

The Zeal of God – Acts 10 (Part 2)

Acts 10.

We're studying the book of Acts to find out how God *started* the church, and what the *implications* are for today. And this passage conveys a *major* one.

That Gentiles are just as much a part of God's plan as Jews.

That's the reason this event took *place*, and the reason it's *recorded*. Gentiles are included in God's plan of salvation, just like Jews. Both, by faith and repentance.

And we found last week, that God will stop at nothing to accomplish that plan. He's that zealous. Remember the **storyline**? First of all . . .

Cornelius sees a vision (1-8) of an angel, who tells him to send for Peter.

While **Peter sees a vision (9-16)** to prepare him.

Then **the messengers arrive (17-23)**, asking Peter to accompany them *back* to Cornelius. Which he does.

Peter goes to Caesarea (24-33). Finding Cornelius, his family, and his friends gathered in his home to hear what he has to say.

That was last week. Taking us through v33.

➤ This week, in Part 2, we'll cover the *last* two segments.

Where **Peter preaches the Gospel (34-43)** . . .

And **The Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit (44-48)**.

That's the storyline.

And so far, we've found that . . .

1. God will stop at nothing to reach those who seek him. (v1-8, 29b-43)

Including the use of:

- **Angels to get their attention (3-6)**

It's not the norm, but it's in his repertoire. As are . . .

- **Unlikely leaders to prepare the way (29b-33)**

Like Cornelius. The *last* person we'd choose.

- **A preacher to share the Gospel (34-43)**

We also found that . . .

2. God will stop at nothing to change those who follow him. (v9-29a)

Conforming us more and more into the image of his Son.

Including the use of:

- **Visions to change our beliefs (9-16)**

Again, not the norm, but possible.

- **Divine communication to change our heart (19-20)**

From his Spirit within us. And . . .

- **Insight to change our ways (24-29a)**

He's that zealous.

➤ Which brings us to **Part 2**, starting in v34. Where *Luke* starts by saying, "So," because of what Cornelius just said. In v33b.

Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.

[34] *So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no*

partiality [he doesn't favor people on the basis of race, culture, or nationality]. [35] *but in every nation* [every ethnic group] *anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*

Acceptable, in the sense that he will receive them as his own, if they fear him and do what is right. If they revere his authority and submit to his way.

Including the way to him in the first place – through faith in Jesus and repentance of sin.

That's the most *important* part of doing what's right.

Peter's not advocating a *works*-based salvation here, contrary to the *rest* of Scripture, but a faith-based one that shows.

God will receive us as his own if we honor him and live for him. That's the idea.

[36] *As for the word that he sent to Israel* [the Jews], *preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)* [all; all should fear him and do what is right], [37] *you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed* [the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist; you know what happened]: [38] *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.*

[39] *And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem* [in the nation and in the capital; we saw it all]. *They put him to death by hanging him on a tree* [an Old Testament word that conveys a curse; in this case, for sin; our sin], [40] *but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear,* [41] *not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.*

In other words, I was chosen as a witness Peter says, because I saw him up close and personal; and therefore know for a fact that his resurrection is real.

[42] *And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead* [the one who would determine who goes to heaven and who goes to hell]. [43] *To him all the prophets bear witness* [like Isaiah, who said that the Messiah would bear our *iniquities* and *make many to be accounted righteous* (Is 53:11); he and others bore witness] *that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."*

That's the Gospel, isn't it? And Peter preached it. Taking us all the way back to the fact that . . .

1. God will stop at nothing to reach those who seek him. (v1-8, 29b-43)

Including the use of:

- **A preacher to share the Gospel (34-43)**

He didn't leave Cornelius and his family to figure it out on their own; as if they *could*.

He didn't leave them to search high and low, to no avail.

He didn't keep them in the dark and string them along.

He *sent* someone. To *tell* them. The truth. The whole truth.

That Jesus, *Lord of all*, died for our sins, rose again for our life, and offers us forgiveness, salvation from the *consequences* of our sin. If, we believe in him.

That's the Gospel. The *good news of peace through Jesus Christ*. (36)

And God is so zealous to reach us with it, he'll send a preacher to share it.

