predicted by the prophets. But he is not allowed to finish his thought. He says that what the prophets taught, “that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.” In that audience that was prepared to hear what God’s word for them truly was, when they heard that all they had to do was believe that Jesus died for them, they believed. All of them.

There is no invitation given, there are no closing hymns to be sung, nothing really. Peter tells them that to be forgiven of your sins all you have to do is believe on Jesus, they did.

Peter just provides just the essentials, and that is really all that is needed for this group.

- Jesus, the Messiah, is Lord of all.
- Jesus was empowered by the Spirit to liberate the devil’s captives.
- Jesus died under the curse deserved by others.
- Jesus was raised up to reign forever.
- Jesus will judge everyone.

All of this is in accordance with the Scriptures, which promise forgiveness for everyone—from every people—who trust in Jesus’s name. (Merida 2017, 151)

Here Peter underscores that it is faith in the Jesus he has just described that brings the forgiveness. So the way of salvation is through the judge of the living and the dead, by appealing to him to forgive sin, which leads into the way of peace through the gospel (v. 35). Everyone who believes in this forgiveness receives this salvation. (Bock 2007, 400)

So, they all believe and what we see is essentially the Pentecost for the gentiles. This is first time that Gentiles were saved as Gentiles. Not proselytes, but Gentiles.

Acts 10:44–48

**“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had also been poured out on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.** Then Peter responded, “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?” And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.” (NASB 2020)

These Gentiles heard the basics in a sermon even shorter than the one in the Temple at Pentecost, and they believed. When they believed, they were saved, and the Holy Spirit came into as well as upon them in the same manner as He did at Pentecost.

Peter and the six witnesses needed to know for sure that Gentiles are now included in the church. Everything for the previously Messianic only church has just changed. Anyone can be saved. Anyone, anywhere. You would think that would already be a known factor based on the thief on the cross but that was not widely known yet.



The Spirit was a gift promised only for the covenant people (cf., e.g., Isa 42:1; 44:3; Ezek 36:26–27; 37:14, 29; Joel 2:28–29; see comment on Acts 1:6); that Gentiles received it without circumcision indicated that God had accepted them into the covenant by their faith alone, without circumcision (or even baptism). God would hardly pour his Spirit (Acts 10:45) into vessels he had not already purified or cleansed (cf. 10:28; 15:9). (Keener 2012-2013, 1809)

The Holy Spirit interrupted what Peter was saying. All that as needed for those listening to be saved was done. They believed and the Holy Spirit has come into and upon them. No proofs necessary, no emotional appeal, no invitation, they heard you need to believe, and they simply did.

Those Jews who came with Peter were amazed. They had been taught that only those who were part of the covenant could receive the Holy Spirit. But notice this in Joel.

Joel 2:28–29

““And it shall come to pass afterward, that **I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh**; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.” (ESV)

All flesh here, based on what they are now seeing, is all inclusive, all Jewish and all non-Jewish flesh. All means all. So much for the slanted teaching they had received from the synagogues.

Praise in tongues is the sign that convinces the Jewish believers that the Spirit has been poured out (“for they were hearing”). Anything less obvious would not have been sufficiently compelling for the Jewish observers, who are here able to recognize the phenomenon from its parallel with the analogous Jewish experience of the Spirit first reported at Pentecost (2:4). (Keener 2012-2013, 1812)

What does this tell us about the prayer of Cornelius earlier? He was not saved, yet God heard him and did something amazing for him so that he might be saved. There are six things we learn.

1. God does indeed hear the prayer of those who do not know Him as part of His drawing them to Himself.
2. It doesn't matter what time of day you pray.
3. You can indeed say no to God in prayer, Peter did, yet God discerns where Peter was and nudged him along.
4. If God takes note of a person who is not saved, how much more does He take note of those who are saved and are persistent in prayer.
5. Peter and Cornelius were already committed to prayer when God showed up and moved in their lives. How much more for those of us who commit to pray as faithfully.
6. What a fitting tribute to praise God in the newness of salvation (Acts 10:46). (Rosscup 2008, 1926)

There are those who study this section of Acts and are amazed that the text does not give us anymore detail than what we see. That is because there are those who want to place additional burdens on us before we can be declared “saved.”

I used to think there were things I had to do first. I needed to clean up my life to make myself more acceptable to God. But, do we see any of that here? No.

There are also those who teach a “magic salvation formula,” or least it seems that way. Nope, just believe. Let me see if I can make it simple to understand.





#### Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

#### Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

### **ABC’s of Salvation**

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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