

Cross-Cultural Ministry-Acts 10:24-35—3/29/26

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Do you ever feel awkward?—like you look around the room & feel alone or out of place, like you are different from everyone else?

Here's a little secret—especially for young people who think too much about yourself—everyone feels that way at times.

You are **not** alone—you are more like others than you realize because we are **all** made in God's image & we are born sinfully self-focused.

Any thoughts about how other people **never** feel insecure or isolated or struggle also wrong—we all deal with such things.

That's one reason why the **church** is so beautiful & so wisely designed as the training ground for how you grow in maturity.

The church is people God saves from **different** backgrounds.

He brought us together to love one another—& that forces us to grow.

Christians are called to love people we might **not** find loveable.

Some people—even some Christians with whom we share the most treasured convictions—are still **so different** from us.

And despite those differences, our commitment to follow Jesus must include our obedience to love **all** who trust in Him.

I'm not saying every Christian needs to be your best friend.

But with our shared devotion to Christ, we **can** learn together.

We **can** grow as Christ expands our hearts to love like He loved us.

As we study Acts 10, we've noted that **Christlike** love for one another is a distinctive of the church under the New Covenant.

We've noted how dietary laws that set Israel apart from the nations are obsolete, passed away as the Old Covenant was replaced by the New.

Those laws for what was clean & unclean were part of the **distinctive lifestyle** of Israel being set apart to God.

But Acts 10 puts into practice a **new kind of separation** to God, a holiness that begins inside & crosses external barriers & taboos.

That is the love Jesus commanded that becomes manifest in the church, the unifying of believers from Israel & all nations.

To move toward that **new phase** in history's redemptive plan, God had to give **new revelation** that could not be doubted.

God had to show His most **proven messenger Peter** the **new path** with the changes that would follow.

God led Peter to do what he had previously protested as unthinkable & to do it without delay or doubting or hesitation or misgivings.

As we follow Peter's obedience, we find what was likely a very awkward situation for him where he felt very out of place.

He was different from almost everyone else in the room & yet he was also in obvious obedience to the glorious plan of God.

So we want to be challenged by God's work as He sent Peter to take the Gospel to the Gentiles in Acts 10.

Whether facing awkward situations & cultural boundaries today, we can be **encouraged** by the step of faith that Peter took.

For you, that may mean taking a tiny step of faith to talk to someone & share some snippet of truth or testimony.

Or it may mean trying to start a Gospel conversation with a stranger.

It may include praying for ministry opportunities with other believers or with unbelievers or praying for missionaries.

In such steps of faith & love, Acts 10 can provide powerful hope as we see how **God prepared everyone** involved in this Gospel advance.

This Gospel progress can also deepen our assurance & gratitude in God's wise & loving design for the church.

So as we walk through verses 24-35 today, we'll outline 4 ways God prepared for this crossing of cultural barriers to establish the church & to show the supremacy of Christ as the only Savior for all nations.

As we see God's work, we'll outline 4 ways God prepared for it that can delight & motivate us in the advance of the Gospel.

Turn to Acts 10 to dig into this pivotal point in history & let's read the whole chapter to recall the context—let's read Acts 10:1-48. [READ]

God prepared Cornelius to summon Peter & God prepared Peter to go & today we pick up in verse 24 as Peter arrived.

We'll note 1st here from verses 24-27 how God prepared a cross-cultural ministry context for this amazing Gospel expansion.

Point #1—God prepared a cross-cultural ministry context.

Read verse 24 again as we get into this. [READ]

Acts 8:40 mentioned Caesarea as where Philip was after preaching the Gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch & others on that coastal road.

So it's likely that God had use Philip to spread the Gospel with Jews in the mixed population in capital city of Caesarea.

And as was mentioned before, God had prepared Cornelius with a humble heart seeking after the true God of the OT Scriptures.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom & yet no man seeks after God with proper fear apart from God's work in him.

