

Acts 063  
Gentile Salvation  
Part 8  
Acts 11:11-14  
January 15, 2025  
Dr. Andy Woods

Let us take our Bibles and open them to Acts 11:11. We are continuing on with our verse-by-verse teaching through the Book of Acts. We are spending a lot of time, because the Bible spends a lot of time, on this conversion of Cornelius and his household, the first full-fledged Gentile—uncircumcised Gentile—into the body of Christ.

The apostle Peter has to make a trip from Caesarea, where this conversion with Cornelius happened, to travel all the way back to Jerusalem, the early church still being headed by Hebrews. He has to explain to them that, "Yes, a Gentile really got saved." That, in essence, is what is happening in Acts 11:1-18.

What is happening is that when Peter gets to Jerusalem, these charges are brought against him by the Jerusalem church leadership. "We heard that you actually set foot in the house of an uncircumcised Gentile" (Acts 11:4-7). Peter defends himself and says, "Yes, that is true. That happened, and the reason it happened is because God set it up to happen that way, because God wanted Cornelius to get saved. Yes, he really got saved." In the process of giving this defense in Jerusalem, Peter retells the story that we have already read in Acts 10.

- VII. Peter's Defense in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-18)
  - A. Charge against Peter (1-3)
  - B. Peter's defense (4-17)
    - 1. Peter's exposition (4)
    - 2. Vision (5-6)
    - 3. Command (7-10)
    - 4. Gentiles arrive (11-12a)
      - a) Men who came to Caesarea (11)
      - b) God's command to Peter to join them (12a)
    - 5. Journey to Caesarea (12b)
    - 6. Entrance into the house (12c)
    - 7. Cornelius' salvation (13-14)
      - a) Sent for Peter (13)
      - b) Purpose (14)
    - 8. Evidence (15-16)
    - 9. Peter's conclusion (17)
  - C. The verdict (18)

Acts 11:4 is his intention to set everything in order as to how Cornelius got saved. Acts 11:5-6 is his vision that he saw. There was a sheet that the Lord showed him after he got hungry, and on the sheet were what looked like clean and unclean animals—some clean by the Mosaic Law, some unclean. Then there was a command to "arise, kill, and eat." Peter said, "Not so, Lord," because a Jew was not supposed to eat what God, in the Mosaic Law, had called unclean. This vision is repeated three times, and then the sheet is taken to heaven.

What God is doing with Peter is breaking him down, and getting him to the point where he is understanding that we are in a new age of time. We are not under the dispensation of Law anymore; we are in the Church Age. Therefore, it is okay to set foot in the home of a Gentile and lead him to Christ.

In Acts 11:11-12, which is where we left off last time, three Gentiles arrive from Caesarea and fetch Peter. Peter, along with six Jews, go back up to Caesarea, where they are going to lead Cornelius to Christ. The story picks up with Peter explaining this to the Jerusalem leadership to get them to see the hand of God in this conversion of Cornelius.

We pick it up with Acts 11:11, which says,

*"And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were staying, having been sent from Caesarea." (Acts 11:11)*

Peter, at this point, as we said a little earlier, is down in Joppa. According to Acts 9:43, he was staying at the home of a tanner.

*"And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon." (Acts 9:43)*

A tanner, as we explained when we were in Acts 9, is someone who works with the skin of dead animals, and touching dead animals was forbidden according to the Mosaic Law. The Lord is breaking Peter down, in the sense that He is moving him away from his Judaism to more of a worldwide outlook in terms of evangelism. God is already at work by having him stay at the home of a tanner, someone that was looked at as a routine violator of the Mosaic Law.

These three men come from Caesarea to get Peter, and the Holy Spirit is the one that sent them. As they are coming, the Holy Spirit is at work on Peter's end, also telling him that, "Yes, these men are coming for you. Follow them back up to Caesarea because there is a very special appointment waiting for you, a man named Cornelius."

