

Cornelius the Centurion

Was Cornelius saved? That seems to be an issue that has divided some of the brothers in the Church of God. It has been taught that since Cornelius was a devout man and had pious acts he was saved. This file will examine the use of the different Greek words that are translated into the English word devout. We will examine how these Greek words are translated in different places. Let us use this as a guide to help us decide if Cornelius was saved before he met Peter.

The following scriptures contain the Greek word Eulabes. Eulabes is defined by Strong's Concordance as follows: *Strong's # 2126 eulabes (yoo-lab-ace'); from 2095 and 2983; taking well (carefully), i.e. circumspect (religiously, pious):*

Luke 2:25

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

Eulabes is translated devout in this scripture. Eulabes only has reference to a pious religious Jew named Simeon. If Simeon was saved, there would not have been a need for Jesus. Simeon would be proof that a man could follow the Jewish law piously and be saved. This would make Jesus unnecessary for salvation. We know the scriptures contradict this. Simeon needed to accept Jesus like every one else if he wanted to be saved.

Acts 2:5

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

We know from following scriptures that the devout Jews that are mentioned in this verse are not saved. These same men later on in the Chapter asked Peter what they must do to be saved. However, these men were pious in their attitude towards God. However, they were not saved. Romans 10:1-3 teaches that a person can have zeal for GOD but not be saved. Paul's prayer for these Jews was that they might be saved. Being devout as translated from the Greek word "eulabes" is not evidence of being saved.

Acts 8:2

And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

Here is an example of devout men being saved. One can be devout in what he believes without being saved. One can be unsaved and very devout. However, the men in this scripture are the saints. Therefore the Greek word "eulabes" can describe saved people.

The previous group of scriptures that we looked at showed the use of the Greek word eulabes. The following scriptures show the use of the Greek word eusebes. The difference between these words is that eulabes shows piety which characterizes the inner being. This can be displayed in true or false worship. The Greek word eusebes shows the action of one's eulabes. Consider the following scriptures for a more perfect understanding of the Greek word eulabes.

Strong's # 2152 eusebes (yoo-seb-ace'); from 2095 and 4576; well-reverent, i.e. pious: KJV-- devout, godly.

Acts 10:2

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

Cornelius was a devout man. His devotion revealed itself in his prayers and gifts to the Jews. Cornelius's devotion extended to his whole house. As we learned above, devout people can have a false worship of God. This was the problem with Cornelius. His devotion to God was based on an expired system of worship that no longer was valid. So though Cornelius had the right intentions in his heart, he did not have the savior.

Acts 10:7

And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;

Cornelius had a devout soldier that worked for him. This soldier had the qualities of a godly man. However, no one can have the righteousness of God without Christ.

Acts 22:12

And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

Ananias was also a devout man. However, the difference between Ananias and Cornelius was that Ananias had a working knowledge of the truth. Ananias was saved after he heard the message of Christ. Cornelius hadn't heard the message of truth until Peter brought it unto him.

2 Peter 2:9

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

The word eusebes is translated here godly. This verse has reference to the saved.

The following scriptures show how the Greek word "sebomai" is used. This word is sometimes translated into the English as devout, religious, and worship. It carries the thought of the actions of a religious person.

Strong's # 4576 sebomai (seb'-om-ahee); middle voice of an apparently primary verb; to revere, i.e. adore: KJV-- devout, religious, worship.

Matthew 15:9

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Worship is translated from the Greek word sebomai. Sebomai is also translated devout. This verse talks about a worship that is false.

Mark 7:7

Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Acts 13:43

Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas:

who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

Sebomai is translated religious in this verse. Here it refers to righteous people.

Acts 13:50

But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

This verse talks about a devout people that persecuted the men of God. These people were under a spirit of falseness.

Acts 16:14

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Sebomai is translated worshipped here. Lydia, a saved sister, was a devout person.

Acts 17:4

And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

This verse talks about devout people who got saved.

Acts 17:17

Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

The devout persons in this verse were not saved. However, Paul tried to reason with them. This is another example of how not all devout people are saved. However, a distinction has to be made between the usages of devout as it is translated from the different Greek words.

Acts 18:7

And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

Acts 18:13

Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

Paul is accused of teaching people to be devout contrary to the will of God. The charge was false.

Acts 19:27

So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

One can see the power of false worship by reading this chapter. People can be just as pious in wrong as the righteous are pious in truth.

The following definitions are from the *Vine Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Each entry is keyed to the *Strong's Concordance Dictionary*.

DEVOUT

1. eulabes ^{^2126^}, lit., "taking hold well" (eu, "well," lambano, "to take hold"), primarily, "cautious," signifies in the NT, "careful as to the realization of the presence and claims of God, reverencing God, pious, devout", in <Luke 2:25> it is said of Simeon, in <Acts 2:5>, of certain Jews; in <8:2>, of those who bore Stephen's body to burial; of Ananias, <22:12> (see No. 2). "In that mingled fear and love which, combined, constitute the

piety of man toward God, the Old Testament placed its emphasis on the fear, the New places it on the love (though there was love in the fear of God's saints then, as there must be fear in their love now)," Trench, Syn., Sec. xlviii.#

Note. Cf. the noun eulabeia, "reverence," and the verb eulabeomai, "to reverence."

2. eusebes ^{^2152^}, from eu, "well," sebomai, "to reverence," the root seb signifying "sacred awe," describes "reverence" exhibited especially in actions, reverence or awe well directed. Among the Greeks it was used, e. g., of practical piety towards parents. In the NT it is used of a pious attitude towards God, <Acts 10:2, 7>; (in some mss. in <22:12>); "godly," in <2 Pet. 2:9>. See GODLY.# In the Sept., <Prov. 12:12; Isa. 24:16; 26:7; 32:8; Mic. 7:2>.#

Notes: (1) While eulabes especially suggests the piety which characterizes the inner being, the soul, in its attitude towards God, eusebes directs us rather to the energy which, directed by holy awe of God, finds expression in devoted activity.# (2) Cf. theosebeia, and theosebes, which, by their very formation (theos, "God," and sebomai, express "reverence" towards God. See Trench (Sec. xlviii).

3. sebomai ^{^4576^}, "to feel awe," whether before God or man, "to worship," is translated "devout," in <Acts 13:43>, RV (KJV, "religious"); <13:50; 17:4,17>. See WORSHIP.

The study at this point does not conclusively prove whether Cornelius was saved or not. However, the reader can safely conclude that just because the scripture says Cornelius was devout does not mean that he was saved. One will have to study the texts concerning the Gentiles receiving the Gospel if one wants to know whether Cornelius was saved or not. The vision of Acts Chapter ten suggests that the apostles had not taken the Gospel to the Gentiles. God gave the vision to Peter to prepare him for a mission to the Gentiles. At this time in Church history, the Jews had not accepted the idea that the Gospel was also for the Gentiles. Peter's message found in Acts 10:34-43 is a message that one would preach to someone that has not heard about the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Acts 11:13-14 shows that Peter had to tell Cornelius words by which all his house can be saved. Acts 15:7 reveals how Peter was used to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. Before Peter went to Cornelius's house, the Jews restricted their preaching to the Jews and possibly to the Samaritans. However, Acts 15:7 lets the reader know that the Gospel for the first time was being preached to the Gentiles. Before Peter, Cornelius was a devout man in the Jewish religion. That was not and is not the same as salvation. Acts 4:12 lets us know that there is no salvation in any other name than in the name of Christ. Peter revealed to Cornelius the name of

Christ. When Cornelius accepted this message, God saved him and gave him the Holy Ghost as a witness to the Jews that he had accepted the Gentiles into the Church of God.