

# Without Limits – Without Borders

## Acts 10:24-43

Do you ever think much about the boundaries **you** set on God? Your boundaries could be cultural or religious; they could be passed down from generations before you or you could have formulated them yourself. You need to understand, I'm talking about boundaries which are not clearly stated in the Bible.

Oh, I know you're saying to yourself right now, "*Oh Pastor, I never try to place boundaries on God.*"

Well, we'll be looking at that issue today as we continue in Acts 10, looking at the encounter between the Jewish/Christian Apostle Peter and the God-Fearing/Gentile by the name of Cornelius.

As we've seen in the early verses of chapter 10, so much had happened already in just a couple of days.

- As Cornelius, a devout Gentile went about his normal life of devotion and love for God, he had an angelic visitor come and tell him that God was moved by his prayers and generosity.
- He was then told that God wanted to speak to him through a man named Simon Peter. He needed to send men to Joppa to have him come to Caesarea. We're going to find that **God is about to enter Cornelius' world in a powerful way.**
- Then we have the Apostle Peter, in his normal life of devotion and love for God also had a visitation. His was a vision of creatures and creepy things – things no Jew would ever eat. But the voice of God spoke to Peter, calling him to, "*Rise and eat! What God has cleansed you must not call common.*" This happened three times in a short period of time. We find that **God is also about to change his world in a powerful way.**
- As the men from Cornelius came to Joppa, Peter actually invited them in and lodged them for the night.

And now we read in Acts 10, beginning at the second half of verse 23...

Acts 10

<sup>23b</sup> *On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.* <sup>24</sup> *And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.* <sup>25</sup> *As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.* <sup>26</sup> *But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man."* <sup>27</sup> *And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together.*

We find quickly that Cornelius was a man of action and a man of faith; since God had told him to send for Peter, he felt pretty certain that Peter would be coming. So, he had calculated the days for the journey from Caesarea to Joppa and then back again. Then he called together his household, his relatives and his close friends.

Now, there's no doubt that some of these weren't as devoted to God as was Cornelius. But, I believe Cornelius invited them because he knew that God was going to be doing something special that day and he wanted those he loved to be a part.

One of the things we see early on in their meeting is that Cornelius was clueless as far as how to respond to this man, Simon Peter. As Peter walked into the house, it would seem as though Cornelius' pagan past from the Greco/Roman culture no doubt slipped in as he *fell down at his feet and worshiped him*.

In the pagan culture, the creature and the creation are worshipped... more so than the Creator. I don't feel that Cornelius was giving worship to Peter as a god, but he was demonstrating an act of great honor. But even this type of recognition had to trip Peter out. Peter knew that he dared not receive any kind of worship or adoration from man.

Even the word translated as *worship*, in the Greek it is *pros-kun-eo* and carries with it the idea of *bowing before, to kiss, or to pay homage*. But Peter wanted Cornelius and all the others to understand that he wasn't to be honored or exalted in any way, he was there simply as a servant of Jesus – *“Stand up; I myself am also a man.”*

Cornelius must've been very influential in a lot of lives, for we find that a multitude had gathered.

And as they were gathered there, Peter begins to speak to them... You need to remember, this was a strange situation for a devout Jew to be in the home of a Gentile... rather he is devout or not, he's still a Gentile.

*<sup>28</sup> Then he (Peter) said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that **I should not call any man common or unclean.** <sup>29</sup> Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, **for what reason have you sent for me?**"*

I find it interesting that Peter first of all declares the weirdness of the situation: *“in normal life it is unlawful for me to be here.”*

But then he goes on about the encounter he himself had had just a couple of days previous. No doubt Cornelius had shared **his encounter with the angel**, now Peter tells them that **he also had an encounter**: *God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.*

The idea that Gentiles were unclean to the Jews was **nothing new to the Gentiles**. They saw this exclusiveness being **lived out every day** within their communities. They saw the prejudice and judgmentalism of the Jews on a regular basis.

We can be assured of this one thing, there was no love lost between the Jew and the Gentile, nor between the Gentile and the Jew.

So, in the midst of all the cultural tension, Peter asks them a very pointed question – *for what reason have you sent for me?*

He didn't want to take anything for granted. But with all that had happened to him over the last couple of days, I do believe he knew **this was an historical event and God was right in the middle of it all**.