The Holy Spirit is working on both ends here. The Holy Spirit is telling Cornelius in Caesarea what is going to happen. "Simon Peter is going to come, and he is going to give you an important message." While that is happening, the Holy Spirit is working on

Peter's heart through direct revelation and telling him to go with these men from Joppa back to Caesarea.

This picks up, if you will, in Acts 11:12, which says,

*"The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings." (Acts 11:12)*

The Holy Spirit had told Peter, "These men are coming for you from Caesarea. Go with them, and do not doubt." This is a pretty heavy thing when you think about it. If three people just showed up at your house and said, "You need to go to a different town," we probably would not do it, unless God had done some kind of work in advance, preparing our hearts for that. That is what the Lord was doing with Peter; that is the significance of him staying at the home of a tanner; that is the significance of him seeing that vision with the sheet, with the four-footed beasts in it. "Go without doubting."

There are a lot of things God tells us to do without doubting. Did you know that? One of the things He tells us to do is when we pray, we should pray without doubting. James 1:6-8 says,

*"But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (James 1:6-8)*

When we pray, and we ask in faith, we are to not doubt lest we be like the wind, throwing a wave of the sea to and fro. In the same way the Lord has told Peter, "These six men are coming for you, and you are to go with them from Joppa to Caesarea. Do not doubt." God has given Peter this command to join these men.

The middle of Acts 11:12 describes the journey from Joppa up north to Caesarea. It says, *"These six brethren also with me."* When Peter makes the journey from Joppa to Caesarea, he takes six men with him. Three men come to get him from Caesarea, and when he leaves Joppa to go to Caesarea, he takes six people with him.

Why did Peter take six people with him? I think Peter knows something big is going to happen. He does not know what it is. In hindsight, we know it is the conversion of Cornelius. Whatever is going to happen is going to be so big, it is going to take witnesses to corroborate it, because it is going to be so awesome that if Peter had to re-explain the whole thing to people (which he is doing now in Jerusalem), they would not believe it is true. These six people that go with him are important because they are kind of like a jury, or eyewitnesses. Peter says, "Cornelius really got saved in Caesarea. I have these six people that saw the whole thing happen."

There is a principle in the Bible that when God does something, it is corroborated by multiple witnesses. Deuteronomy 17:6, speaking of capital punishment under the Law of Moses, says,

*"On the evidence of two or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness." (Dt 17:6)*

If someone is convicted of a capital crime under the prior dispensation of the Mosaic Law, to the point where they had to be stoned to death, then the crime had to be witnessed by two to three witnesses. Usually, one of the persons that saw the crime had to be the first to throw the stone. God does not put people to death except on the basis of two to three witnesses. God works through witnesses.

It is the same thing with a sinning elder. It is sad when church leaders have to be removed from their position because they are caught in some kind of sin, but it says in 1 Timothy 5:19,

*"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses."*

If someone points a finger at an elder and says, "I saw that elder in sin, he needs to be removed from his position," then one witness is not enough; you have to have that sin seen by two to three witnesses. This protects an elder from the rumor mill because anybody can accuse anybody of anything in this day and age. It is also set up in a way where a church leader can be removed from his position if the requirement of two to three witnesses is met.

You will see this concept of witnesses all the way through the Scripture. I think the reason Peter brings six people with him, as he leaves Joppa and goes to Caesarea, is he is bringing his witnesses because something amazing is about to happen through the conversion of Cornelius and his entourage and household. Unless this conversion was seen by witnesses other than Peter, the Jerusalem leadership of the church probably would not have believed the testimony of Peter in and of itself.

So there goes Peter with the six, leaving Joppa and going to Caesarea. As he is recounting the story, which you have already studied in Acts 10, how he enters into the house of a Gentile named Cornelius in Caesarea. If you look at the end of Acts 11:12, it says, *"...and we entered the man's house."*

Whose house? Cornelius' house. That was taboo. That was, as the German word goes, "verboten." A Jew was not supposed to do that. In fact, if you go back to Acts 11:3, that is what the Jerusalem leadership is upset with Peter about: this issue, that he would walk into the house of a Gentile.

