

Devout; Acts 10:1-4

I. Cornelius

- a. Cornelius was a proselyte to Judaism.
- b. Acts 10:22 says he was "well-spoken of by the whole Jewish nation."
- c. He learned to love God from the words and examples of the Jews in Caesarea.
- d. God took notice of Cornelius for a few reasons.
- e. We could learn a few things from him.

II. Fear God

- a. Acts 10:1–2a (ESV) 1 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, 2 a devout man who feared God with all his household,
- b. "Pertaining to being profoundly reverent or respectful, *devout, godly, pious, reverent* in our literature only of one's relation to God."
- c. "That it was an *Italian* cohort probably means the men were from Rome and not natives of other cities in the Roman Empire. This distinction suggests that Cornelius was a Roman centurion stationed in the capital of the Rome-backed king, yet he rejected emperor worship and the Roman pantheon of gods. That such a man chose, instead, to worship the Jewish God (Acts 10:2) is no small thing."
- d. There are two kinds of fear.
 - i. To flee in terror.
 1. I am not a horror movie fan; I don't like being afraid or having my heart shocked.
 2. I have watched them before, but with the blanket (or my hands) covering my eyes.
 3. I look away from the screen during the scary parts of movies.
 4. A movie is not something we should have any fear of.
 5. Matthew 10:28–31 (ESV) 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.
 6. God tells us, "do not fear" in many ways.
 - ii. To have a profound measure of respect for (*have*) *reverence, respect*, with special reference to fear of offending.
 1. One of the meanings for 'profound' from Merriam-Webster is an intense feeling or quality, and all-encompassing: complete.
 2. Do we have an all-encompassing respect or reverence?
 3. Are we afraid to offend God?
 4. How many movies have we watched that disrespectfully use God's name?
 5. Do we use words or phrases that mimic God's names similarly (cheese and crackers, Jiminy Christmas, jeez Louise, etc.)?
- e. Cornelius recognized and feared God.

- f. "From the beginning Cornelius appears "with his whole house" around him, his family and his slaves, and soon we note even his friends (v. 24). This was more than just family religion; this man's faith reached out all around him."
- g. We must recognize the Almighty Creator, the God of the Covenant, our Savior for who He is!

III. Generous

- a. Cornelius "gave alms generously to the people."
- b. "According to the Mosaic conception, wealth is a loan from God, and the poor have a certain claim on the possessions of the rich, while the rich are positively enjoined to share God's bounties with the poor."
 - i. Deuteronomy 15:11 (ESV) 11 For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'
 - ii. "In the course of time, the giving of Alms out of mere pity and without regard to the permanent relief of the recipient became a meritorious practice, possessing, like a sacrifice, the power of atoning for man's sins, and redeeming him from calamity and death."
 - iii. Proverbs 11:4 (ESV) 4 Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.
 - iv. Most interpret the verse like this, "Water will quench a blazing fire; so does almsgiving make atonement for sins."
 - v. One of the books of the Apocrypha, Ecclesiasticus, says, "lay up alms in thy storehouse; it shall deliver thee from affliction."
 - vi. For this reason, we see Jesus in Matthew 6 rebuking the hypocrites who would sound the trumpet so everyone would see them giving alms.
- c. Helping the needy is undoubtedly a command by God, and Cornelius saw that and gave generously.
- d. Are we generous with those in need?
 - i. We must see our wealth (however much or little it is) as a loan from God and the commandment to share God's bounties with the poor.
 - ii. Acts 20:35 (ESV) 35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"
 - iii. There are some who have very little and may depend upon others to meet their daily needs.
 - iv. 2 Corinthians 8:12 (ESV) 12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.
 - v. As an encouragement, do not let that be a reason not to be generous.
 - vi. 2 Corinthians 8:1–4 (ESV) 1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—

- e. Cornelius saw that God loves a cheerful giver; he "gave alms generously to the people."
- f. Being generous is not a means of atonement but a command of God.

IV. Prayerful

- a. Cornelius "prayed continually to God." Acts 10:2b.
 - i. The Greek word translated 'prayed' in verse 2 means "to beg of God."
 - ii. Romans 1:10 is the only other use in the New Testament.
 - iii. Romans 1:9–10 (ESV) 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.
- b. We are encouraged and admonished many times to pray.
 - i. We are encouraged 154 times in the NT to pray.
 - ii. There are only 27 books; this averages the use of 5.7 times in each book.
 - iii. Cornelius prayed continually to God.
 - iv. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (ESV) 17 pray without ceasing,
 - v. Acts 10:3–4 (ESV) 3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." 4 And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.
 - vi. Revelation 5:8 (ESV) 8 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.
 - vii. The Tabernacle had an Altar of Incense which Aaron was commanded to burn every morning and evening (Exodus 30:1-10)
 - viii. Exodus 30:10 (ESV) 10 Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the Lord."
 - ix. Our prayers ascend to God as the incense did every morning and evening.
 - x. Our prayers to God are holy to the Lord, just as the altar of incense was.
- c. A Christian prays continually to God.

V. Devout

- a. There is a difference between being religious and being devout.
 - i. "The difference between Cornelius and many religious people today is this: he knew that his religious devotion was insufficient to save him. Many religious people today are satisfied that their character and good works will get them to heaven, and they have no concept of their sins or God's grace. In his prayers, Cornelius asked God to show him the way to salvation.
 - ii. Acts 11:13–14 (ESV) 13 And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; 14 he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'
- b. God has given us the message of salvation, Jesus.
- c. Are we devout?
 - i. Do we have a profound measure of respect for God, and are we fearful of offending Him?

- ii. Are we generous, and do we view our wealth as a loan from God?
- iii. Do our prayers ascend to God like incense continually?