

BACKGROUND

41 AD

I love watching historically movies about that period - flip through the DVDs
Tracey hates it, because I tend to pick movies to bits!

BTW I am not a fan of the movies which show intimate images of our Lord Jesus.
The Greatest Story Ever Old - watched for the 1st time last week - UTTER RUBBISH !!!
Totally watered down or outright destroyed the true gospel!

Prefer:

Kosters' 1953 ***The Robe*** (with Richard Burton & Jean Simmons)
Daves' 1954 sequel ***Demetrius and the Gladiators*** (Victor Mature & Susan Hayward)
Cecil B De Milles' 1956 ***The Ten Commandments*** (Charlton Heston & Yul Brynner)
Willer's 1959 ***Ben-Hur*** (Charlton Heston)

To the modern:

Ridley Scotts' 2004 feature ***Gladiator*** (Russell Crowe)

So can you picture the likes of Russel Crowe as a mighty Roman soldier (albeit a General)

- Cornelius was a mighty Roman military leader.
- Large, intimidating, experienced & seen his fair share of battles and engagements
- Exposed to and carried out the horrors of Roman law
- Eg. Crucifixion and many other tortures equally sickening.
- Coming from Italy, maybe even Rome itself **ie. a Gentile**
- loyal to the empire (as you don't become a centurion without proven allegiance.
- Fully decked out in his military armour for battle and regalia for dress.

● Cohorts

- In this period (~40 AD) consisted of one Tribune and 4-5 centuriae (about 500 soldiers).
- *Cohors II Italica Civium Romanorum*
- From extra-Biblical sources
 - ◆ Not much info until 69AD
 - ◆ Consisted of Italians
 - ◆ Maintained the peace of the Roman Province around Caeserea

WHAT CHANGED THIS CENTURION INTO THE MAN DESCRIBED IN V.2 ?

1. Look at the Spiritual Attributes of Cornelius

v2.

A devout man,

- Gk. ευσεβης = pious
- *Eusebes* meaning “well revered” or a sacred awe directed (in this case) to Almighty God.
- It may be described as a holy awe of God, so that we are excited to do activities devoted to God.
- In V.22 - he devoted his service to worship God, keeping the Jewish (ie. Old Testament) Law!
- His servants described Him as a **JUST** man (one who outwardly kept the Mosaic Law).

- He is a man who like Isaiah had **seen God in ALL His glory**, had a personal revelation of:
 - His lowliness to God’s splendour
 - His sinfulness to God’s pure holiness
 - His unworthiness to God’s Majesty
 - His fallen created nature to the Almighty’s Sovereignty and Omnipotence!
- Cf. Isaiah’s description of the Lord sitting upon His throne! **Read Is.6:1-5**

- Remember, Isaiah was a:
 - Prophet (spoke God’s message as directed by the Holy Spirit)
 - Of God’s chosen people (“The Children of Jacob, His Chosen ones” 1 Chr 16:13)
- Yet when he beheld God’s holiness he was filled with calamitous humility [**CUT OFF**]:
 - Man of unclean lips
 - People of unclean lips

It is NOT until I have seen God as He sees me, that I can appreciate my need for His grace and mercy. **That is the key virtue of humility, meekness, poor in spirit!**

So, Cornelius is ...

one that feared God with all his house

- A mighty Roman soldier is here trembling before Almighty God!
- Picture again being in the presence of powerful leaders in those days [take the knee]:
 - Kings
 - Emperors

- Or us in current days [merely bow or curtsey], meeting the
 - The honourable Prime Minister,
 - Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II or
 - President of United States.

- Mark of respect to authority to those who can harm the body!

How much more so to the Almighty creator and sovereign judge who can sentence our soul for all eternity?

Notice the devotion of a Godly man:

- **ensure his entire house (at least outwardly) fears the Lord.**
- Cf. **Joshua**; *but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Josh. 24:15*
- Cf **Abraham**; *This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.*

And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

*And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, **every man child in your generations**, he that is **born in the house**, or **bought with money** of any stranger, which is **not of thy seed**.*

*He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. **Gen 17:10-13***

*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. **Gen 18:19***

Isn't it wonderful the Lord has Covenant provision for certain Gentiles even back then!
It is the duty of Godly parents to ensure God is honoured in their home by all who are under their roof. **It is NOT a guarantee they are saved inwardly.**

Does our home life reflect the obedience to Almighty God?

