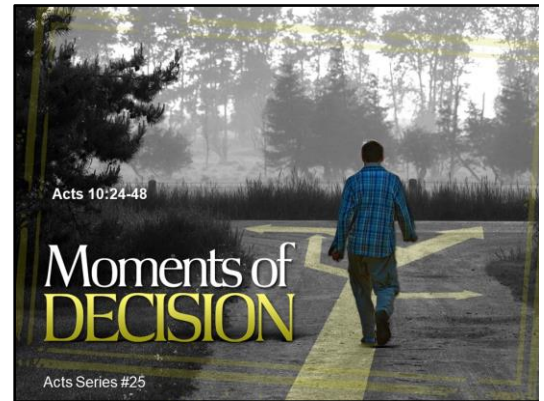




**Message #25**  
**“MOMENTS OF DECISION”**  
**Acts 10:23-48**



Before continuing the narrative of Peter and Cornelius, it's important we understand the context of where the rest of Acts 10 takes place. 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 position, power and esteem.

Not only was Cornelius a Gentile (a non-Jew) but because he was a leading representative of the oppressing Roman overlords, the connection that we read of here in Acts 10 is even more remarkable, and a further testimony to the power of God at work transforming Peter (and, by extension, the Jewish believers) in their understanding of God's plan which is NOT for the Jews alone, but for everybody.

In spite of the "Great Commission" of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20) and the declaration and command of Acts 1:8, it is obvious the Jewish believers had never really and practically considered that the Gospel of Christ was meant for anyone but Jews. This was a steep learning curve for them as they discovered that God's plan went way beyond their own limited thinking and theology.

So we pick up the story in **Acts 10:23a**....

After spending a night together in Simon the tanner's house, Peter along with the three messengers sent by Cornelius, and a further 6 fellow believers (see Acts 11:12), set off for the 30-mile trek from Joppa to Caesarea to meet with Cornelius.

Two worlds were about to collide. Peter didn't know what to expect, and neither did Cornelius....though both, through their respective visions, were being prepared and led by God.

**Acts 10:24 –**

Cornelius is ready for the group travelling up from Joppa. He has been assembling quite a large number of family and friends. He obviously senses this meeting was going to be an occasion of great significance.

The first meeting between Cornelius and Peter was a bit awkward. When Peter entered the house/courtyard, Cornelius (the Roman centurion and person of power and position) fell down at Peter's feet in worship/reverence. Peter, as we've seen previously in Acts, refuses to accept any exaltation of himself (v26). Instead, he immediately proclaims the truth of the only One who is worthy of worship (v27).

In **Acts 14:11-15** we will see Paul and Barnabas encounter a similar adulation in Lystra. They are similarly horrified, and immediately seek to deflect all such praise.... "We, too, are only human!"

**Throughout history, and particularly in our western society today, it seems that people are keen to receive (and even intentionally attract) the praise and adulation of others.**

**Give your thoughts on why/how this "cult of celebrity" is dangerous....**

- 1. In the case of the person(s) being "worshipped"?**
  - 2. In the case of the people doing the worshipping of others?**
  - 3. In the modern Christian church?**
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In **verse 28** Peter informs the gathered audience that, according to the Jewish law, he should not even be there...that it is unlawful for a Jew to be in a Gentile's house. But he acknowledges that it is God who is teaching him that he was now no longer able to consider Gentiles to be "unclean". Remember the words of the Lord in Peter's vision.... *"Do not call impure that which God has made clean."*

This is such a seismic shift in the thinking of a Jewish person that it cannot, and should not, be understated. The Jews despised the Gentiles. In the Jewish worldview, everyone was divided into Jews and Gentiles. If you were a Gentile, Jews believed that God neither loved nor chose you; He did not offer salvation to the Gentiles. So for Peter to now affirm that God has been showing him that He (God) does choose the Gentiles for salvation is a truly colossal shift in Peter's (Jewish) worldview.

**Can you think of other divine challenges to the prevailing "Christian" worldview throughout history?**

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Peter, having made this amazing affirmation, then asks Cornelius why he sent for him? **Acts 10:29**  
Cornelius responds by sharing about the vision he had received from the Lord.

Hearing the account of the vision that Cornelius had received, Peter then began his "sermon" (**vs 34**). It is interesting the way Luke records this. The phrase "opening his mouth" is a colloquial Greek expression marking the speech that follows as important. And it definitely was!  
Peter began by shattering what remained of the barrier separating the two groups with his fresh insight: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right."

Then Peter continues to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (**vs 34-43**). The "meat" of Peter's sermon contains many of the same elements he has used before (2:14ff; 3:11ff). These repeated themes are what we call the **kerygma**, the essential elements of the gospel story...and that which needs to be know about salvation in Christ. Peter spoke about the birth, life, death, resurrection of Jesus, and the salvation He offers for all who believe in Him. He also spoke about Jesus as being the "judge of the living and the dead".

**Verse 43** is an extremely important one in the development of Peter's understanding and, indeed, the proclamation of the gospel from this point on. In this verse Peter affirms that the gospel is meant for EVERYONE! Given the context of the audience Peter is sharing with, this is particularly relevant.

And **10:44** then states that while Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came upon the crowd in conviction and they believed! What an amazing response to the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

And it was even more amazing to the circumcised (Jewish) believers because they saw the same experience of the Holy Spirit moving on these new (Gentile) believers as had been the case on the Jewish believers on the Day of Pentecost (Acts2).

Peter and the others see this as positive proof that they (the new Gentile believers) are genuinely accepted and saved by God and that they should be baptised as such.

This experience of the Holy Spirit falling on the Gentile believers the same (eg speaking in tongues) as on the Jewish believers at Pentecost is not establishing a pattern for all conversions. It is important that the Gentiles be seen to be welcomed into the church in the same way so that they can be accepted as equals. This will be seen even more clearly in Acts 11.

However, whilst it is important not to over-emphasize the person and work of the Holy Spirit, it is equally wrong to under-emphasize the Holy Spirit and His activity.

The Holy Spirit is essential for the Christian life and witness. The Holy Spirit grants power to witness (Acts 1:8) and pray (Rom.8:26). Through His ministry comes assurance of salvation (Rom.8:16), since by Him believers are sealed for the day of redemption (Eph.1:13; 4:30). The Holy Spirit is the "pledge of our inheritance" (Eph.1:14) and our teacher (1 John 2:27). We are gifted by the Holy Spirit for ministry and are to grow in the fruit of His character (Gal.5:22-23).

In summary, this chapter is an exciting (and initial) fulfillment of Christ's prophetic statement in **John 10:16**. And what has happened here opens up the way for the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire (the known world) through the missionary efforts of the early church.

These moments of decision will lead to a movement that continues today, and includes Church@TheGabba. It is an amazing story....then, and now.

- **"Obedience delayed is disobedience"....Do you agree? Do you relate to this statement?**
- **How can the events of Acts 10 give us great hope and conviction in our own evangelism?**
- **Both Peter and Cornelius display humility. Why is humility important and how can it be encouraged and developed?**
- **How do you see the unity between people of different cultures/backgrounds lived out in C@G?**