Acts 11:3 says, as they are accusing Peter in Jerusalem,

*"You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." (Acts 11:3)*

When Peter did that, when the story is described in Acts 10:27-28, it says,

*"As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. And he said to them, 'You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.'"* (Acts 10:27-28)

That is what staying at the home of a tanner taught him at the end of Acts 9. That is what the vision of the sheep taught him there in Acts 10, where certain animals were called unclean, and he was told to "arise, kill, and eat." So he is now listening to the voice of God and not listening to the voice of tradition, which is a great place to be, by the way.

He goes right into the home of a Gentile. Now, this business about how a Jew not being allowed to go into the home of a Gentile, is not something that God ever commanded. I think what that is, is a bunch of pharisaical regulation placed on top of the Law of Moses. By the time you get to the time of Christ, there was this tradition within Judaism. It really was not part of the Mosaic Law, but it was part of the Pharisees' tradition that, as a Jew, you were not supposed to go into the home of a Gentile.

When Peter is doing this, he is not really violating the Law of Moses, in my estimation; he is violating a bunch of pharisaical regulations, which was very common with those kinds of pharisaical regulations. They started off well-intentioned, but over the course of time, the tail started to wag the dog as they tried to build a fence around the Law. They were so afraid of violating the Law that they added these extra-biblical regulations beyond the Mosaic Law. At first they started off well-intentioned, but over the course of time, which is typically what happens with legalism, the regulations become more important than the Law itself.

This was Jesus' whole tangle with the Pharisees, because Jesus would heal people on the Sabbath; He would allow His disciples to eat on the Sabbath; and it would always strike the ire of the Pharisees when He did that. Jesus would have to explain that, "I am not really violating the law of the Sabbath. In fact, I am the Lord of the Sabbath. I am actually the one that wrote the Law at Sinai 1500 years ago. So if I bless a man on the Sabbath by healing him or allowing him to eat, I am actually keeping the original intent of the Sabbath." Really, what Christ was violating was the traditions of men, started off well-intentioned, but the tail started to wag the dog.

That is why Jesus says stuff like this in the Gospels. Mark 7:13: *"Thus invalidating the Word of God by your tradition."* This idea of fence around the Law was common in Phariseeism. "We do not want to violate the Law; we know that violating the Sabbath sent us into the Babylonian captivity; so we are going to pass a bunch of rules and regulations. We will never violate the Sabbath again. Do not eat on the Sabbath. Do not heal on the Sabbath." In the process, they lost sight of what the Sabbath was all about. The Sabbath was designed to be a blessing to man.

The very first person to build a fence around the law was Eve. You remember the original command: "Do not eat from the forbidden tree of knowledge." When Eve is being tempted by Satan, this is what she says in Genesis 3:2-3:

*"The woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will [surely] die.'""*

In the process, she misstates what God originally said. She left out the words "any" and "freely." "From the fruit of the trees of the garden.." Actually, what God says is, "From any of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may freely eat." She dropped those words out, and then she added, "We cannot touch it." God never said anything about not touching it. What happened there in her mind? She was so afraid, her and Adam, of violating the command, that they passed their own rules to make sure that they would never get near the tree of knowledge so as not to violate it. That is basically phariseeism—building a fence around the law.

When everybody is upset with Peter entering into the house of a Gentile, that is not what God said, but that is what the pharisaical regulations restricted. When you go into the Old Testament, you find Jews interacting with Gentiles constantly. They are called proselytes. If a Gentile wanted to follow Yahweh, then a Gentile had to submit themselves to the Law of Moses and come into the commonwealth, or the Nation of Israel.

