

A man with a grey beard and dark hair, wearing Roman-style armor, is looking down at a metal helmet he is holding. The background is a dramatic, cloudy sky with a bright light source on the left.

CORNELIUS

HIS EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE
DID NOT SAVE HIM

Imagine the privilege of having an angel of God appear in your own home, call you by name, give you instructions, and—if that weren't enough—have the angel's words come true. It would be an unforgettable experience!

Cornelius, a Roman centurion living in Caesarea in the first century, had a similar experience. His story is recorded in the Bible, in Acts 10.

But do you know what? That extraordinary experience did not save him. Nor did it give him the forgiveness of his sins. The fact that a “holy angel” appeared to him (Acts 10.22) didn't grant him eternal life.

What that experience did do was lead him to hear the gospel. Immediately after the angel left, Cornelius sent for the apostle Peter. Note also that the angel did not preach the gospel to Cornelius, nor did he save him. But the angel told him this truth: “(Peter) *will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved*” (Acts 11.14 NKJV). God allowed this experience in Cornelius' life so that four days later the apostle Peter preached the gospel message to all those gathered in his house (Acts 10.30-34).

The experience he had with the angel did not save him. The abundance of good works, evident in his life and known to all, did not make him worthy of salvation either. The preacher and apostle who came to his house also could not save him.

What did Cornelius need in order to be saved? First, he needed to hear the message of salvation, which is why Peter came to preach the gospel of peace to him.

Peter began his sermon by stating that *"Jesus Christ –He is Lord of all–"* (Acts 10.36 NKJV). He then spoke of Christ's sinless life, *"how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power"* (Acts 10.38 NKJV). He reminded them of Christ's tireless desire to help those in need, *"who went about doing good and healing"* (Acts 10.38 NKJV).

He also preached about Christ's undeserved death, *"whom they killed by hanging on a tree"* (Acts 10.39 NKJV). He declared the undeniable evidence of His resurrection: *"Him God raised up on the third day"* (Acts 10.40-41 NKJV). He warned that Christ was invested by God with authority to be the Judge. *"He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead"* (Acts 10.42 NKJV).

Finally, Cornelius heard that *“everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name”* (Acts 10.43 ESV). Hearing this, Cornelius understood that he needed the Savior, who was Christ. Cornelius was saved that very day by believing in Jesus Christ. He didn’t have to go forward or repeat a prayer. He received the word preached to him. He was saved by Christ, not by his experience. *“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”* (1 Timothy 1.15 KJV).

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