We won't take time to turn to a plethora of passages to prove that, but it's important to recall that reality of God's preparatory work here.

God had been preparing Cornelius's heart to pray & be devout & generous & to do what was right.

Cornelius must have been stationed in Caesarea for some time as God had built his reputation with the Jews there & his family relatives had settled there & he had gathered other intimate associates there.

Cornelius had called together those relatives & close friends in anticipation of Peter's arrival as he was expecting them.

We're not told how Cornelius knew Peter was arriving or if he merely was expecting God to fulfill what the angel told him to send for.

But we're told he was ready for Peter's arrival the next day.

If we count day 1 as the day the angel spoke to Cornelius & day 2 as the day of Peter's vision & day 3 as the start of the 10-hour trip, then this was day 4 when Peter was entering Caesarea.

But recall that Peter was not alone as verse 23 said some brothers from Joppa accompanied him & we know that Cornelius had sent at least 2 servants & a devout soldier.

When Peter shared this in Acts 11:12, he said 6 men went with him.

So it's possible someone spotted the caravan of 10 men coming from afar & gave Cornelius time to gather this crowd.

What's unmistakably clear is that **God** had prepared this crowd, that God had worked in Cornelius's life & relationships to set this stage.

That's why I say that we should note 1st here how God had prepared a cross-cultural ministry context.

By context, I mean a setting where Peter would be different, where he would be out of the comfort zone of past ceremonial cleanness.

But it was not a hostile environment—it was an embarrassingly superabundant welcome as we read in verses 25-26. [READ]

Literally this might say, “And when it was that Peter entered, having met him, Cornelius was falling at his feet, he worshiped him.

This was an extreme display of reverence, submission, dependence, & honor for this messenger sent from God.

Peter corrected it because it is wrong to worship anyone except God.

Peter raised him & commanded him to stand as he explained that he himself was a man, not the Messiah.

But let's think about Cornelius's gesture even as we correct it.

Imagine Cornelius praying continually & giving to God's people the Jews in his city & to seeking to live uprightly & finally receiving a direct message from a holy angel of God.

Imagine the eagerness to welcome this messenger & hear his message.

Imagine Cornelius praying as he sent his servants & the soldier & as he waited for them to bring this man Simon Peter back.

Would it happen exactly as the angel had said?

Would the messenger come even though Jews did not associate with Gentiles & what would God do with his prayers & giving?

Since Peter later alludes to them hearing something about Jesus, he likely knew God was doing something new in their time.

When Peter arrived, we see divine preparation of the context.

Read verse 27 again for the God-ordained gathering. [READ]

Conversing with Cornelius apparently outside or at the door when he arrived, Peter entered inside & discovered a crowd.

This may have been an inner courtyard or an inner room, but Cornelius was wealthy enough to have numerous servants in his household.

So it was a crowd ready & waiting—they had already been assembled eager to hear the message from God through Peter.

Do you see how God had prepared a cross-cultural ministry context?

Peter did not go door-to-door passing out invitations to hear the Jewish follower of Jesus who would meet with Gentiles.

We don't read anything about Philip being involved or anyone else.

God did this—God prepared this non-Jewish-gathering with hearts hungry to hear from the servant that God had sent.

But an obedient messenger was needed & that was Peter as the communicator with a cross-cultural ministry commitment.

You can note that as a 2nd point of how God prepared a cross-cultural ministry commitment.

Peter is the communicator, but what's striking is the commitment to obedience in this newly revealed area.

Read verses 28-29 again to see that. [READ]

Peter began here speaking to them—to the crowd, not just Cornelius—appealing to their firm mental grasp of the strangeness of the scene.

They understood—he did not need to rehearse how forbidden his current actions were in the minds of Jews of his day.

Just as the Jewish leaders did not enter the praetorium to meet Pilate in John 18:28 lest they be defiled & unable to eat the Passover, Peter's entrance into this house was ritually unacceptable.

They knew people would question Peter for doing this as Acts 11:3 reports as Nehemiah 13:3 had excluded all foreigners.