One of the most famous proselytes in the Bible, a Gentile who wanted to follow Yahweh, was Ruth, who came from Moab. She was a moabitess, which was a nation adjacent to Israel in the Transjordan. In Ruth 1:16, Ruth is speaking to her Mother-in-law, Naomi:

*"But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.'" (Ruth 1:16)*

There is a Gentile interacting with a Jew, and there is no problem with it whatsoever.

Another very famous proselyte in the Old Testament was the Queen of Sheba, which most people believe is modern-day Saudi Arabia. According to 2 Chronicles 1:1-12, the Queen of Sheba traveled 1,200 miles—that is pre-airplane and the like—to sit at Solomon's feet to learn of his wisdom. There is no problem with the Jew interacting with the Gentile.

Jesus made reference to these proselytes in Matthew 23:15. He says,

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on land and sea to make one proselyte; and when he becomes*

*one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."* (Matthew 23:15)

Jesus had no problem with evangelization and Jews interacting with Gentiles. He had a problem with taking Gentiles and loading them up with legalistic bondage, which is what the Pharisees did, and what Jesus is condemning here.

In fact, that is the whole point of the temple. The temple was supposed to be so beautiful that the Gentile nations could come and visit the temple and learn, through the sacrificial system, about the holiness of God, and the love of God. That is why they made it so attractive, particularly when Solomon built the first temple, and the returnees from the captivity rebuilt it and Herod beautified it.

When you understand that, you understand why Jesus is so angry when He goes into the temple, which is supposed to be a house of prayer, and they turned it into a merchandising enterprise. What are the Gentiles supposed to think when they come and visit the temple? That God is a God of crass materialism? This is why Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple.

By my count, He did it twice. He did it once at the beginning of His ministry, and He did it again at the end of His ministry, which is a nice bracket, if you will, or inclusio condemning everything that was wrong in first-century Israel. God never had a problem with Jews interacting with Gentiles, but the Pharisees came and they built the fence around the law. They reinterpreted things where a Jew could not even go into the house of a Gentile.

When Peter does this, he is not violating the Law; he is violating the fence that was built around the law by the Pharisees and the early Christians. (They are not even called Christians yet; that is coming at the end of this chapter.) The early Jewish leadership of the church was still steeped in all of this Phariseeism, so that is why they are cross-examining Peter. "Is it true that you went into the home of a Gentile?" And Peter is saying, "Yes, it is true. Not only did I go into his house, but I led him to Yeshua—the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ."

We pick it up there in Acts 11:13-14, where we have a description of Cornelius' salvation. Acts 11:13 indicates that Cornelius had sent for Peter. Cornelius is the one that sent the three Gentiles from Caesarea to Joppa to fetch Peter. Peter explains this. It says,

*"And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here;'"* (Acts 11:13-14)

Cornelius is a God seeker. He wants to know the truth. He does not know the gospel yet; he may not even know the name Jesus Christ yet. God loved Cornelius so much that He sent an angel to say, "Okay, here is what you need to do to get the truth." The

angel tells Cornelius to dispatch some people, go down to Joppa, get Peter, bring him back up to Caesarea, and listen to every word that the man has to say. "If you listen to him, you will come to a saving knowledge of the truth."

It is really important to understand this, that Cornelius, when he dispatches three people to go back to Joppa, does not just get in Peter's face and say, "Thus saith the Lord. God told me to tell you." Has anybody ever said that to you? "God told me to tell you to hightail it back up to Caesarea." Yes, that was a real message that came to Cornelius, but God was working on his end simultaneously when He was working on Peter's end. Peter saw the vision of the sheet, etc. If you go back to Acts 11:12, Peter says, "The Spirit told me to go with them, without any misgivings."

When the Lord works and wants you to do something, it will not be a situation where someone comes to you and says, "God told me to tell you that this is what you are supposed to do: do not wear a blue tie on Tuesday." If God really does not want you to wear a blue tie on Tuesday, you know what God is going to do? He is going to get that message to you personally, as well, because a matter must be confirmed by two to three witnesses. This message was confirmed by what God was doing on Peter's end, what God was doing on Cornelius' end, and the two have to intersect.

