

Terrified and Perplexed

Acts 10:1-16

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God Himself is the extraordinary evangelist who is mighty to save! Acts 10:1-16 is a story of how God saves and moves His church to fulfill the great commission.

2 Parts (4 realities about Evangelism):

1. Cornelius' Terrifying Encounter

Cornelius was a Centurion (considered an enemy of the Jews) but a worshiper of God. As an uncircumcised Gentile, he was never embraced by the Jewish believers and was excluded by them. There was likely no desire for him to be saved, and Cornelius probably did not get to hear the gospel. Yet God still reaches for him – the enemy and excluded.

Reality #1: God's heart is for the Enemy and the Excluded.

While there is not one person who is innocent and deserves to be saved, God is still able to reveal Jesus to those who have been excluded. Even in our failure to reach out and our evangelistic exclusion of people, our God is still mighty to save! God is able to reach those who seem unreachable. Take up the weapon of intercession and let the God of the impossible save!

Cornelius saw a vision of an angel radiating the glory of God (v3) and he responded in terror (v4a). There is nothing more terrifying than seeing God's glory. The angel reassures Cornelius with words of comfort and his heart was put at rest (v4b).

Reality #2: God's terror is unavoidable; God's comfort is invaluable.

God sees and knows all; nothing is hidden from Him. On that day, will God's word bring you renewed terror or rest and peace? What words will God speak to you on that day?

2. Peter's Perplexing Vision

As Peter was praying, he became hungry and requested for food. While waiting for the food, he fell into a trance, saw a vision of clean and unclean animals (vv. 11-12) and was asked to consume them (v13b). Peter was perplexed; he did not want to break God's command (v14). Yet through this vision, God was seeking to transform Peter so that he could become a better evangelist.

Reality #3: Evangelism is not only trying – but transforming.

Perhaps like Peter, what makes us struggle with evangelism are certain cherished parts of our identity. While we all have different strengths and approach evangelism differently, we cannot make these things reasons to excuse ourselves from evangelism. Every time we evangelise, we plunge into a new depth of dying to ourselves and living out Christ in us.

The voice from heaven responds to Peter by saying that no animal or meat in and of itself is defiling or unclean (v15). Jesus had already declared all food clean (Mark 7:18b-19). Peter already knew, but it was only here that the conceptual and intellectual became real and visceral for him. Through the vision, God was preparing Peter's heart for his evangelistic encounter with Cornelius

and paving the way for the Early Church to reach out to the Gentiles. Through Peter's physical hunger, God was demonstrating His hunger for the lost and excluded.

Reality #4: Our evangelism must reflect God's hunger for the excluded and the lost.

Remember the gospel and let it fill our hearts with the hunger that Christ has for us in evangelism!