

THE ROMAN SOLDIER

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 10:24-48.

LESSON 303 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:3).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Acts 10:24-48

²⁴ And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

²⁵ And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*.

²⁶ But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

²⁸ And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

²⁹ 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?

³⁰ And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

³¹ And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

³² Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

³³ 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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

A Blessing Shared

There was eager anticipation in the home of Cornelius when he heard that Peter was coming to tell him about Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, and about the power that had fallen upon the disciples at Pentecost. Cornelius invited many of his friends and relatives to hear with him the good news of salvation. He was expecting to hear a living story, and he wanted to share the wonderful truth. A blessing shared becomes a double blessing.

Most of the Roman soldiers who lived in Jerusalem did not like the Jews nor were they interested in the Jew's religion. It was all foolishness to them. They were in Judæa only as policemen for the Roman government. Of course, the Jews felt they were in bondage to them; but at the same time felt that they were better than the Romans because the Jews were God's chosen people. To the Jews the Romans were heathen, or even dogs; and the Jews felt they would defile themselves by associating with the Romans.

Into All Lands

The followers of Jesus had been told before He went to Heaven that they were to preach the Gospel in all lands, but they had not understood that that included preaching to the Romans and other Gentiles. There were Jews scattered in many countries, and they may have thought that if they preached to them in all lands, they would be fulfilling the Great Commission: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

As soon as he came into the house, Peter explained to Cornelius that under the Jewish law a Jew should not enter the home of a Roman soldier; but if God wanted Peter to do something different, he was willing to obey. If God said, "Go preach to the Gentile soldier," he would go. And so Peter had come to tell Cornelius about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Works of Righteousness

Cornelius was not an ordinary Roman soldier. He did not worship the Roman gods, but served the true God faithfully. He and all his household prayed much, and even fasted. They were holy, sanctified people, walking in such light as they had. They made it an important part of their lives to worship God. And what a blessing they received! They were the first Gentiles to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Their faithful service to God was rewarded. They had worked works of righteousness.

When Peter opened his sermon, he said: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Cornelius not only went through a form of worshiping God, but proved by the life he lived that he honoured God's Word.

Those who work righteousness are accepted of God. We must prove by our actions that we are born-again Christians. People may claim to be Christians; but if they are committing sin, Jesus

hear all things that are
commanded thee of God.

³⁴ Then Peter opened *his* mouth,
and said, Of a truth I perceive that
God is no respecter of persons:

³⁵ But in every nation he that
feareth him, and worketh
righteousness, is accepted with
him.

³⁶ The word which *God* sent unto
the children of Israel, preaching
peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord
of all:)

³⁷ That word, *I say*, ye know,
which was published throughout
all Judaea, and began from
Galilee, after the baptism which
John preached;

³⁸ 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.

³⁹ And we are witnesses of all
things which he did both in the
land of the Jews, and in
Jerusalem; whom they slew and
hanged on a tree:

⁴⁰ Him God raised up the third day,
and shewed him openly;

⁴¹ 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.

⁴² And he commanded us to
preach unto the people, and to
testify that it is he which was
ordained of God *to be* the Judge
of quick and dead.

⁴³ To him give all the prophets
witness, that through his name
whosoever believeth in him shall
receive remission of sins.

⁴⁴ While Peter yet spake these
words, the Holy Ghost fell on all
them which heard the word.

⁴⁵ And they of the circumcision
which believed were astonished,

will not accept them when they stand before Him in judgment.
He will not claim them as His children.

The colour of our skin, the amount of money we have, the honour our friends give us, have nothing to do with whether or not we will be welcomed into Heaven. We must bear the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. When Jesus sees these fruits in us, He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." We shall be accepted of Him. We do not have to wait until we get to Heaven to be accepted. Right in this world, if we are saved, the Lord owns us as His and pours out His blessings upon His dear children. Even our prayers are a delight to Him when we pray from a sinless heart.

John's Announcement

Peter was not afraid to preach to the Gentiles. He told them about Jesus, whom John the Baptist had announced. John's sermon had been, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And then when Jesus had come to him to be baptized, John had cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." That day the Holy Ghost had descended upon Jesus, anointing Him for the work He had to do among men while He was on earth. He had healed the sick, given sight to the blind, comforted the lonely and discouraged. Peter said He "went about doing good."

Would not all men like to know such a Saviour? Surely the Gentiles would be happy, too, to own Him as their Lord. Jesus had said that He could perform those great miracles because God was with Him.

