

ACTS

Part 29 – “Peace Through Jesus Christ”

Acts 10:23b-48

The narrative recorded in chapter 10 describes a significant turning point in redemptive history. The gospel has continued to progress beyond Jerusalem and has made significant inroads into the world of the Gentiles thus fulfilling Jesus' words. The Lord prepared Peter for this theological and pastoral mega-shift by sending him a revelatory vision declaring that no people were untouchable in God's new gospel economy. Peter's discovery of the impartiality of God is based entirely on the good news that all who turn in faith to the Lord Jesus will be saved without any respect to their ethnic or national identity.

Main Idea: God shows no partiality, but saves all those who believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins.

Vs. 25 Peter enters Cornelius' home having been convinced that Gentiles are no longer untouchable. Cornelius response to Peter (*proskuneo*) probably means something more akin to humble gratitude than what we typically think of as “worship.”

Vv. 30-32 Cornelius explains to Peter the extraordinary event which led to him seeking out the apostle.

Vs.33 The attitude all of us should have before the preaching of the Word of God.

Vs.35 The Bible describes a right relationship to God in different ways without ever contradicting that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. Sometimes the Bible uses the effects of saving faith to describe the totality of salvation. Such descriptions do not endanger the doctrine of **sola fide**. We must not blunt the full force of what the Bible teaches concerning salvation. Salvation by grace alone through faith alone does not minimize the life changing impact of that salvation.



Vv. 34-43 Peter presents the gospel to Cornelius. Notice all that is included in Peter's presentation. At the heart is the gospel itself which is the death and resurrection of Jesus. But he also references doctrines closely associated with the gospel with a direct bearing on one's salvation – faith, obedience, fear of God, love, the coming judgment of Christ. **Notice the clause "believes in him" (v. 43) which is clearly not a different thing but the same thing from a different viewpoint as "fear him and do what is good" in v. 35.**

v.46 The baptism of the Holy Spirit was the divine indication that these people, believing in the message as they obviously did, were received into the company of God's covenant people. And note the response to this on the part of the circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter but who had not received the vision as he had. It astonished them that Gentiles would have been so favored.

v.47 In other words, if God has welcomed these Gentile believers, can the church do otherwise than welcome them herself? The question, in context, is directed to the Jews with Peter. And, as 11:3 makes clear, what is being contemplated is nothing less than baptism being given to those once considered unclean.

1. The Humility of Cornelius

- Second to his reception of the gospel and baptism, the chief evidence we have of the genuine nature of Cornelius' conversion is his humility.

2. The Obedience of Peter

- Even though he is dismayed and originally resists what the Lord shows him in the vision of the sheet Peter receives the Gentiles and extends to them hospitality. After that he does that which Jesus commissioned him to do: he preaches the gospel.

3. The Necessity of Hearing

- Some have reasoned from the description of Cornelius prior to his hearing the gospel that he must have been within the saving bounds of God's grace. One scholar refers to Cornelius as "the pagan saint par excellence." (Clark Pinnock, 165). Unfortunately even C.S. Lewis promoted the idea that there is salvation outside of hearing and believing the gospel (*Mere Christianity*, 65). Of course this is in direct contradiction to the biblical witness (Rom. 10).
- The content of Peter's proclamation:
 - A) The Life of Jesus
 - B) The death and resurrection of Jesus
 - C) The coming judgment
 - D) The necessary response

4. The Power of the Gospel

- The Cornelius episode is marked by the direct intervention of God through supernatural dreams and visions. And yet God chooses to convert Cornelius through the quite ordinary work of gospel proclamation. It is a reminder that even at that momentous stage in redemptive history it is the gospel proclaimed that is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe (Rom. 1:16).
- The gospel proclamation of Peter concludes with the new birth of Cornelius and his household evidenced by their reception of the Holy Spirit (Vv. 44-48). They receive the covenant sign of baptism immediately indicating that they have been included in the people of God.

Theology in Application

- Hospitality is an expression of gospel transformation.
- There is no salvation outside a believing reception of the gospel.
- Gospel proclamation is the central activity of the church's mission.