Cornelius The Centurion

Introduction
I. I believe with all my heart that the gospel is universal in application, and intended for all races, classes and conditions of humanity (Rom. 1:16–17).
   A. It is intended to reach down to lowest depths of degradation and despair.
   B. Also intended for the very best man this nation affords, morally speaking.
II. In this lesson I want look at a prominent man, known throughout the country in which he lived and against whom very few things could be said—his name is Cornelius, a resident of Caesarea Maritima, and his story is found in Acts 10.

Discussion
I. Character Of Cornelius (Acts 10:1–2, 22)
   A. Many today would think it strange that he needed to do anything in order to be saved from his sins.
   B. People today might be honest, honorable, prayerful, generous, with hearts open to the poor—what do they have to fear at the hands of a just and merciful God?
   C. Cornelius was told four times that he needed to “hear words” in order to be saved (Acts 10:6, 22, 32; 11:14).

II. Appearance Of The Angel (Acts 10:3–6)
   A. How many preachers in this town would question his salvation?
   B. Though an angel had spoken and God heard prayers, he must yet hear words from another man’s lips before he will be saved.
   C. The angel to did not appear to convert him, to preach to him or change his heart in any way.
   D. The humility of Cornelius is shown (Acts 10:6).
   E. Did not inquire if he could be saved in some other way.

III. The Messenger: The Apostle Peter (Acts 10:9–18)
   A. Our scene changes from Caesarea to the city of Joppa, some 30 miles away.
   C. While Cornelius was waiting he called his friends together (Acts 10:24, 33).

   A. In the introduction of the sermon we find a positive declaration that God respects not persons, but character—to fear Him and work righteousness is the ground of acceptability.
   B. The content of the sermon (Acts 10:36–44).
   C. Peter did not preach this sermon without interruption (Acts 11:15).
      1. “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them...” (NKJV).
      2. “No sooner had I begun to speak...” (Weymouth).
      3. “Just as I was starting to speak...” (NIV).
      4. “Now just as I began to speak...” (Moffatt).
      5. “But just as I was getting started...” (Living Bible).
D. The Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his household. Why?
   1. He did not preach the needed words.
   2. If Cornelius was saved when the Spirit came, he was saved before Peter’s sermon; therefore he was saved before faith.
   3. “So then faith comes by hearing…” (Rom. 10:17).
E. Speaking by the Spirit of God does not prove salvation.
   1. Saul, while seeking to kill David, had the Spirit of God upon him, and did what Cornelius did—spoke by the Spirit of God (1 Sam. 19:21–23).
   2. While the Israelites were camped across from Jericho, Balaam’s donkey spoke by the Spirit (Num. 22:28).
   3. Caiaphas, the High Priest, prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation.
      a) God used this unregenerate man to speak (John 11:51; 2 Pet. 1:20–21).
      b) Caiaphas was a persecutor of the church (Acts 4:6).
F. The Holy Spirit proved that the Gentiles could be saved (Acts 11:15–18).
G. Ten years later, in Peter’s final words in Acts, he told how the Gentiles would be saved in the same manner as the Jews (Acts 15:7–11)
   1. “And he commanded them to be baptized…” (Acts 10:48).

Conclusion
I. I repeat what I said at the start: no man will be saved by morality alone.
   A. They have to heard words (Matt. 28:18).
   B. I pray you would follow the steps of Cornelius and obey God’s commands.
II. If you are waiting for an angel to come, eternity will find you still unprepared.
   A. Angels no long come—we have the word of God.
   B. The word of God is still powerful (Heb. 4:12).
III. If you are waiting for the baptism of the Holy Spirit—you will die disappointed.
   A. Only two cases of Holy Spirit baptism in world history (Acts 2, 10).
   B. The purpose of Holy Spirit baptism has been fulfilled.
IV. If Christ were visibly present, He would point you to His word (Heb. 5:8–9).
V. We are saved, not by the appearance of an angel, the baptism of Holy Spirit, nor by miracles, but by humble, loving, trusting obedience to authority of God.