When someone comes up to you and says, "God told me to tell you that you are supposed to work this job," or "God told me to tell you that you are supposed to move to such and such a place, and buy such and such a house, and live in such and such a neighborhood. Here is how many dogs and cats you are allowed to own." People do this stuff to you all the time. Your answer is, "I appreciate you telling me that, and God needs to confirm it on my end."

God does not put us in situations where people just have these direct revelations from God and order us around. That is outside of His pattern of working. If God is working on their end, He will also be working on your end, confirming everything that you are supposed to do. These kinds of narratives, historical accounts, are helpful in understanding how God works and how He is working in this situation here.

Then you go down to Acts 11:14, and now we have the explanation as to why Peter is supposed to leave Joppa and go to Caesarea to meet Cornelius. Why does Cornelius need to send for Peter? Acts 11:14 says,

*"and he [Peter] will speak words to you by which you [Cornelius] will be saved, you and all your household."*

"Peter is going to show up, and he is going to come into your house. He is going to give you the gospel because you are a God seeker, and he is going to teach you the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. This is something, Cornelius, that you know nothing about right now."

That is the whole purpose of Peter leaving Joppa and going to Caesarea. This means that Cornelius, prior to this point in time, was not yet saved, because it says, "He will speak words to you by which you will be saved." This message is going to Cornelius as an unsaved person.

Acts 10:1-2 talks about what Cornelius was experiencing as an unsaved person. It says,

*"Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and he gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually." (Acts 10:1-2)*

This was pre-salvation. You notice that Cornelius, as an unsaved man, was devout. You will notice that Cornelius, as an unsaved man, was a God fearer. You will notice that Cornelius, as an unsaved man, was a financial blessing to the Jewish people. You will notice that Cornelius, as an unsaved man, was praying to God continually.

Why bring this up? Because in the doctrine of Calvinism, which we are covering in Sunday School, the Calvinists basically say that the lost human being is totally depraved, meaning they have no ability to hear or see anything from God. The T in the Calvinistic acronym T.U.L.I.P. stands for Total Depravity. It means that man is completely and wholly depraved and has no ability whatsoever to respond, repent, or believe in God until he is first regenerated by God. This is a basic Calvinistic belief.

If that is true, how in the world do you explain Acts 10:2, where Cornelius, as an unsaved man—and we know he is unsaved here because the angel told him that Peter is coming to give him the right words by which he will be saved—how is it that a Cornelius, as an unsaved man could be devout, can fear God, can bless the Jewish people, and can pray to God continually? This becomes one of the key passages that you can use to show that the Calvinistic understanding of total depravity is grossly overstated.

This is why at our church, Sugar Land Bible Church, we reject the Calvinistic teachings. A lot of them come from John MacArthur. John MacArthur, in his book "Faith Works," says,

"Because we were dead to God, we were dead to truth, righteousness, peace, happiness, and every other good thing, no more capable to respond to God than a cadaver" and are "spiritual zombies, death-walkers, unable even to understand the gravity of their situation. They are lifeless."<sup>1</sup>

That kind of a statement might be very consistent with John MacArthur's Calvinistic theology, but it does not at all harmonize with Acts 10:2 juxtaposed with Acts 11:14.

---

<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles (Dallas: Word, 1993), 64-65.

Unsaved people can believe the gospel on their own after, of course, the Holy Spirit convicts them, and they can be drawn to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The other end of the extreme are people that say, "You know what? Because Cornelius was a devout man and was fearing God and blessing the Jewish people and praying to God continually, he was already saved." That moves you into a doctrine called inclusivism, which is basically the idea that people can be saved whether they know the name Jesus or not. All they have to do is to be faithful to whatever light they have.