And by “preacher,” I don’t just mean a professional. I mean *all* of us. Anybody. Someone who God might use for a *lifetime*, over and over again; or someone God might use for a moment, and then *never* again. Like Boris Kornfeld. That’s K-o-r-n-f-e-l-d.

- His full name is Boris Nikolayevich Kornfeld. A Jewish doctor who had come to faith in Christ, while imprisoned in one of Russia’s **gulags** in the early 1950’s. This isn’t him, because we don’t *have* a picture of him, but it very well could be. Considered a political subversive, like so many others who spoke out about the ills of communism, he was exiled to places like this in Siberia.

And while there, he lived in constant fear of those in authority, and those he reported from time to time for stealing food from his patients. Not that it did any good, but it was the right thing to do.

But that fear didn’t stop him from sharing his testimony; preaching the Gospel. Like he did one night under the cover of darkness, with a patient who lay sick in his ward. Conveying how God had brought him to a place of faith in Jesus . . . And changed his life. And after talking into the night, both men went to sleep right there in the hospital; no doubt hoping to talk again. But only one woke up. Because Dr. Kornfeld was murdered that night by one of the food thieves seeking revenge.

Seems like a waste, doesn’t it? A failure. A miss on God’s part; considering all the people that man *could* have helped. *Could* have shared with.

But nothing could be further from the truth. Because the patient he “preached to” that night, was a man named Alexander **Solzhenitsyn**. Who, as a result of Dr. Kornfeld’s testimony, became a believer *himself* a few years later, and went on to *write* about what he saw in the gulags. Publishing several books that were smuggled *out* of the Soviet Union, to tell the world about the 18M people worked to the bone, and 1.6M who actually died. It was so shocking and revealing his writing, that it arguably marked the beginning of the end for that nation.

All because God sent a “preacher,” in the form of a doctor, to reach one man, on one occasion, who was seeking him. A man who went on to reach millions.*****

- If people are seeking, God will send a preacher. He’s that zealous. And if it’s *you*, whether you’re speaking to one person or 101, over coffee or over a pulpit, on occasion or for a lifetime – preach the Gospel. Be faithful and share the Good News of peace. Because you never know. You never know who’s listening, and you never know how God’s going to use it.

Which brings us to the final principle in this passage, that . . .

3. God will stop at nothing to assure those who believe in him. (v44-48)

Assure them that they *too* are part of God’s kingdom. Just like everyone *else* who believes in Jesus. Jew, Gentile, pagan, whoever. He’s that zealous. V44.

While Peter was still saying these things [still preaching the Gospel], *the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word* [an expression that implies understanding and belief; because of what follows]. [45] *And the believers from among the circumcised* [Jewish believers] *who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.* [46] *For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God* [praising him, worshiping him].

God will stop at nothing to assure those who believe in him. Assure them that they’re a part of his plan, his family, his kingdom. On equal footing with everyone else, and without distinction. Something the Jews thought was outrageous, and the Gentiles impossible.

And something we *continue* to think. Not on the basis of race or ethnicity anymore, but sinfulness and waywardness.

“There’s no way so and so could be saved. There’s no way God would forgive me. I’ve done too much. I’ve hurt too many. I’ve failed too often.” Even in *our* day people have a hard time believing that God shows no partiality. And yet he does; and will stop at nothing to prove it to them, assure them.

Including the use of:

• His Spirit to overwhelm them (v44-46)

Like Luke says in v44 – *the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.*

And v45 – *the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on them.*

He *fell on* them and was *poured out* on them. Two phrases to say “overwhelmed.” Like those big buckets at a water park that deluge the *kids* standing beneath them.

Have you ever seen them? They’re so big they look like they belong in an iron smelting operation.

And they’re cantilevered, so that as they fill up, they tip more and more until they finally flip, pouring gallons and gallons of water on those standing below. Completely overwhelming them in a flood. All at once. Just like the Spirit overwhelmed those at Caesarea.

But the Spirit’s invisible. So how did they know it? How did they *know* he had fallen on them? How did they *know* he had been *poured out*? *They were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God*; v46. They heard them uttering unintelligible syllables or foreign languages; like at Pentecost, in chapter 2. And, they heard them praising God. *Another* indicator of the Spirit’s overwhelming presence.