*“For what reason have you sent for me?”*

So Cornelius began to give him an account of **HIS** last few days –

*<sup>30</sup> So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, <sup>31</sup> and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. <sup>32</sup> Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. **When he comes, he will speak to you.**'*

*<sup>33</sup> "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, **to hear all the things commanded you by God.**"*

I believe God had been working on Peter continually since the vision of the beasts and creepy things. After Peter had let the men into the house of Simon the Tanner, and after they had spent the night there, then the following couple of days traveling with these men... I feel that Peter pretty well knew exactly what was going on, but he wanted to be certain and hear it from Cornelius, himself. He didn't want to assume... either on Cornelius or on God.

When people come to us for prayer, rather it is here following a service or at any time during the week, once of the very first questions we need to be asking is *“Why are you here?” “What can I pray for you?”* Or something like *“What's going on in your life?”*

We might know that there is a sickness they are dealing with, or family issues, or a host of other things, but many times people want prayer for things that might not be so apparent.

Peter could have come in and straight out began sharing with them the story of salvation: *"You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But I see you guys need Jesus."* No, first he wanted to know if that was the real reason he was summoned.

What was going on in the heart of this man, his household and his friends and relatives?

It is always best not to assume you know the need of a person or the planned purposes of God, unless He reveals it to you directly.

Cornelius' response was straight forward: *we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.*

Cornelius believed what the angel had told him, *the Lord had already spoken to Peter.* He is trusting this whole encounter into the Lord's hands as He speaks through Peter. So, Peter began...

*<sup>34</sup> Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. <sup>35</sup> But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. <sup>36</sup> The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ--He is Lord of all-- <sup>37</sup> that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. <sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.*

The first thing that Peter shares is **this new revelation that God was working in his life at that very moment.** Beginning with the sheet being let down with all the animals and creeping creatures, the voice telling him, *"What God has cleansed you must not call common,"* then the Gentile servants and the Roman soldier at the front gate and their message to Peter that first night: **Peter, himself was going through some major changes in his doctrine and understanding.**

**God was widening his concept of GRACE.**

*"I perceive that God shows no partiality.  
But in every nation whoever fears Him  
and works righteousness is accepted by Him."*

Do you realize how massive and radical this concept would have been for a Jew? Even a Christian/Jew! Peter is now confessing this new revelation to these Gentiles. This was a revelation they wouldn't have ever heard from any other Jews.

He goes on to tell them,

*Jesus is Lord of all*

As Peter begins to share about the life and ministry of Jesus, he moves from His baptism by John the Baptist, where the Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon Jesus; as *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power*, and how He had gone *about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him*.

But then he made it very clear that it was the Jews themselves who had killed the One whom God had anointed.

The simplicity of the message makes the message clear. This isn't some Gnostic "*Higher Knowledge*"; the message of the Gospel had never been restricted to just the educated elite; no, the very hope of the Gospel is that it reaches to the hearts of both the simple and the wise. As a matter of fact. Jesus said, "*Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*" (Mark 10:15)

But, Cornelius needed to understand that the Gospel message isn't merely the **good, moral life and sacrifice of Jesus**; the **Gospel message isn't complete without the resurrection**. So, Peter continues – The one *whom they killed by hanging on a tree*,

<sup>40</sup> *"Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.*

<sup>42</sup> *And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."*

Peter makes it very clear that Jesus wasn't simply a **moral man who lived a life directing men to follow God**. He didn't simply live a **moral life as an example to men of how we should live**. Nor was He a plan of God, interrupted by the schemes of men who was arrested and crucified Him outside of the plans and purposes of God, whose body now lies dead and rotting in some borrowed tomb over in Jerusalem. *Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly*.

Peter tells the people listening that he himself had **experienced the Resurrected Lord...** he had **eaten with Him and drank with Him after the resurrection.** Peter knew personally that Jesus wasn't some "**Spirit/Man**".

God had raised Jesus Christ from the dead and He "*presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs* (Acts 1:3)."

The Apostle Paul also knew the validity and the reality of the resurrection clearly as he presents the eye witnesses in his case in 1 Corinthians 15

1 Corinthians 15

*<sup>1</sup> Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that He was seen by **Cephas (Peter)**, then **by the twelve**. <sup>6</sup> After that He was seen by **over five hundred brethren at once**, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> After that He was seen by **James**, then by **all the apostles**. <sup>8</sup> Then last of all He was **seen by me also**, as by one born out of due time.*

Paul's testimony was that Jesus was *seen by over five hundred eye witnesses at once.* In essence

Paul is saying, *"If you don't believe me, ask one of them. Most of them are still alive!"*

Oh, so much we could say about the **power and the necessity of the resurrection.** The Gospel isn't complete without it.