If a Muslim is faithful to God in the Islamic belief system, the Muslim can be saved whether they know the name Jesus or not. The same is true with a Buddhist or a New Ager, or a humanist, or whoever. All you have to do is be faithful with the light that you have been given, and you can be saved.

People will go to Acts 10:2 and grab that verse where Cornelius, as an unsaved person, was fearing God, giving money to the poor, and praying to God continually. They say, "There. He was saved." No, he was not saved because the angel just told him, "Peter is coming to you to tell you how you will be saved." When Cornelius was doing all of this stuff, he was unsaved. Therefore, inclusivism is wrong just as much as Calvinism, that says you cannot respond to anything that God sends your way, is also wrong.

That is why I am drilling down on this here a little bit. We want to stay out of these ditches. You know about inclusivism because we have talked about this before, have we not? It is basically Oprah Winfrey theology. She says,

"...one of the mistakes that humans make is believing there is only one way...And many, many paths to what we call God...It doesn't matter whether she called it 'God' along the way or not...There couldn't be just one way!... There couldn't be only one way with millions of people in the world!...you are on some remote part of the earth and you never heard the name Jesus. You cannot go to Heaven...?"<sup>2</sup>

This is what she is saying on YouTube, as she is interacting with a studio audience member.

It does not matter that the person asking her the question is obviously a Christian, a Bible informed, biblically informed Christian who is telling her that you cannot be saved without Jesus. She is saying that there are people all over the world who are very sincere, that know nothing about Jesus, and they are going to heaven, too. That is inclusivism.

Acts 10:2 is a favorite verse of the "exclusivists." I have already given you this tragic quote from Billy Graham in his interview with Robert Schuller. Here they are talking about outside Christian groups,

---

<sup>2</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lb2RUUpMDk34](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lb2RUUpMDk34)

"...whether they're conscious of it or not...Whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world...They may not even know the name Jesus, but...They turn to the only light that they have and I think they're saved and they're going to be with us in heaven."<sup>3</sup>

This is a tough quote for me to swallow, because I believe God has used Billy Graham. In fact, my own mother got saved at a Billy Graham crusade. It is hard for me to look at someone that God has used in my family and watch him in a different environment, just spout heretical statements.

Then, of course, Tony Evans has some published statements about inclusivism. He calls this transdispensationalism. This is a printed statement in his book, and this is a tough one to swallow, too, because he is a guy in our dispensational circles—a Dallas seminary guy writing this. I report these things to you, not with any real glee. It is sad for me to even have to talk about it, but you have to be aware of how close inclusivism is hitting home within our own circles.

It is not a misspeaking in a sermon; it is printed material. I know about misspeaking in sermons. You can misspeak in the heat of a moment. It is completely different when you write it down and publish it, because your thought process is more calm, cool, deliberative, and reflective, and it goes through a bunch of editors. Here are people from Moody Bible Institute publishing this. I am wondering, where are their heads? What is their theology if they are actually putting this stuff into print?

"By this I mean if a person is sincerely seeking God and desiring to know Him, and is responding to the truth he knows, there is no missionary or direct manifestation of God, then God judges that person based on his faith in the light he has received."<sup>4</sup>

He is saying exactly what Billy Graham and Oprah were saying: "You can get to heaven through being sincere. It does not matter whether you know the name Jesus or not. After all, Cornelius was seeking God and he did not know the name of Jesus yet, so he is in." But the Bible clearly says that he is not in. The Calvinist is saying he cannot even respond to God. That is not true. The inclusivist is saying he is already saved, whether he knows the name Jesus or not. That is not true, either.

Let us get back to the Bible. Acts 4:12 says,

*"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."*  
(Acts 4:12)

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrf60-zHI9A>

<sup>4</sup> *Totally Saved: Understanding, Experiencing and Enjoying the Greatness of Your Salvation* (Chicago: Moody, 2002), 355, 359.

