



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?**  
**Wk. 31 Christ's Power Over Discrimination**  
**By Pastor Jody May 04/28/2023**

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**Acts 9:1-16 ESV**

**Peter and Cornelius**

**10** At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, <sup>2</sup>a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. <sup>3</sup>About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." <sup>4</sup>And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. <sup>5</sup>And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. <sup>6</sup>He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." <sup>7</sup>When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, <sup>8</sup>and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

**Peter's Vision**

<sup>9</sup>The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. <sup>10</sup>And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance <sup>11</sup>and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. <sup>12</sup>In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. <sup>13</sup>And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." <sup>14</sup>But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." <sup>15</sup>And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." <sup>16</sup>This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

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**[INTRODUCTION]**

When I say the word DISCRIMINATION you might think of words like - prejudice, bias, bigotry, intolerance, inequity, favoritism, one-sidedness, chauvinism, partisanship; sexism, and/or racism. If that is true, then you have been taught that any form of discrimination is wrong. Yet the word discrimination comes from the root word **DISCERN, which means to judge rightly**. So let me redeem this word with an example. I think we as



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parents would be ok to be **found guilty** of discrimination if I decided not to let my child play with a loaded gun, based upon their age and maturity level. You see, the word discrimination is not bad in and of itself. If evil comes out of discrimination it is because of the morals by which you judge, that's what can make discrimination a bad thing.

Folks, as a point of reference, neither **would I trust** our government to define for me what things I need to discriminate against, that's why we have **God's Word**. For example, they are against kids playing with guns as well, but our current administration and their supporters believe we are discriminating in the wrong way if we keep our children from pursuing alternate sexual identities, along with self-mutilation of their own bodies. Folks we don't trust the government to define for us what is right and wrong, that is God's place, that is Jesus' area of responsibility as our king, and it is **our job as representatives** of Him to **inform them** what is a right and wrong.

I am calling on you to discern today what is Truth based on scripture, not what the authorities tell you, BUT I am also calling on you **not to surrender** your place in society as **DISCERNERS**, for **Jesus still reigns** over all powers and authorities. He's been doing it since the first century and He's doing it today to bring all things under His authority ([Eph. 1:10](#), [Rom. 14:11](#)).

**Now what's all this talk about DICRIMINATION this morning about?**

Well, today you are going to witness the **power of Jesus over DISCRIMINATION that has gone wrong**. You see up unto this point in Acts the Gentiles were not included among God's elect, and as bad as that could sound, Paul tells us in Romans 1 they were content with that. It had been this way up to the point of Jesus' incarnation, and BTW that is the same approach of orthodox Jews of today. Very rarely back then, and only then having lived among the Jewish people for a while, was a Gentile allowed to be indoctrinated and marked/circumcised to become a Jewish convert and then acceptance of these people was 'iffy' at best.



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But thanks be to God, that the plan **was never to keep** Salvation from the Gentiles for we were to be included in the plan of Salvation, as Paul quoted this prophecy in his letter to the Romans ([Rom 9:24-25](#)).

**Hosea 2:23 ESV**

And I will have mercy on No Mercy,  
and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people';  
and he shall say, 'You are my God.' "

Instead of ignoring the prophecy, listen again to the words of Jesus.

**John 10:16 ESV**

"And I have **other sheep** that are not of this fold I must bring them also, and they will **listen** to my **voice**."

The people of God will no longer be identified by physical markings (circumcision), by cultural, religious, and/or holiday customs, or by works based doctrinal living, but God's people will be identified by the simple fact they **hear the voice of Jesus**. That is, His sheep know His voice, they listen (learn), and they obey. Jesus was even good enough to prepare the way for us, to receive the Gospel, that even before he left the earth, He declared that our inclusion was His will.

**Acts 1:8 ESV**

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the **end** of the **earth**."

So today while Paul and Peter get a lot of credit for why we are sitting here today, and rightly so, in reality we are here because **Jesus desired it**, it was His will, we were brought in by His power, we are saved because it was His choice. So in our text today I want to point out **three different areas of Jesus orchestrating**, that means guiding, so that we could be grafted in ([Rom. 11:17-18](#)). In those areas we are going to learn several truths that we need to remember for today, because I want to remind you, Jesus has a plan, and He is still working it to a predetermined conclusion.



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**1. Christ orchestrates the movement of all worldly authorities.**

Ok, one of the things that we have to keep in mind when we look at Acts, is the political scene in which it happens. If the story in Acts is about the Gospel going from Judea, to Samaria, and then to the rest of the earth (1:8), we should stop and consider the scope of the world in which this story takes place. So, let's just give some facts about the moment in time that this is all taking place.