- The question is, is that for today? Should we expect people who are saved today, to start speaking in tongues? The short answer is no. God will stop at *nothing* to assure those who believe in him, including the use of his Spirit to *overwhelm* them, but **tongues were the exception**. In the grand scheme of things, speaking in tongues was *rare* at conversion. Even then.

In fact, we hear of them only 3 times – Acts 2 at Pentecost, here in Acts 10 at Caesarea, and Acts 19 at Ephesus.

Of all the conversions in the book of Acts, tongues were manifested only 3 times.

The *vast* majority of the time, the Holy Spirit's presence resulted in *other* manifestations.
Like the 3000 saved at Pentecost who devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching,
fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer.
Going on to share their stuff, meet in homes, and worship together in the temple.
And a little later they added boldness and *joy* as a result of the Spirit's presence. (Acts
4:31; 13:48ff)
No mention of tongues whatsoever. Just radically changed lives.

So on a *few* occasions the Spirit's overwhelming presence was accompanied by speaking
in tongues, but more often than not, it was something else.
Tongues were the exception.
So they *can't* be the pattern or expectation for us. At conversion, or *any* time. (**Summ**)

Rather, it seems as though tongues were given and expressed on specific *occasions* in the
book of Acts, to draw attention to the Holy Spirit's New Covenant work.
In this case, his overwhelming work to include the *Gentiles*. And assure them of it.

➤ And last, God not only uses his Spirit to *overwhelm* those who believe, but . . .
• **Baptism to mark them (v47-48)**
V47 – *Then Peter declared, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who
have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"*
Obviously not. At least not legitimately.
*[48] And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they
asked him to remain for some days.*

He *commanded* them. Did you catch that, v48? It's one more reason *we* should be
baptized. And baptized in Jesus' *name*.
Identifying ourselves with him, desiring to be *like* him, and committing to *live* for him.
That's what it means to be baptized in someone's *name*.
It's an act of identification, an act of imitation, and an act of devotion.

And as such, baptism was one more means to assure the Gentiles *believers*, that they were
just as much a part of God's New Covenant as *Jewish* believers.
Just like the *Jewish* converts had been baptized, back in Jerusalem, so too *Gentile*
converts were baptized.
Marking *them* as God's people, just as much as the Jews. For all to see and all to
treasure. (**Summary**)

It's proof positive, that God will stop at nothing to reach those who seek him, change
those who follow him, and assure those who believe in him.
Blessed assurance. That Jesus is mine. He's that zealous.

Pray – Lord, it's beyond us that you care so much, and go to such lengths to save our
souls, make us whole, and assure our hearts. We're humbled, grateful, overwhelmed, and
full of praise.

Communion

Ps 116:12-14 – *What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me?*
What shall I *give* in return for all his grace, all his help, all his blessings, all his zeal?
I know, he says – *[13] I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the
LORD, [14] I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.*

I'll *lift up the cup of salvation* – I'll honor and drink from the symbol of his gracious
outpouring. (15a)
I'll *call on the name of the Lord* – going to him for everything I need, and praising him
for everything he's done. (15b)
And I'll *pay my vows* to him, express my love and commitment to him, *in the presence
of all his people*. (16)
Sounds a lot like Communion, doesn't it?

So as we prepare to do that, let me encourage you to start by calling on God to get *right*
with him.
Because the Bible says if you eat and drink without doing so, you'll be guilty of
showing disrespect and irreverence toward God . . .
And risk bringing judgment on yourself.

Better to call on him and get right with him, so that when we lift *the cup of salvation* and
you express your love for him *in the presence of all his people* . . .
There's no lack of integrity between your heart and your act. Only praise. Only thanks.
Only peace.

Let's do that now, and when the time comes I'll lead us in eating and drinking together.

➤ At the last supper, with bread in hand, Jesus said, *"This is my body, which is for you."*
Meaning the bread we hold is symbolic of his *sacrifice* on our behalf.
"Do this [he said] in remembrance of me."

Then, cup in hand, he said, *"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in
my blood*. In other words, this cup, is the *cup of salvation*.
Symbolic of God's promise and God's zeal, to save those who believe.
"Do this [he said], as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Sing – Thank You Lord

We pray, in Jesus' name, amen. Let's stand, and render to the Lord our praise.