Does that sound optional to you? The word "must" (the original Greek word is "dei") is also used by Dr. Luke in Luke 4:43, about how Jesus must preach the kingdom of God to other cities. Not optional, in other words. Jesus must fulfill the Old Testament. Not optional, in other words. Jesus said to Thomas, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."* As if that were not enough, the rest of the verse says, *"No one comes to the Father but through Me"* (John 14:6). Does that sound optional to you? Whether you hear Jesus' name or not, you are in? These are statements that people are making now that do not comport with biblical truth.

First Timothy 2:5 says,

*"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,"* (1 Tim 2:5)

Only one being can be a mediator between God and man, and that is the God-Man. How many of those are out there? There is only one—Jesus is the God-Man. At the point of the virgin conception, humanity was added to eternally existent deity. He is 100% God and 100% man. Unless you know of another one, only Jesus Christ can mediate between God and man.

Paul says in Galatians 2:21:

*"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."*

Do you see the problem of saying you can get to heaven without Jesus? It makes His sacrifice needless. You look at all the sufferings He went through for us and you say to Him, "Thanks, but no thanks. I have got my own path." What we just did is took all of His sufferings and trivialized them.

The reason He did what He did is because that was the only way. That is His whole argument with the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. He did not want to go through the ordeal of the cross, so he said, "If there is another way..." But there was no other way. That is why He went through what He went through for us. If we say there is another way, then it is like taking His sufferings and making them needless.

I do not know what Oprah understands about this, but when she gets in front of millions of people and says Jesus is not the only way, whether she knows what she is doing or not, I have a feeling that she does not know what she is doing, because if she knew what she was doing, she would not do it. She is articulating one of the greatest blasphemies that could ever be articulated against the eternally existent second member of the Godhead, Jesus Christ. She is saying what He went through was unessential.

Jesus, in Matthew 7:13-14, said,

*"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."*

What you are seeing is that general revelation is not enough to get a person saved. Examples of general revelation would be nature and conscience. It is available to all, but the only thing you can do is make you accountable to search for God. It is usually non-written or nonverbal, and the quality of it is natural. It is what you see in daily life. Studying rocks and trees is not going to save you. It will make you accountable to search for truth, but it will not save you.

What you need to be saved is special revelation. Examples of special revelation would be the incarnation, Scripture, miracles. Special revelation is available to some, and if you listen or read special revelation, it is enough to be saved. It will save you. It is typically in written form; it is supernatural or miraculous.

You see what is happening here with Cornelius? He is in the general category. He is responding to the light that he has and God, through Peter, by moving Peter from Joppa up to Caesarea, is now going to provide Cornelius with the special revelation, because the general revelation is not going to get him to heaven, even though he is a God seeker. The special revelation will.

I believe this: the testimony of the Book of Acts supports it. If a person is responding to the light that they have, can an unsaved person respond to that light first of all? They can. Paul says so in Acts 17:26:

*"and He has made from one man every nation to live over the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation; that they would seek God..."*

When people tell you an unsaved person cannot see God, my Bible is saying the exact opposite. Unsaved people have conscience. They have creation. God put them on notice that there is something bigger than yourself that you are accountable to, and you better figure out who it is. If someone actually wants to know the truth, you know who shows up at their front door? Peter shows up. God, who is not willing that any should perish, will move heaven and earth to get that God seeker the right data that he needs so as to be saved.

That is what is happening in Acts 10. Cornelius is moving from the general to receptivity to the special. By the way, the same thing happens with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. It is the exact same pattern, responding to the light the person had. God sent Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch to give him the right interpretation of Isaiah 53.

The problem, though, with most people is they do not want God. How do I know that? Romans 1:18-20 tells me that. It says,

*"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being fully understood through what he has made." (Romans 1:18-20)*

General revelation. What does Psalm 19 say? A great psalm on general and special revelation. Psalm 19:1-4 says,

*"The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.  
Day to day pours forth speech,  
And night to night reveals knowledge.  
There is no speech, nor are there words;  
Their voice is not heard.  
Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
Their utterances to the end of the world.  
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,"*

It goes on describing general revelation. Then you get to Psalm 19:7 and it talks about special revelation.

