

Acts 10:24-48



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24 On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him.

26 But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am just a man."

27 As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled.

28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.

29 "That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me."

30 Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments,

31 and he said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.

32 'Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea.'

33 "So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

34 Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality,

35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

36 "The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—

37 you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed.

38 "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

39 "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.

40 "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible,

41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

42 "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

43 "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.

45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,

47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?"

48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

We left our narrative last week with Peter on his way to Cornelius's house, the unthinkable, the unlawful, the unexpected as God very definitively and directly moves the gospel from Jews only to enveloping the entire human race.

1. All men are equal



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27 As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled.

28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.

29 "That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me."

At first this statement that we should not call any man unholy or unclean might seem surprising. Aren't men unholy and unclean? Well yes, but only significantly so when stood against God, not when measured against one another. Not any more.



Psalm 53:1-3

1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God," They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; There is no one who does good.

2 God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there is anyone who understands, Who seeks after God.

3 Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.

What separates man from man is the forgiveness of God not their diet, their skin color, their language, their outward appearance or righteousness. The only significant differentiating factor between you and any other person on the planet is your standing before God as it relates to your view of Christ. Have they bent the knee? Have they repented of their unholiness and uncleanness?

Our world is being ripped apart by this question of human divisions. Disagreements, inequalities, unfairness, right and wrong, black and white. So many legitimate issues that skirt around a far more fundamental and profound issue which is holding us back from reaching any true resolution. That we are all equally under the wrath of God, condemned for our sin not first against each other but chiefly against God. Oh my friends do not get caught up in lesser legitimate problems. Do not minimize the human hurt and sin which we absolutely can and do inflict against one another. But equally do not for a moment think we can solve any of those issues truly without solving our heart issues of rebellion, hate and disbelief in our Creator. Spend your mortal life addressing most fully that far more eternally significant problem. The world will mock you, but only for a little while before all knees bow and all realize what I'm telling you was right, what God told us, was right.

2. All men need to hear the gospel



30 Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments,

31 and he said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.

32 'Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea.'

33 "So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

This was the focus for our time last week, that there is no sufficient good outside the gospel. For all the good you might do and all the morality you might exhibit if you stop short of forgiveness of your sins before your Creator you will fall woefully short of what is required for entrance into heaven.

3. All men who believe the gospel receive forgiveness



34 Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality,
35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.
36 "The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—
37 you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed.
38 "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.
39 "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.
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41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.
42 "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.
43 "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

All men are welcome to come to God. Come his way, in humble repentance in recognition of his greatness and your subsequent lostness. Believe in Christ, believe in the cross. Submit yourself to him, throwing your hope onto his promise. Anyone who does that will be saved. We take that for granted but for Peter this realization absolutely rocked his world. He hadn't though this was plan, it was something he'd come to see only days before from the sheet until this moment. In one moment his universe had expanded from a small segment of humanity to every man, woman and child on planet earth. A lifetime of looking down on non-Jews, something so core, so baked into his DNA, cut out in a moment. "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."

This is not a new Jewish nation this is a Christianity, an extension of forgiveness out to the whole world. Oh the kindness of God, to extend the offer of forgiveness to everyone everywhere. That anyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness.

It's worth taking another small aside from our narrative to point out that while this is incredible and surprising for Peter this is not surprising for God, this was the plan all along, however it absolutely was veiled and unspecific until this time.

Saul, or Paul will become the key player in this new ministry of the gospel to the Gentiles and he speaks a number of times about this "mystery" to which we now have a front row seat here in Acts.



Colossians 1:25–29

25 Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God,
 26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,
 27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
 28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.
 29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.



Ephesians 3:1–7

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—
 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you;
 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.
 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,
 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;
 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,
 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.

This is not a plan B to an original plan which the Jews messed up by rejecting Christ. This was always in the mind of God to do, it's just that much like the Messiah himself the Jews weren't aware of this unfolding and thus the surprise, hesitation and at times resistance.

For all the mystery and mercy the underlying gospel message is the same. All men everywhere need forgiveness for their sins against their Creator and the gospel spoken and heard is the only means of gospel transmission. Do you understand the weight then of being a Christian? As a human creature with a voice box, a means of lingual communication, you and I are the only means, the only hope of salvation in the world. What a responsibility and what an opportunity. Why would you look any further for mission or purpose in life? Why frame any other thing than to orient your life around sharing the gospel and helping others do the same?

When did we buy the lie life was meant for something else? When did money, fame, fun, friends, held something better more valuable than that? Stewarding the message of eternal life effectively, generously.

4. The birth of the first Gentile Christian



44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.
 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.
 46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,
 47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?"
 48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

It is encouraging to me that it is the Lord who extends salvation irrespective of experienced or nuanced effort on the part of the evangelist. Peter is a participant in this narrative not its case or catalyst. All along the way he is just as surprised and in awe as the Gentiles are. God has his will set and his will cannot be thwarted. For Saul it was a violent intervention. For Cornelius it was a gracious invitation. The odds were awfully stacked against both Paul and Cornelius. Christians were around them but either unwilling, disinterested or forbidden from associating with the hope of the gospel. Yet God still used his spoken gospel, from the mouths of less than fully aware or eloquent evangelists, to great effect. If God can save Saul and Cornelius nothing can stay his saving hand so share the gospel boldly, widely, practice at it yet take courage that small is sufficient.

- Do you view other kinds of people with contempt?
 - Ages
 - Ethnicity
 - Economics
- Are you planning to build your life around evangelism?