**Rome is THE power**, and still up to this point there has never been an earthly kingdom like it. It really got rolling around the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and finally collapsed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD plunging our world into the dark ages. That's around a 1,000 year reign as the top political power, and even then they had influence longer than that. They were prophesied about in Daniel, so you read about them this past week.

**Daniel 2:40 ESV**

<sup>40</sup> And there shall be a fourth kingdom, **strong as iron**, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these.

That was the statue from Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Rome would be the Iron that shatters culmination of the Babylonian, Persian, and the Greek empire. From that prophecy they enter into Jerusalem and take it over in 63 BC. At that time, they were already warring from the distant shores of North Africa to upper parts of Europe fighting the Germanic Tribes.

Rome, because of its' vast influence also brought along with it, the **strong arm of the law**. Upon occupation of a territory, obviously Rome would tax its' people for its' governmental control. In order to make sure people could work in peace, and that trade could continue the Romans worked hard and often violently to make that happen. This instituted a period called the [\*Pax Roma\*](#) that was the **Golden time** of trade and commerce in Rome from 27 BC to 180 AD (covering the incarnation and the first generations of the church). That means the roads were patrolled and maintained, magistrates were a plenty,



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and thieves, pirates, and professional criminals were all kept in check. This is the scene that the Gospel bursts forth on.

Let's add all that up, Jesus incarnation comes at a time when a Gentile nation controls the world:

He waits until a people, that were not His people, would be controlling His nation.

He waits until people that were hostile against His people (all the middle east) to be put into subjection and controlled through the **PR**.

He waits until roads and the seas were made safe to travel and communication could spread quicker than ever before.

He waits until there is one currency so that money no longer loses its' value which allows for greater banking and investment oversight.

So, here's my question, is Jesus' waiting an earthly hoping that things may line up so that He can promote the spread of the Gospel, was this fate, luck, or blind chance? OR has Jesus been **taking over the world** through a physical Kingdom so that He could exercise His dominion bringing in the Kingdom of God? If you answered **taking over the world** you are correct!

**Government and Authorities come and go but Jesus always reigns.**

Jesus has always been in control since the beginning. Jesus is always on top of the Kingdoms of the world for they all work to bring about His plans.

**Proverbs 21:1 ESV**

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wills.

What the wisdom of Solomon teaches us, the wisest of all kings, is that even the heart of a king, that is his will and desires, is water in the hands of Jesus. Jesus controls the desires of a leader's heart to turn it wherever He wants to. In Rome through all the Caesars and political scheming of her senators, none of them **never knew** they had already been **taken over** by a foreign power. None of them knew that their policies for expansion & conquest so that our Kings decrees of freedom would be proclaimed, that their quest to bring peace & prosperity would bring in an eternal peace for God's people. It was all



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done by Jesus' bidding so that He may get His gospel throughout the known world. Jesus had already taken dominion from Adam and had been practicing it since the fall, and all of Rome's greatest leaders had been handled as water in the hands of Jesus.

As this is true this brings us to another important conclusion.

**Government is not inherently evil and is to be used for Gospel expansion.**

**Romans 13:4-5 ESV**

<sup>3</sup>For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, <sup>4</sup>for he is **God's servant for your good**. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. (see also [1 Peter 2:13-14](#))

Jesus has plans to use the authority of the government to promote peace (not cause dissension), to protect the innocent (nor reward the guilty), and to punish the evil (not penalize the innocent). This also calls the Christian to be active in politics because there is an **imperative** in the text, **rulers should not be a terror to good conduct, but to bad** (Rom 13:3). Family, listen, part of the role of the church is to be active in the formation of a **government that works for Jesus**, not the other way around. It means we work at keeping our government obedient to the Constitution by voting and promoting people who do, for that I believe was one of the reasons America was birthed in the first place, was to help bring the Gospel to the world.

I can go on with Romans 13 for the rest of the day, but I want to get back to our text. Jesus' victory over religious discrimination starts with His discernment over the powers that be. He is using all powers and all authorities to make a way for the Gospel to reach His people, who were not a people, that's us, the Gentile church. Now let's move on so that we can appreciate and not despair even if at the moment, are government is working at more terror than good.

**2. Christ orchestrates the events that bring the players together.**



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What we will see in our text today, that Christ, is not, waiting for things to happen He **makes things happen**. He's not a 'leave it up to chance' type of guy. No, Jesus is a mover, a doer, a planner, He makes things happen because again, He has a specific goal in mind. There's no winging it, sorry you guys out there that don't like to plan, you're all about the spontaneous, Jesus plans it.

Not to be confused on this point, Jesus gives direct messages in the form of visions/dreams/ and He makes them so real that both people involved in them act on them.

**10** At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius,... **3** About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." **4** And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him,... **5** And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. **6** He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea."

About the same time not even 24 hours later Jesus puts in another call to Peter just over 33 miles to the south.

Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. **10** And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance **11** and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. **12** In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. **13** And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

So, we have the Lord putting in a call to both Cornelius and Peter. Cornelius at 3pm and Peter at 12pm the next day; those are traditional times of prayers for those that would be practicing Jewish religious observances. Two different messages and two different goals in mind. Cornelius you are to send for this guy Peter in Joppa, and Peter, you are hungry, so I am going to show you a bunch of BBQ (j/k that's extra biblical). I will have to do it three times, so you realize you are not day-dreaming of food just like you all are thinking of Potluck out there.



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The importance of these **personal messages** is the **specificity** in them. Cornelius, go to Joppa, look for a guy named Simon, on the docks, he tans skins in the sun, and ask for a guy named Peter. Do you know what type of faith that required for Cornelius to send three of his men, over 30 miles to get a guy named by a vision of an angel (**sec. 8 right there**)? Then Peter, these animals, represent foods, they represent things you would not normally touch. The meaning behind this message is Peter, I am **lifting a ban on what you can eat**. Now upfront you and I would be gee, thanks Jesus, I am always looking to eat more protein, that's not what's going on here.

Jesus is making Peter understand that which kept Jews separate from Gentiles, the reason **why the religious discrimination existed**, what they eat is unclean, He was removing. Here's what this means.

In the ancient world they didn't have the evening news, they didn't have newspapers, so communication went from house to house, via **live interaction**. People would sit and eat and talk over lunches and dinners and discuss politics, family, and religion. What Jesus was doing is He was telling Peter, I am **removing the boundaries** Peter, the Gospel will be shared with the Gentiles, it's going to happen under their own roofs. There will be NO MORE BOUNDARIES between me and them. Those that did not receive my mercy will now receive it, and those that open up their doors I will go in and sup with them, and they will be my people.

And as Peter is contemplating all these things just so there is no confusion on why he's being told this he gets a knock at his door.

**Acts 10:17 ESV**

<sup>17</sup>Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate.

**Jesus loves us too much to leave things up to chance and speculation.**

Right now, in this world it can seem that the world has no desire to support you, but instead everyday it seems more about hindering you, causing you to





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stumble. Inflation keeps Gas, food, and consumables going up, secular indoctrination of our kids is happening at an ever-increasing rate, our rights are shrinking and our privileges are being removed, crime is rising like a high tide but in all of that we need to remember the Bible was God's revelation to all of this; that all things work to the good of those He has called ([Rom. 8:28](#)). That also means all sorts of persecution are for your good, **AND in all of that** Jesus never wants us to speculate about His love for us. The Gospel has been delivered, we are not alone, He has come, HE made us a people, and He planned for it, not leaving it up to chance, and made that plea to His Father the night before the cross.

**John 17:20-21, 24 ESV**

<sup>20</sup>"I do not ask for these only (disciples), but also for those **who will believe** in me through their word, <sup>21</sup>that they **may all be one**, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>24</sup>Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, **may be with me where I am**, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world

Jesus prayed for the church, the night before He was crucified, to show He knew that Hosea 2 was pointing to people outside Judea. He wants us all to know there was no speculation, it was on purpose, **He orchestrates all events - He chose to die for us**. He prayed that we would all be one, that means the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles would eat and fellowship and break bread as one people as one true race, His people, under one roof together, with Him. Jesus is breaking down the barriers that keep us from Him, and they will never be put up again.

I have one more area here that I want to share with you, to show you that Jesus is all about the details of Gospel expansion, if He orchestrates the authorities, and the events, you better believe He is also tied up in the orchestration of our lives.

**3. Christ orchestrates the lives of those that serve Him.**

**Let's make this a little more personal, why these guys, why now?**



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**10** At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, <sup>2</sup>a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God... <sup>7</sup>When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, <sup>8</sup>and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

**Cornelius** is a Centurion that means he's a military man. Jesus likes this type of guy, if you remember he was astonished at the faith of another centurion, back when He walked the earth. A centurion had come up to Him, recognizing authority, and had just asked Jesus not to be bothered with coming, just send the healing with someone, and because of this man's faith Jesus healed that man's daughter ([Mat. 8:5-13](#)). In that encounter Jesus predicted that many like him would come from the nations (v.11) and sit at the believer's table.

Good news, you don't have to be in the military to hear Jesus, although we should learn there are certain qualities that are helpful.

Centurions oversee 100 hundred men, they understand responsibility, accountability, and they **know their actions affect others**.

This centurion was part of the Italian Cohort, means he was part of a larger force of 600-1000, a legion, directly from Rome. He was picked **because of influence**, for he had been trained how to divide and conquer.

This centurion had been convicted in heart, and because of his conviction he pursued Judaism even without the prospect of being accepted. **He did what was right** because it was right, and because of that God made him the first convert of the Gentile nation.