*"The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul;  
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.  
The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;  
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." (Psalm 19:7-8)*

In other words, general revelation (Psalm 19:1-6), and special revelation (Psalm 19:7-14).

Every single day of a person's life, they hear sermons and watch sermons. Did you know that? They go to the beach and they look at the waves, how the waves keep coming in and going out and the tide. They hear it and they are hearing a sermon. They look at their fingerprints and they realize that no two fingerprints are the same on planet Earth. They look at a snowflake under a microscope and realize that all snowflakes that have ever fallen in human history are different from each other. They look at the sunrise and they look at the sunset.

Every single day of their lives they watch these things, and what they are seeing are sermons. God is revealing Himself to people through these things. They may never read the Bible. They may never listen Christian radio or Christian television. They may never darken the door of a church or ever listen to a preacher or a pastor. Yet every single

day of their life is a sermon, sermon, sermon, sermon, sermon in the form of general revelation being clearly seen.

What is the expectation of God? That people would respond to that and say, "Oh, my word, there is something bigger than me that has put all this together." Did you know that right now, as we speak, we are traveling at an astronomical speed. In our heliocentric solar system, the Earth is rotating around the sun at exactly the right distance. We are not so close that we burn to death, and we are not so far that we freeze to death, even though the last couple of weeks seem like things are a little colder than normal.

Here we are, moving at this astronomical speed, at the exact distance to sustain life. You do not think that is a sermon? That is one of the best sermons you will ever see, watch, read, or hear. God preaches it every single day—it is clearly seen. What does God want people to do? Respond. There is something bigger than you that you are accountable to. Search for the truth.

Men do not do that, do they? They like being god. I do not want to submit to God. I like being god myself. What do they do? They take the obvious and they hold it down in unrighteousness. God says, "Okay, if you will not respond to general revelation, how in the world would you ever respond to special revelation?" Then they do not get the gospel.

But you get a person like the Ethiopian eunuch that is responding. You get a person like Cornelius that is responding. God, who desires no one to perish, moves heaven and earth to get them the specific data that they need in Jesus Christ so as to be saved. That becomes the relationship between general revelation and special revelation. God is moving Cornelius from the middle column there to the far right column. That is the whole point of Peter coming.

General vs. Special Revelation		
	General	Special
Examples	Nature, conscience (Rom 1–2)	Incarnation, Scripture, miracles
Availability	All	Some
Accomplishment	Accountability (Rom 1)	Salvation (Acts 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15)
Form	Non-written or non-verbal	Written
Quality	Natural	Supernatural, miraculous

If all of this is true, Calvinism, in which man has no ability to respond, cannot be right. If all of this is true, inclusivism, which says people are saved by just being good sports and trying hard within the limited knowledge that they have, whether they know the name Jesus or not cannot be true either.

Because God loves Cornelius—just like he loves Theophilus, the one to whom the Book of Acts was written—God is explaining how He worked to reach Cornelius through Peter with special revelation. The special revelation goes right into his door, when the Jewish law said, "Do not go into the home of a Gentile." The law did not say it, as we have explained; the Pharisees said it.

Then Peter starts to preach the gospel. You have already read about it at the end of Acts 10, the story is just recounting. Peter cannot even finish his special revelation sermon before Cornelius says, "We have heard enough and we believe," and there is a conversion. Now Peter is having to explain, along with these six witnesses, that this really happened.

In Acts 11:15-16 you have the evidence of Cornelius' conversion. Number one is his spirit baptism (Acts 11:15), which Peter and the witnesses explain. Number two is the fulfillment of Acts 1:6, which was fulfilled when Cornelius believed. I do not mean to stifle your energy and creativity, but those two verses right there are absolutely loaded with theology. If you do not understand those two verses, you do not even understand when the church started, as one example.