Power from Heaven

Jesus is our example, and He wants us to help others in His name. We can if we have the power of the Holy Ghost in our lives. Jesus said: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). And as Jesus always kept in communion with the Father, so must we pray much and keep in close touch with God if we expect to do the works that He wants us to do.

Our power to work for Jesus comes from Heaven. In ourselves we can do nothing. Jesus said to Himself, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19). If Jesus and the Father were so much one that Jesus could not work by Himself, how much more must we be empowered from God in order to work for Him.

**"He knows how I am longing some weary soul to
win,
And so He bids me go and speak the loving
word for Him;
He bids me tell His wondrous love and why he
came to die,
And so we work together, my Lord and I."**

Christ's Deity

The important point of the disciples' preaching was the fact that Jesus was the divine Son of God. Wherever they went they told about the cruel death that Jesus had suffered at the hands of the Jews, but that He had arisen again the third day. No other prophet, no other great religious leader had ever arisen from the dead. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, Jesus was the Son of God. And Jesus had arisen not only as a spirit, but with a body. He had eaten with them, and they had handled His body. He had

as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

⁴⁷ Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

indeed arisen in the flesh. Surely this was the Son of God!

The Great Judge

Jesus walked among men as a man, and He taught that He could do nothing apart from the Father. Yet He commanded the disciples to preach that someday He, Jesus, would judge the world. The Father was going to give all judgment into His hands. This Jesus, who had walked humbly upon earth, was going to be the Judge of all the earth — and Heaven too. How important it is that we become the friends of Jesus now while He is calling us in mercy. When He comes as the Judge it will be too late to turn to Him.

In the judgment it will be Jesus who will distinguish between the saint and the sinner. He will bring all the dead back to life to judge them; and He will reward them according to their works (**Revelation 20:12-13** ¹² **And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.** ¹³ **And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.**). The same Jesus whom the Jews crucified will come as King of kings and Lord of lords. Then those who have refused Jesus will weep and mourn in their sins, but they will hear those dreadful words: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23).

Cornelius Rejoices

How willing Cornelius and his friends were to believe the preaching of Peter! How happy they were that they, too, could be the friends of Jesus and live with Him forever! They will be in Christ's Kingdom when He comes to set up His reign upon earth, and will enjoy all the blessings Jesus has gone to prepare for those who love Him.

Peter had been disappointed that so many of the religious Jews had missed the blessing because they did not believe in Jesus; but now he was encouraged when Cornelius and his company believed. They had prepared their hearts for this hour when they would hear the great truth of which the prophets had spoken, and of which even the angels had desired to know more — the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. As they listened to all that Peter said, they believed with all their heart, and the Holy Ghost descended upon them.

Seven or eight years had passed since Pentecost, when the 120 in the upper room had received the Holy Ghost. Later, some people in Samaria had also received that experience. And now it was being poured out upon the Gentiles, proving the prophecy of Joel, "It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28). The Jews who were with Peter were surprised. Was it possible that the Gentiles could receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost? Were they good enough? Would the Holy Spirit come upon others than a chosen few?

How happy we are that the promise was to "all flesh"! Anyone who works righteousness — is wholly sanctified — is worthy to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

The Jews could not doubt that the Romans had received the Holy Ghost, for they heard them speak in other tongues (in a language different from what they knew), just as the 120 had done on the Day of Pentecost.

Water Baptism

The Romans had now been saved, sanctified, and baptized with the Holy Ghost, but they had not yet been baptized in water. Their sins had been forgiven; they had been made holy; and they had received the anointing from God. Why was it necessary that they be baptized in water? Water baptism is our witness to the world that we have become followers of Christ. Every born-again Christian should be baptized in water as soon as he has the opportunity. He need not wait until he has been sanctified and has received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. As soon as he is saved he is a new creature in Christ; and by water baptism he shows the world that he is now a Christian. When Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus, he meant it to be done as Jesus had commanded — in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This commemorates Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection; and also calls attention to our death to sin and rising to walk in newness of life.

When Peter returned to his home he left a strong body of believers among the Gentiles at the home of Cornelius.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Cornelius do when he heard that Peter was coming?
2. What did the Jews think of the Romans?
3. Why did Peter go to preach to Cornelius?
4. Describe the religion of Cornelius and his men.
5. What were the opening words of Peter's sermon to Cornelius?
6. Who is accepted of God?
7. What will Christ's position be when He comes again?
8. What happened to Cornelius and his men when they received Peter's preaching?