But coming back to Peter, he explains that because of the resurrection, there is a message of hope that all Believers are to proclaim or *preach to the people.* There is coming a **Day of Judgment** and on that day everyone will stand before Jesus Christ, whom God had anointed, appointed, declared and delegated to be **Judge of the living and the dead.**

So, the question even comes to you this morning,

*"What have you done with Jesus?"*

It is of eternal importance that you settle that question in your life, or one day you will stand before Him as your Judge, rather than your Savior.

Earlier on, just shortly after the Day of Pentecost, Peter stood before the High Court of Israel, the Sanhedrin and as he spoke of **Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Savior**, he told these leaders of Israel –

Acts 4

<sup>12</sup> "...nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

His message hadn't changed: rather it was the elite of Israel, the religious rulers, the teachers of the Law of Israel, a powerful officer of the Roman Army, or lowly household servants... the message and the hope of the Gospel is still the same and the invitation extends to all...

<sup>43</sup> **...through His name (the name of Jesus), whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."**

Peter explained all that God had commanded him to speak: Jesus didn't come simply to teach men about God, He came as the Anointed One, the Messiah of God. And He was ordained or commissioned by God to be the Judge of all the earth – both the Living and the Dead.

But not just the Judge, first He comes as the Savior, the Anointed, the Messiah, the Christ. He came to be the Redeemer of ALL..., **Whoever** would call upon His name....

The Greek word is *pas* and carries with it the definition of: *all, everyone, whoever, the whole*. And Jesus said a lot about the **whosoEVERS**.

Matthew 10:32

*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

Mark 3:35

*For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.*

Mt 18:4

*Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

John 3:15-16

*That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Revelation 22:17

*And let him who thirsts come. Whosoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*

We cannot discount or change the meaning of “*Whosoever will, may come*”, otherwise we become like the close minded and close hearted Jews who felt they were the only ones that God cares for and the only ones that God would redeem.

***Whosoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins*** is the truth that opens the doors to the Gentile world..., literally all who were not Jews.

Yet, we also recognize the balance of the doctrine, as Jesus Himself declares: “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.*” (John 6:44)

**We need to see and accept the balance.**

For those who had lived in the household of Cornelius for some time... they had heard of the greatness of God... they wanted to be devoted to Him, but because of the message of the Jews – both through their words and their actions..., these Gentiles didn’t fully believe they would have a chance to enter into the fullness of God’s grace. They felt they were rejected by God because they were born on the wrong side of His plan of redemption, now Peter proclaims to them that God has a **plan for all men**... for whosoever believes...

Cornelius, his household, his relatives and friends needed to hear that message. Peter’s message brought hope: the hope of salvation. And in verse 44 we read –

<sup>44</sup> *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.*

The hope of the Gospel was touching the lives of these men and women, and probably even children. As Peter spoke, the walls of rejection were torn down and these dared to enter into that hope found nowhere else, *for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* And through the grace of God, their faith was opened, and mercy, forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit of God poured out upon them.

**Oh the limitless, unbounded love of God!**

Born in Germany, in 1868, Frederick Martin Lehman was born as a Jew to Jewish parents who immigrated to the United States when he was only four years of age. A few years later, as an 11 year

old child, during a walk one day among the orchards that surrounded their home he experienced the grace of God in such a powerful way, that he wrote about it in his adult years.

He wrote that *“Heaven let a cornucopia of glory descend on the eleven-year old lad.”* He wrote that as he felt the presence of Jesus Christ surround him, *“The weight of conviction was gone and the songs of joy and praise fell from his lips.”*

Later in life in 1917, Lehman would write lyrics to a hymn based on an old Jewish poem. Perhaps they are familiar to you.

The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;  
It goes beyond the highest star,  
And reaches to the lowest hell;  
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,  
God gave His Son to win;  
His erring child He reconciled,  
And pardoned from his sin.

- *Refrain:*  
Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure—  
The saints’ and angels’ song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade;  
To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.

What about you today? Do you know Him and His grace? Have you put limitations on the boundless, limitless grace of God?