I know mine is sadly lacking - especially in graciousness to my wife and family.

Do we allow idolaters under our roof?

Do we provide a Christ-like example to follow (irrespective of our circumstances) at home?

gave much alms to the people,

- Cornelius was faithfully generous to care for those commanded by God needing our special care:

*And if thy brother be **waxen poor**, and **fallen in decay [hand faileth from health]** with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a **stranger, or a sojourner**; that he may live with thee. **[Lev.25:35]***

*And the **Levite**, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the **stranger**, and the **fatherless**, and the **widow**, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest. **[Dt 14:28,29]***

*If there be among you a **poor man** of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:*

....

*For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. **[Dt 15:7,11]***

It is our Christian duty to share our blessings with those who have less than us!

It saddens me to hear many people (even Christians) mention how poor they are.

I believe we should devote time to studying our persecuted brothers and sisters (predominantly overseas, but here in Nambour, too).

If we ever need to be reminded of the wonderful providence of God, I do invite you to examine your situation:

- Health - free/cheap medical (despite its flaws). Many third world have nothing!
- Food - we feast like royalty compared to our third world brethren!
- Water - I can go ANYWHERE in populated Australia and find a tap or even creek and get fresh, easily cleaned safe drinking water!
- Shelter - how many of us have a couple of people in 2-3 bedroom house?
 - Compare that with third world countries where 3 generations and extended families occupy 1 room!
 - Or many homeless even living on Sunshine Coast!

Loved ones, please be generous as the Lord enables. If not with your financial wealth, then with your labours (helping in soup kitchens, meals on wheels, etc) or at least with your prayers and awareness of the needy.

Of course, we also have needy folk in our own congregation:

- Sick
- Elderly
- Family concerns

Please share with the Session (or your trusted brothers and sisters) your personal needs!

prayed to God always.

- The OT is replete with example prayers of those saints of old.
- These would have instructed Cornelius how and what to pray.
- Some examples:
 - **Adoration**
 - ◆ Ex 15
 - ◆ Num 14
 - **Confession**
 - ◆ Ezra 9:5-10:4
 - ◆ Job 40:3-5, 42:1-6
 - **Thanksgiving**
 - ◆ Deut 26
 - ◆ Ezra 7:27, 28
 - **Supplication / Intercession**
 - ◆ Job 42:7-10
 - ◆ Gen 17
 - ◆ I Sam 8

- **HOMEWORK: Read *Psalm 25* and find the 4 typical features of prayers.**
Cf. The Lord's Prayer *Mt 6:9-13*

It is a notable virtue to be of good report before man.

- Here **V22**, Cornelius is referred by his servants as having “**good report before the nation of the Jews**”
- He must have been an honourable man for the entire Jewish nation to acknowledge him.
- God-honouring Gentile

to hear words of thee

- Cornelius had attended to the Word of God (the Jewish OT) as best he could.
- He must have known the Jewish books (by some means)
 - Demonstrated by his faithful adherence to it!

to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

- **V.33** Cornelius was to hear the Word of God, from Peter
- As directed by his vision.
- Essentially, the NEW TESTAMENT the Gospel.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. **2 Timothy 2:15**

V.24 he had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

- Note, Cornelius wanted as many of his loved ones to experience the Gospel!
- We should have a burning love for others to hear God's word
 - First and foremost our brothers and sisters in the Lord
 - Our family and friends ~ cf. All the household!
- NB. He doesn't ask ALL men, but at least a select treasured few.

Collectively, these make up the spiritual attributes of this Roman Centurion.

2. Simon Peter: Why have you sent for me?

vv. 36-43 - Outline's the Gospel (ie. The New Testament)

3. A Gentile "Pentecost"

vv. 44-48

8 years after the True Pentecost

Summary

I am forced to ask myself, do I share these spiritual attributes with Cornelius?

Micah 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Or in these words of Dr Luke in Acts, have I been:

- A devout man, and
- one that feared God with all his house,
- which gave much alms to the people,
- and prayed to God alway?

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