

**ACTS Chapter 9 (ESV p. 1016) continued**

The final verses of Acts Chapter 9 leave the story of Saul and return to the apostles. Our attention is directed once again to Peter, who was last mentioned in chapter 5 when he was imprisoned by the Sanhedrin for disobeying their edict that they should not preach Jesus in public. Remember Peter's answer along with his fellow apostles was to preach Jesus to them directly, causing the Sanhedrin to become more angry. But again, God intervened to forward His plan for them, so a respected Pharisee (a strict observer of the law) named Gamaliel defended them and they were let go, but not before being flogged. Still, they left rejoicing because they suffered for the name of Jesus. At the end of chapter 9, we find Peter is continuing to go all around preaching and teaching Jesus (verse 32). In the city of Lydda he heals a paralyzed man named Aeneas (verse 33-35). In the city of Joppa, he raises a woman named Tabitha (also Dorcas) from the dead (verse 36-42) which causes even more people to believe in the Lord. So, Peter stays in Joppa for some time.

**ACTS Chapter 10 (ESV p. 1017)**

While Peter is resting and waiting for his next assignment, God is setting up for him to reach further into the world. God sends an angel to a commander of the Italian army named Cornelius (verse 1) who is living in the city of Caesarea and has found favor with the Lord because of his prayers and his giving to the needy. It's important to note that this man is religious, but he is not yet saved. He believes in and worships God along with his whole family, but he is referred to as "devout", rather than described as a believer because of one thing- he does not yet know Jesus Christ (verse 2). This is the reason that Peter is needed. God wants him to present Jesus to this family (verse 3-6) because as religious and God-fearing as they are, they cannot be saved without knowing Jesus as the Son of God, their Savior (see Acts 4:10-12 (ESV p. 1010), John 14:6 (ESV p. 998), and 1 Timothy 2:5-6 (ESV p. 1094)). Cornelius obeys the angel's instructions and sends men to find Peter (verse 7-8). Meanwhile, God speaks to Peter in a vision, but the vision is not just an instruction to go to this man Cornelius. It is also a command to Peter to lay down his prejudices and pre-suppositions. This is for us a clear reminder that sometimes God's instructions are not just for information to pass on to others, but often they are for us to correct our own mind or behaviors.

Some points about Peter's vision:

1. Peter went to the roof to pray (verse 9). This was customary for people of this time to do. The roof represented a quiet, secluded place with little or no distractions. We

remember Daniel went to an upper chamber to pray (Daniel 6:10, [ESV p. 829](#)) as well as the disciples went to the “upper room” to pray (Acts 1:13-14, [ESV p.1007](#)).

2. Peter was very hungry and fell into a trance (verse 10). It often happens that we get very tired when we are overly hungry and we get sleepy or at least easily distracted and cannot focus on the task at hand, in this case praying. In this case, God used this as an opportunity to get Peter’s undivided attention.
3. Peter saw heaven opened and something that resembled a large sheet spread out by its four corners and coming down to earth (verse 11). Perhaps this is confirmation to Peter that this message is coming from God.
4. The sheet contains all sorts of four-footed animals, creeping creatures (reptiles and bugs) and birds. Then, a voice calls him by name and tells him to rise, kill, and eat (verse 12-13). This is significant because according to the laws of Moses, these animals were absolutely forbidden for Jews to eat (see Leviticus 11, [ESV p. 99](#)).
5. So naturally, Peter replies that he never has done this and he cannot now. But the voice tells him not to call anything impure or unclean that God has made clean. And this exchange occurs three times before the sheet is taken back into heaven and the vision ends immediately (verse 14-16). The significance of this lies in the number of times the exchange takes place. Whenever a command is repeated several times in the Bible, it means this is really important. So, the message for Peter is clearly that though some things were once considered unclean or impure, but once God has cleansed them, they will never again be called unclean. (See Hebrews 7:24-27, [ESV p. 1106](#) and Hebrews 10:14, [ESV p. 1109](#))
6. Then, while Peter was still doubting and questioning what the vision meant, the three men from Cornelius arrived and the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter to announce their coming and to sanction his going back with them (verse 17-20) This is the beginning of Peter’s confirmation of God’s will. (see Isaiah 30:21, [ESV p. 659](#) and John 14:26, [ESV p. 999](#)).

At this point, Peter is still somewhat uncertain of the meaning of his vision as well as the reason that these men are looking for him, so he questions them directly about why they have come (verse 21).

7. Their answer begins to open Peter’s eyes to the significance of his vision and to God’s purpose. “We have come from Cornelius the centurion.” From this sentence alone, Peter knows that this is a Roman soldier and not only a soldier, but a commander of the Italian army. This man normally represents oppression, idolatry and sometimes brutality to the Jews. Should Peter be afraid? Next, they say, “He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people.” Notice that they don’t refer to the Roman empire at all, which would commonly be the words spoken by Roman soldiers. They don’t refer to multiple gods which would be

typical of most of the Romans. They refer to one deity, Almighty God. This is probably the time that Peter remembers that the voice in the vision said that he had sent these men (refer to verse 20). Then they mentioned that Cornelius is, “respected by all the Jewish people.” It is unheard of that any Roman official should care what the Jews think of him. Here Peter begins to know that there is something different and special about this situation. Next, comes Peter’s final confirmation and his “Aha” moment. The men say, “A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.” First of all, typical Roman soldiers don’t believe in holy angels. They believe in sorcerers and magic. Second, they don’t ask Jews to do anything, they tell them. And most of all, Roman soldiers never care what a Jew has to say or invite them into their homes except to be servants. Now Peter understands that God has had a hand in this. He remembers what the Holy Spirit told him in the vision, “Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.”

8. Now, Peter gets it. He invites them into the house to spend the night. He leaves with them the next day and takes some other believers with them (verse 23). Now he is ready to do God’s work, to complete what God has assigned to him, led by the Holy Spirit, even though he has not been given specific details about what he is to do.

They arrive at Caesarea after traveling for a day and Cornelius is waiting for them along with his family and friends (verse 24). When Peter enters his house, Cornelius falls down at his feet to worship him, but Peter is quick to correct this. He tells him, “I am only a man myself.” Even in this God is revealing to Peter that he is there to explain to this Gentile that the only one worthy of worship is God, not any other man (verse 25-26). In the next verses (27-28) Peter testifies to the people how God has changed his mind about how he should treat them (verse 29). In essence he is admitting that he originally did not want to be there with them but now is willing to do whatever he can for them. Cornelius responds by telling Peter that God told them to call for him so he could tell them what God wanted them to know (verse 30-33). Now, Peter fully understands his vision and his purpose for this assignment (verse 34-43). Peter recognizes that God accepts people from every nation if they revere Him and live righteously. He explains the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ and ends with the statement that “everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness for sins through His name. (verse 43). Then, the Holy Spirit came upon all who heard his message and God provided proof to the circumcised Jews that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit by allowing them to hear these Gentiles speaking in tongues and praising God (verse 45-46). Then, Peter recommends that they all be baptized. And he stays and they fellowship together for a few days (verse 46-47). Once again, God’s plan is accomplished.