

THE

HARVESTER

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

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CORNELIUS

What about Cornelius? Well, the Bible says he was a devout or godly man who feared God, gave much alms to the people, prayed to God always, a just man of good report among all the nation of the Jews, and he fasted (Acts 10). WOW! What a man! Do they come any better? Is there any room for improvement?

The Bible further reveals that Cornelius, this devout, fearing, giving, praying, fasting, just man with a good reputation, had a vision from heaven (Acts 10:3-6). An angel of God appeared to tell him that his prayers and alms had *"come up for a memorial before God."* WOW! What a man! God has actually spoken to him through one of his angels. Cornelius must be a special person. He must be a Christian.

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Is there any room for improvement? Yes. You see, Cornelius is NOT a Christian. "What?! You mean this man who is devout, God-fearing, a giver, prayer, faster, just, of a good reputation, who has seen a vision from heaven, and whose prayers and alms have come up before God, is not a Christian?" That is exactly what I mean. Many religious bodies would consider Cornelius a Christian based on his character. In fact, he has done that which many teach one must do in order to be saved, that is, he believes and has prayed. Yet, the Bible has said nothing of Cornelius' spiritual status.

Evidently, the godly characteristics which Cornelius possessed were not enough to save his soul. According to the Bible, the angel told this believing, devout, God-fearing, giving, praying, fasting, just man of a good reputation, that he needed to send for Peter. In fact, the Bible says Cornelius was actually *"warned from God by an holy angel to send"* for Peter (Acts 10:22). But why? The angel says to Cornelius, *"He (Peter) shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do"* (Acts 10:6). This statement indicates to us that Cornelius lacked in some area. Something was missing in his life. There was room for improvement.

The question before us at this time is: What can you tell a man whom the Bible teaches is a believing, devout, God-fearing, giving, always praying, fasting, just man with a good reputation who has seen a vision from heaven, and whose prayers and alms have come before God? Acts 11 offers another account of what happened to Cornelius. Here, the angel tells Cornelius to *"send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved"* (vs. 13 & 14). This is exactly what you can tell a man of Cornelius' character or

type. Tell him words, whereby he and all his house "*shall be saved.*"

You see, the fact that Cornelius believed in God, was devout, feared God, gave much alms to the people, prayed to God always, had seen a vision from heaven, had his prayers and alms come up before God for a memorial, a just man of a good report among the nation of the Jews, and who fasted, was not enough to save his soul! Nor did he meet the qualifications of a Christian. Therefore, he was told to send for Peter and Peter would tell him what else he needed to do. The Bible says that this man was "*warned from God by an holy angel*" that something was missing. NO! His goodness and godly characteristics were not enough to save him. If so, then why did God send the angel to warn him, that he must send for Peter?

Well, what could Peter tell a man of Cornelius' type? He told Cornelius about the Christ (Acts 10:34-43). Now we can see that simply believing, being devout, fearing, giving, praying, seeing a vision, having our prayers and alms come up for a memorial before God, being just, having a good report among our fellow man, and fasting will not save us. These things were not enough for Cornelius! Salvation involves obedience to Christ (II Thess. 1:7,8). With this being so, Peter, just as the angel had said, told Cornelius about the Jesus of Nazareth. And when Peter finished preaching Christ to this good man, Peter then asked, "*Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord*" (Acts 10:47,48).

With the closing of Acts 10 we find a statement about Cornelius' spiritual status. Though he was a believing, devout, God-fearing, giving,

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praying, just man with a good reputation who fasted, and had seen a vision from heaven, he was still lost without Christ. He was still lost because he had not obeyed the gospel, nor had his sins been forgiven. However, when he had done that which Peter commanded (baptism), his sins were forgiven (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

A great truth is declared in the record of the conversion of Cornelius and many false conceptions and doctrines, concerning salvation, are put to rest. The Bible reveals the following about Cornelius prior to his baptism:

1. Believed in God (Acts 10)
2. Was a devout man (verse 2)
3. Feared God (verse 2)
4. Gave much alms to the people (verse 2)
5. Prayed to God always (verse 2)
6. Saw a vision from heaven (verse 3)
7. Talked with an angel of God (verse 3)
8. Was told that his prayers and alms had come up for a memorial before God (verse 4)
9. Was a just man (verse 22)
10. Was of a good report among all the nations of the Jews (verse 22)
11. Fasted (verse 30).