Let me ask you a question, do you live your life understanding your responsibilities for leadership, do you accept the stewardship of all your resources to be levied for Christ's cause, are you continually pursuing Him, even if it means a loss of earthly treasures? That was this man.

### **Peter's Vision**



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<sup>9</sup> The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. <sup>10</sup> And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance <sup>11</sup> and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. <sup>12</sup> In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. <sup>13</sup> And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." <sup>14</sup> But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." <sup>15</sup> And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." <sup>16</sup> This **happened three times**, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

**Peter** is the lead Apostle, he's not military but he has been given the keys to the kingdom. He was a man that needed leaders, that needed men with training, and God provided for Peter in Cornelius. God had already prepped Peter's heart, he has sent him to Samaria with Grace to lay his hands on people that were once an enemy. He is staying with a man that handles dead animals all the time, perpetually unclean, so Peter has been realizing most likely how his past religious observances were now unnecessary. Lastly God, has taken Peter, he has separated him from the rest of the Apostles and influences of Jerusalem to get him out in enemy territory to hear from Him alone. **(some of you...)**

Then Peter has to be taught 3 times, remember Peter is a 3 timer when it comes to lessons, that it is ok. Peter remembers he was unclean man when Jesus found him, and that's how it is for everyone. Peter begins to repent/turn from judging people by their ancestry, their ethnic origins, and instead He begins to judge a man by how God sees them.

**Jesus' Gospel proclamation includes your sanctification.**

Many of our nations' forefathers were Deists, which is false doctrine. They believed that creation was like a big clock that God just wind up and let go, but the scriptures reveal a **God that is involved in all of our lives**, daily, using our pasts and our present lives not only to do His will but to continually change us. **No work done for Jesus, will ever be done without it changing you. All work for His glorification necessitates your sanctification**, as Paul points out.



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**Philippians 2:13 ESV**

For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

God works in us for both His will and work and **the work is to change us all for the glory of His Son**. The way God influences the world is that the world gets to see a person changed by the **radical love** of God. When we embrace the calling of spreading the Gospel folks, you are embracing your sanctification, you are embracing dying to self, and you are embracing becoming a better image bearer of Christ, and you are receiving the fullest measure of joy. The **happiest a Christian can ever be** is when they know they have given all they have for Jesus!

**[CHALLENGE]**

Today family, in light of these things, let me just challenge you one more time. It is very easy to think no one is steering this ship called life, you are being tossed about on the waves of this world, it seems like we are on that boat, in one of the scariest movies ever, the [Perfect Storm](#). It's as if you are running up that big wave knowing it won't make a difference because there is another one right behind it and your engines are failing. When things get like this, we need to remember this story from Acts.

**Government and Authorities may come and go but Jesus always reigns.**

Yes, the water gets rough, and people drown, but your master is the master of the sea. At any moment, as He showed us, He can get up from a nap, and tell the seas to be calm, let us not fear but enjoy this rollercoaster ride together. The storms never stop but what helps us to endure is to understand we are in this with Jesus, He always reigns, there is always a plan, and turbulent waters just mean the greater the Glory when He is revealed!

**Jesus loves us too much to leave things up to chance and speculation.**

Perhaps today, you feel like there is no way to decipher which way to go in the storm. You may have lost some of your ability to steer, you can't make see the sky to get any bearings, but Jesus has left you with His compass: **His Word**.



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Friends the more you read the more you will understand that your life is not left up to chance and Jesus will always tell you what He wants but His will is found in His Word, how are you working to get more of that into your life?

**Jesus' Gospel proclamation includes your sanctification.**

Lastly, you may think you have been left behind, and like Jonah in the middle of the Storm, you have been thrown overboard, and what's worse like Jonah, you think you deserve it. Jonah, didn't drown though, God saved Him through the trial of being swallowed for 3 days. Then like Jesus, he was brought back up to not just calm but to dry land, and he was given a chance to do his work for God. You see God never just uses you to do His will, He always uses His purposes to work things for your good, to make you better, to reflect His Son, **to give you joy!** Today, you may think you got thrown overboard but that was really mercy and God is going to do some major work in your life! It's ok, most every believer in this room has gone through this, it gets better, and what's more you are glad you went through it.

Jesus is orchestrating all things to a triumphant conclusion, we know what it is, we have the Bible, **it says we win!** Now live this week in the knowledge, that Jesus is bringing all under His subjugation and we His people get to be in the middle of His great plan!

**[PRAYER]**

**[COMMUNION]**

**[BENEDICTION]**

Go in the name of the Father, that before time called you out to be a part of His family, united through the Son.

Go in the name of the Son, that is orchestrating all things, leaving nothing to chance, to bring history to a glorious crescendo.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that connects us with the plan, who invites us to participate, and brings us hope even in the midst of life's storms.