



Series: Unstoppable (Part 18)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This week, we are continuing the story of Cornelius, which ends with Peter's speech to the assembly at Jerusalem in Acts 11:1-18. In fact, Cornelius' conversion is the longest narrative in Acts. Judged solely on the basis of the amount of space Luke gives to the story, we know that we are dealing with a crucial concern of Acts, a pivot for the entire book.

As mentioned in last week's sermon (Unstoppable Part 17), the early church was faced with a different 'New Normal' that challenged everything about their deeply-rooted beliefs in God. Bringing the gospel to the Gentiles seemed new and unbelievable to them. Although, the entrance of Gentiles into God's kingdom was not a new plan, but something promised long before. God uses the Roman centurion Cornelius, his family and friends to shatter old mindsets in the early church and to break down the barrier to the Gentile world.

## **DISCUSSION**

1. What were some old mindsets that you had before you encountered Christ towards people or situations that God has convicted you about? You may start with this statement, *“I used to....but God.....”*.
2. Read Acts 10:23 - 11:18.
  - a. *Acts 10:34, “...I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.”*

This is the foundation for Peter’s understanding that the gospel should now go forth to Gentiles. Actually, many Jews of Peter’s day thought that God loved the Jews while hating the Gentiles<sup>1</sup>. God’s choice of a people who experience his saving grace – whether the nation of Israel or individuals for salvation – rests on his unmerited act of grace (refer to Eph 2:8-9, Titus 2:11).

*How did you become aware of the grace that God has shown you?*

*How would Christianity be different if Peter had not followed God’s instruction to go to Cornelius?*

- b. The outcome would be very different had Peter not paid attention to God’s leading to embark on an assignment that seemed counter-cultural. What other biblical examples can you think of that God’s servants followed His lead and took on assignments that seemed unconventional or counter-cultural? Can you list some bible references here?
- c. The ability to discern God’s will, to hear Him and to obey His leading are key elements of God’s miraculous work in this story. How can we cultivate our spiritual ears and hearts to hear God and follow His leading? The following scriptures can help you in your journey to discern God’s voice.

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<sup>1</sup> According to William Barclay, it was common for a Jewish man to begin the day with a prayer thanking God that he was not a slave, a Gentile, or a woman. A basic part of the Jewish religion in the days of the New Testament was an oath that promised that one would never help a Gentile under any circumstances, such as giving directions if they were asked. But it went even as far as refusing to help a Gentile woman at the time of her greatest need – when she was giving birth – because the result would only be to bring another Gentile into the world.  
(<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/acts-10/>)

- Deut 13:4
- Isa 50:4-5
- Jer 6:10
- John 6:63, John 14:26, John 16:13
- John 8:47, 10:27
- Mark 4:24
- Heb 3:15

Posture your heart and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His truth to you today about the state of your spiritual ears. Are you short of hearing? Or are you choosing to deny? Journal and write down what He is saying to you.

- d. What relevance can you draw from Peter and Cornelius' story to situations in our world today? Are there any mindsets that need to be changed? How is God challenging you with this story?

### **WHAT WOULD YOU DO**

God is the chief orchestrator in all accounts of conversion. Even the smallest details are attributed to the working of God. Conversion is not the result of skillful leadership by the community or even of persuasive preaching or biblical interpretation. In many accounts, such as those of Philip's work with the Ethiopian, the mysterious hand of God directs everything. In other stories, such as the story of Peter and Cornelius, old mindsets in the early church had to be shattered into the movements of God. Conversion is a surprising, unexpected act of divine grace.

Would you invite God to shatter old mindsets for the season ahead by following His lead instead of taking the lead yourself. And imagine if we, God's faithful disciples, would do that? What would the future look like?

### **MEMORY VERSE**

*Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3)*