

Bi134 Acts

Lesson Bi134-20 The Holy Spirit Is Poured Out on Gentiles

Have you ever seen someone being excluded from a group simply because of their race or tribe? This should never happen among the people of God, as Peter learned in today's story from Acts chapter 10.

Caesarea, a harbor city, was the main center of the Roman occupation forces. A man by the name of Cornelius lived there. Although he was a Gentile and a Roman centurion—commander over 100 soldiers—he was a devout, God-fearing man. One day, while he was in prayer, an angel appeared to him in a vision. The angel told him to send messengers to Joppa to find a man named Peter who was staying in the home of one Simon the tanner. In spite of his good deeds, Cornelius needed to hear the way of salvation through Christ. He immediately dispatched two of his servants and one devout soldier to go get Peter.

The three men arrived in Joppa at noon on the following day. About that time, Peter went up on the flat roof of Simon's house to pray. While there he, like Cornelius, was given a vision. In his vision he saw the sky opened and a huge blanket let down from heaven. In the blanket were all kinds of mammals, reptiles, and birds, which Jews were forbidden to eat. The Law of Moses called them 'unclean.' A voice spoke to Peter ordering him to kill and eat the animals.

But Peter refused, saying, "No, Lord, I would never eat such unclean food." The Lord answered him, saying, "Do not call anything impure that God has cleansed." This happened three times, and the blanket was taken back into heaven. Peter wondered, "*What is the meaning of this vision?*"

At that moment, the three men from Joppa arrived at the house and asked to talk with Peter. That's when the Holy Spirit said to Peter, "These men have come for you. I sent them, so don't ask questions. Just go with them." The next day Peter went with them back to Caesarea. He was accompanied by six Jewish brothers.

When they arrived, they found a large group of people gathered for the occasion. Peter addressed them. "As a Jew, all my life I have considered Gentiles to be unclean," he confessed. "But God has shown me that I was wrong. I should not consider anyone unclean simply because they are of a different race than I." Then he asked, "Why did you send for me?"

Cornelius told him about the angel's instructions. "Now," he said, "We are ready to listen to what you have to say."

At that, Peter told them about his vision, and about how God had changed his heart. "Now I know that God opens his arms to people from all tribes and nations," he said. He then told them about Jesus and how God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he had been crucified and raised from the dead on the third day. Peter continued, "We have been appointed as his witnesses. We are to announce to all that everyone who believes in Christ receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:1-43).

Then, an amazing thing occurred. While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came powerfully upon everyone who was listening to his message. And just as the first disciples had done on the Day of Pentecost, they all began to speak in tongues and praise God. Peter then ordered that they all be baptized in the name of Jesus. “Because,” he exclaimed, “they have received the Holy Spirit exactly as we did!”

The Caesarean Outpouring is another pivotal event in the history of the church. By giving new Gentile believers the Holy Spirit and empowering them as Christ’s witnesses, God was opening wide the door of faith to the Gentiles. Not only could Gentiles become part of the community of faith, they could be full participants in God’s mission to redeem the nations.

This is the fifth key outpouring of the Holy Spirit to occur in the book of Acts. As you may recall, the first outpouring occurred at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. The second occurred a few days later in Acts chapter 4. We call that outpouring the Second Jerusalem Outpouring. The third key outpouring occurred in Samaria in Acts chapter 8. And the fourth occurred in Damascus in Acts chapter 9 when Saul was empowered by the Spirit. Now, a fifth key outpouring of the Spirit occurs in Caesarea in Acts chapter 10. Here, the Spirit falls on, fills, and empowers a large group of Gentile converts. As in the first four outpourings of the Spirit in Acts, this one results in Spirit-empowered witness. The Caesarean Outpouring is yet another fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.”

Also, the story of the Gentiles’ conversion and empowering is another example of a divine appointment in the book of Acts. In this story God sovereignly arranged the meeting between Cornelius and Peter, where Peter could share the word of the Lord with Cornelius and his household. Because Peter was full of the Holy Spirit, he was able to keep his appointment, and a powerful work was done. Once again, we see the Holy Spirit acting as ‘Director of the Harvest.’ We learn three important lessons from the account.

The first lesson we learn is that we should exclude no one from the church because of their race, tribe, or ethnic background. In a vision the Holy Spirit taught Peter that he should call no person common or unclean. It seems the early Christian Jews had not yet fully understood that the gospel is for Gentiles too. We should therefore welcome every person of every race into our church services. Further, we should take deliberate steps to share the gospel with all people. We do this knowing that God has placed in the heart of all people the ability to hear the gospel and be saved. We all share alike in the benefits of salvation.

A second lesson we learn from the story of the Gentiles conversion and empowering is that everyone who becomes a follower of Christ can also become a full participant in his mission. By filling the new Gentile converts with the Holy Spirit, God was showing Peter and his Jewish companions that the Gentiles can also be part of God’s mission to redeem the lost. The primary reason Jesus baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit is to empower them as his witnesses. God gave the Holy Spirit to these Gentiles for the same reason he gave the Spirit to the apostles and the 120 at Pentecost. That was to enable them to accomplish the work he had given them. That work was to proclaim Christ “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of

the earth” (Acts 1:8). If we are going to effectively participate in God’s mission to redeem the lost, we too must be empowered by the Spirit.

Finally, from the story of the outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles in Caesarea, we learn how speaking in tongues serves as a sign from God that one has been empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel to the lost. This is the second time in Acts that Luke mentions tongues. The first time was on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. Now, when the Gentiles in Caesarea are filled with the Spirit, they too speak in tongues and magnify God. We can magnify the Lord in two ways, by worshipping him in Spirit and truth and by declaring his greatness to others. As at Pentecost, these newly Spirit-empowered disciples must have magnified God in the same two ways. Speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance is the initial physical evidence that one has been baptized in the Holy Spirit. It is also a sign from God that he has empowered them to speak for him.

This lesson is **important** because we learn that God does not consider any person common or unclean, and neither should we. God wants to save people of all races and tribes and then empower them to proclaim the gospel to others.

The big **truth** we learn from this is that we should freely proclaim the gospel to all people, even to those of other races. Once they have received Christ, we should ensure that they are empowered by the Spirit and mobilized to reach the lost.

Let’s now **review** some important truths we have learned from this lesson.

1. How did God set up a divine appointment between Peter and Cornelius?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered, that God set up a divine appointment between Peter and Cornelius by giving them visions and by guiding them by the Holy Spirit, you answered correctly.
2. Who should we proclaim the gospel to and invite to become members of the family of God?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered, “We should proclaim the gospel to all people of all races and tribes,” you are right.
3. Who can participate in God’s mission to redeem the lost?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that anyone from any race who will be empowered by the Spirit can become a full participant in God’s mission to redeem the lost, you answered correctly.
4. What is the meaning of speaking in tongues in the Book of Acts?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered, “In the book of Acts speaking in tongues signifies that one has been filled with the Spirit and empowered as Christ’s witness,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it several times until you are able to correctly tell the story of the Caesarean Outpouring and its lessons to others. Then, pray with them that they may be empowered with the Spirit as were those new Gentile disciples at Cornelius’ house.