Peter was a Jewish man & he was joining closely together with & going to an alien, a foreigner, a Gentile.

Because of laws in Leviticus 11 about clean & unclean foods & fluids, this would have been unlawful to intentionally do.

Of course, if it was necessary or unintentional, God had given laws for cleansing from such defilement to be restored to the community again.

But Peter was going against the separation from outsiders that they all knew was accepted & practiced by Jews.

Even though there was not a specific command against entering a Gentile context like this, the context would have been unclean & therefore would have defiled a Jewish man who was otherwise clean.

But as we have read, God had shown Peter something new.

God had given new revelation to Peter to replace Old Covenant laws for cleanness with something new he was about to learn.

Get that—Peter did not yet realize what was going to happen—but he obeyed the revelation he had been given.

Peter obeyed the new call for a commitment to cross cultural ministry.

Do you see that?—what had formerly separated these two groups was no longer to be a barrier between them.

God had shown Peter literally that *not at all common or unclean was to be called a man*—meaning it was not to be said of any man.

Unholy is that term common—*koinos*—meaning normal & clean, but not set apart to God.

And unclean is a step away from that commonness into defilement.

But God had demonstrated a change to Peter through the vision where all the animals were declared clean.

And as Peter pondered the vision, God told him to go with Cornelius's servants without misgivings, without delay or hesitation or doubt.

So not only were the animals & food declared clean, but so were the men, the Gentiles, & this crowd of strangers.

He gave that reason for obedience to the summons without objection.

But that's as much as God had told him at this point.

Get that—Peter did not automatically begin to preach Jesus here.

Apparently, he was still unclear what God's next step was.

I say that because he asked for the consequence of his obedience—Peter asked them the *therefore* question to explain why he was there.

For what word or communication had they sent for him?

When we hear that question, it's tempting to ask Peter a question like: "*Are you kidding, man? Do they need to ASK you to preach Jesus?*"

I mean, Peter was the guy who preached the sermon to explain the Spirit's coming & to exalt Jesus as Lord & Christ.

Peter had the truth & answers these people needed, but he asked them.

He was not just being polite or trying to set the stage somehow.

He was also not being impolite or unkind in explaining why he had crossed this cultural bridge to associate with these foreigners.

That would have been a question in their minds anyway.

We may hear that this was cross-cultural & assume that happens all the time in our world of international travel & ethnic restaurants & more.

But when we say this was cross-cultural in Peter's context, we mean it was against all customs & laws & accepted behavior.

This was not normal—this was **maximum awkwardness**—it was choosing to be that different guy, out of place, a stranger in the room.

But this was obedience to what God had shown Peter.

And as a leader, he had led 6 others into this step of faith to obey God.

Peter did so because God had prepared him for this cross-cultural ministry commitment.

Peter had not fully understood before what Jesus meant when He gave the commission to make disciples of all nations, **all Gentiles**.

Jesus had not meant a casual convenience or a call for Gentiles to become ceremonially clean to join the Jews.

It was more—Jesus called for a commitment to preach the Gospel & make disciples by going to **be among those unclean Gentiles**.

It was a command to be obeyed in ways that would replace the Old Covenant ways of becoming a part of God's people.

Salvation would be by grace through faith in the promised Christ—the same as always—but salvation would unite believers from all nations.

Peter's obedience led to further revelation shared by Cornelius.

But before we read his recounting of that again, stop & ask yourself if **you** have obeyed what God has revealed to you **as far as you know**.

Peter did not know what would happen next, but God prepared him with a cross-cultural ministry **commitment to obey**.

So Peter obeyed by going & then he asked what was next.

Of course, we know what's next in Peter's story—but we don't always know what is next in God's story in **our** lives.

We don't know how God will use us, but we know He gave the Gospel to preach to **Jews & Gentiles**, to those both **similar & different**.