Yet, with all these godly characteristics, Cornelius was still warned by an angel from God to send for Peter. But why? Peter would tell him what else he needed to do in order to be

saved. And after preaching Christ, and him crucified, Peter commanded Cornelius to be baptized. There was still room for improvement!

Friends, can you now see that simply living a good life, being a good and respectable person, and fearing God will not save you if you die without Christ and obedience to the gospel? Also, how many times have people claimed to have been laying in bed at night and all of a sudden they began to have a vision from heaven. Many claim they were saved that very moment and they have been saved ever since. Haven't times changed? The same thing happened to Cornelius, yet, he was not saved. Rather, the angel warned him to send for Peter because Peter would tell him what he needed to do to be saved.

How sad it is when we think of those we love who are of the same character as Cornelius before his baptism. They believe in God. They seem to be devout people who pray always and give much alms to the people of their community and some may even fast at certain times. Yet, they will be lost because they have not conformed to the will of our Lord (Matt. 7:21). But they do not understand this truth! They believe that honesty, morality, benevolence, and godly fear with prayer will save them. How sad! God sent an angel to warn Cornelius that there was more to it than simply being a good person! There are "words" (Acts 11:14) to be obeyed (II Thess. 1:7,8) and we must be the ones to "tell" (Matt. 28:19,20; Acts 10:6) and to warn (Acts 10:22) these seemingly "good" people that there is room for improvement.

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. Who bound up Samson with two new ropes to hand him over to the Philistines?
2. To what two neighboring countries did Israel call for help instead of the Lord?
3. When Jesus was before the Sanhedrin, many testified falsely against Him. Why didn't this convict Him?
4. In which account of the Gospel are there no parables?
5. When Isaac first saw Rebekah, what was he doing?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. What group of people in the council at Jerusalem said that they could find no fault in the apostle Paul? THE PHARISEES (Acts 23:9)
2. When a tax collector asked Peter if Jesus paid taxes, what was his answer? YES (Matt. 17:25)
3. When Paul was struck by the light from heaven as he went to Damascus, did those with him see the light? YES (Acts 22:9)
4. According to Isaiah 57, what do those who walk uprightly find as they lie in death? REST (Isa. 57:2)
5. Next to Isaiah, what Old Testament book is quoted the most in the New Testament? PSALMS

WITH OUR PERMISSION

A word of caution is given to the wise in 1 Peter 5:8. *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh*

about, seeking whom he may devour." The adversary of every Christian is the devil. He is an enemy to watch because he can strike suddenly and fiercely and from out of nowhere. Like a hungry lion roaming the jungle, the devil is constantly in search of easy prey. But he can devour only those who let him!

The key word in 1 Peter 5:8 is "may." It seems that the scholars of the King James Version introduced this word in the verse since all of the other major versions omit the word "may." But Strong's Concordance shows it coming from the Greek word "dunamai." Consequently, the KJV does bring out an interesting thought for consideration.

In English class we learned the difference between using "may" and "can." Both are used to express possibility. CAN is used when referring to the simple ability to do some thing while MAY is used when politely asking for permission. Thus, we note that there is a variation in meaning between "whom he can devour" and "whom he may devour." Quite often we read the text verse with the idea that Satan will pick on whomever he chooses. However, the devil cannot "*devour*" anybody anytime he wants but only when given the proper permission: "*whom he may devour.*"

The point, then, is that we each have control of the influence that Satan may have over us. He cannot "*devour*" us if we determine otherwise. Another verse which supports this idea is in James 4:7. "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" By refusing to give in to the devil, he WILL go away! Note that Christ did not permit Satan to win Him over in Matthew 4. The only way that the devil can overtake us is if we allow him. In other words, he cannot overcome us except with our permission!

RAY

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
June 30 -July 2 (F-Su)	Moffat Road Church Mobile, AL 7:30pm Fri & Sat	Bill Prince (Oxford, AL)
July 5-7	Freefield Church State Line, MS	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 8-14 (Sa-F)	Brushy Creek Church Lucedale, MS 7:30 each evening	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 9-14	Valley, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 9-14	Leitchfield, KY	Lindeal Greer (Bogue Chitto, MS)
July 13-16	Red Hill Church near Woodbury, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
July 16-21	North Warren Church McMinnville, TN	Lindeal Greer (Bogue Chitto, MS)
July 16-21	Oak Grove Church Woodland, AL	Wendell Daniel (Wedowee, AL)
July 16-22	Shawnee, OK	Harry Cobb (Birmingham, AL)
July 23-28	Second Avenue Church Opelika, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)

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 WEDNESDAY 7:00 pm