So even if you merely ask how to pray for someone to start a conversation with them, you can cross the line in our culture that seeks to silence anything uncomfortable or controversial.

You & I can prayerfully obey the command to make disciples here in Roanoke with individuals & groups that seem distant or defiled.

And we can pray & give & send & go as we participate in cross-cultural missions ministry across the world.

We can share the cross-cultural ministry commitment that God prepared in Peter & Peter obeyed.

As we do, we can pray for God to prepare a cross-cultural ministry **craving** or concentration like He did for Peter.

That's what we see next in verses 30-33 that you can note as a **3rd point, that God prepared a cross-cultural ministry craving** or **you** might also call it a **concentration or cultivation**.

You can call it readiness, receptivity, humility or teachability.

God had prepared Cornelius to be thankful for God's Word & eager to submit to whatever God said through His messenger Peter.

That's why I mean for this 3rd point that you can call a **craving**, meaning a hunger to hear & obey God's Word.

Or you can call it a **concentration**, as in a focused attentiveness.

I also thought of calling it a **cultivation**, as in a heart plowed by God's grace ready to receive & follow His commands.

With all that, let me simply my outline, I said that **God prepared a cross-cultural ministry (1) context, (2) commitment, & (3) craving.**

Now let's read verses 30-33 again. [READ]

This is the third time this angelic appearance to Cornelius is included in this chapter & so we need to take note that it was important.

This was new revelation—God was advancing His plan after 5-10 years focused mainly on Jews along with some Samaritans.

None of the NT was written yet & it was a big shift to include Gentiles as joint-heirs of New Covenant promises in Jesus as the Christ.

So again we're reminded that Cornelius was praying about the ninth hour, 3pm in the afternoon when an angel appeared.

This time he described the angel as a man in bright clothing, which is how angels often appeared in Scripture.

As before, the angel called him by name & told him God was responding to his prayers & giving instructions.

God said to send for Simon Peter at Simon the tanner's home by the sea in Joppa & Cornelius obeyed immediately & Peter had also.

Cornelius recognized Peter's doing rightly in coming & expressed the readiness before God of everyone in his home.

They would get under & respond to Peter because God had proven that Peter was bringing what had been commanded by the Lord Himself.

Do you think Cornelius made it clear that Peter was to preach?

I don't think Peter needed any introduction to convince this assembly of their need to hear what he was going to say.

This was historic & unique & yet it should not seem strange.

After all, I am just a man & yet you gather here & bring others also to hear a message from God that comes from His Book.

As Paul said in 1st Corinthians 1-2, that may seem foolish or simple or unimpressive to the world, but it is God's wisdom.

It is God's way of working supernaturally by using mere men to deliver His message in straightforward words of truth.

God has chosen to work by such methods to crush competing boasts & thoughts of human glory & self-importance.

So when we see a gathering of people—especially different people who have no other reason to draw them together—& their purpose is to hear a man explaining God's Word, we know it's divine.

We know God has moved to assemble such attentive hearts.

That's why I'm amazed at God's grace week after week for over 25 years that you are all here to listen when all I do is explain Scripture.

I'm amazed that God has chosen to invade the world with the power of His Spirit here & now, in this place in our time.

I'm thrilled & thankful that God works all by His sovereign grace.

Just as Peter did not write this gameplan & then execute the script to perfection to make Acts 10 happen, so neither do we.

Rather, we simply pray & seek to obey, don't we?

We beg God to work & we seek to obey the ways He said He works & then we wait to see what He will do.

Our prayers alone & together are part of God's battle strategy of His supremacy being unleashed around the world to work for His glory.

And somehow, even though Cornelius was not yet a believer, God had moved his heart to pray & God was answering.

God was answering by preparing in Peter a cross-cultural ministry **conviction** that God saves sinners in every nation.

We can note that as a 4th & last point today—**#4, that God prepared a cross-cultural ministry conviction.**

#4, God prepared a cross-cultural ministry conviction in Peter.

God had prepared in Peter a cross-cultural **commitment to obey** the mandate to make disciples of all nations.

But more so, we see in Peter's words how God had prepared in him a **cross-cultural ministry conviction.**

God had convinced Peter that He is not one to show partiality, but that He saves those who seek Him rightly in every nation because Jesus is the Christ & Lord of all.

Read verses 34-36 to see those convictions articulated. [READ]

That phrase, "opening his mouth", is used of speaking authoritatively, especially with a message from God.

He said in truth he was making something his own, catching up to attain it certainly, processing information to truly grasp it.

That something was that acting by partiality is not who God is.

In contrast to Jewish thinking of that day, Job 34:19 had long before said that God was one *Who shows no partiality to princes, nor regards the rich above the poor, For they all are the work of His hands.*

Deuteronomy 10:17 added that "*Yahweh your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.*"

Later, King Jehoshaphat had said, "*let the fear of the Lord be upon you; be very careful what you do, for Yahweh our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe.*"

So this reality of God not showing partiality was not new even though He had chosen Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob.

What made those choices **not** partiality was that God did **not** choose based on a bribe or a position of princes or any unrighteous coercion.

In contrast, all of God's choices were completely by **His grace**, not based on human money or position or merits or efforts.

As God told Israel in Deuteronomy 7 & 9, He had not chosen them because of their great numbers or their righteousness or anything else.

We must recall that God only & always saves by His grace, by His own initiative to show mercy because He loves to do so.

And that reality informs the way we love others also.

We should not love people for what they do for us, for what they have or don't have in position or appearance or status.

God's Word applies impartially in its promises & judgments.

And that's true in every nation or ethnic group, as Peter said.

The one who fears God & does righteousness is welcome to Him.

Of course, Peter was **not** saying that by fearing God & doing right things, a person can earn acceptance with God.

If that was his point, that would go against everything taught in all of Scripture & he would not have needed to preach Jesus to Cornelius

That would also contradict what is said in Acts 11:14 & 18 that Cornelius would be saved & granted repentance to life.

Peter's point was that God had prepared Cornelius's heart to hear & receive the truth even though Cornelius was a Gentile.

Jesus had said in Luke 24:47 to preach forgiveness of sins in His name to all the nations, all the ethnic groups, the Gentiles.

But Peter had not done that until God had shown Him the vision & explained that the Gentiles were no longer to be considered unclean.

God had convinced Peter that those whose hearts God humbles to approach Him as He has said will be welcomed to Him.

As Jesus said in John 10:16, "*I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.*"

Jesus was reaching those outside the fold of Israel whom God had prepared to hear His voice & come to Him.

We can unify as believers & preach Jesus to all unbelievers, as Peter added in verse 36, because Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

So Peter was not out of order or out of place to associate with Gentiles & preach peace through Jesus Christ to them.

God could & would show grace to Gentiles who turned from sin to fear Him & approach Him rightly through Jesus as Lord & Christ.

God would prove that to Peter & everyone in that gathering to confirm a newly unity in the mystery of the church.

That was historic & unique & yet it modeled Gospel ministry to those of every tribe & tongue & people & nation.

God had prepared a cross-cultural ministry **conviction** in Peter that should also move us to preach Jesus as Lord of all & as the only Christ who saves sinners.

We need not doubt whether Jesus is the Savior that people across the globe need to hear of & turn to in faith for salvation.

No other religion can rescue their souls from sin's punishment.

As Peter preached in Acts 4:12, "*there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.*"

So we preach Jesus & we praise Jesus & we prize Jesus.

And we invite you to come to Him to find forgiveness & life that you can never earn or achieve by your own works or efforts.

He can freely give what we cannot deserve because He completely accomplished what we could never achieve.

So give up on all else & trust in Jesus to have eternal life.

And now let's remember His wondrous work in His death for our sins & His resurrection victory & promise to come again.

Bow with me & let's pray that we will remember Him in a fitting way as we close by remembering Him at His communion Table.