

The Impartial Work of God – Part 2

Acts: The Spirit Moving / Acts 10:30-48 / September 14, 2025

Introduction:

Today, we cover the second part of the powerful story in Acts 10. If you missed last two sermons, on Acts 9:32-43 and 10:1-29, I would encourage you to listen to them as each passage builds on each other. You can find them on the sermons page of our website by tapping or clicking on the Acts series graphic. Our passage this morning follows Peter's question of Cornelius in verse 29, "why you sent for me." The answer, we will discover, is twofold. As Ben Witherington comments, "It must be stressed that what we have here... could be said to be a tale of two sorts of conversions—Peter was converted to a new point of view about Gentiles as part of God's people, and Cornelius and his household were converted to a new view of Jesus Christ." (Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, p. 360-361). This tale can be divided into three scenes; Cornelius' answering Peter's question, Peter responding, and the Spirit moving. The first scene is in verses 30-33, where we see,

A Humble Confession

Pay attention to how Luke guides our focus to the end of verse 33. Look at verses 30-33, "And Cornelius said, 'Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, "Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea." So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come.'" Pause there. The detailed repetition of Cornelius' vision serves more than just sharing it with Peter. It anchors our hearts to what God had done, reminding us of Cornelius' obedience to send for Peter and Peter's obedience in coming. This obedience serves to highlight the profound words Cornelius concludes with. Look at verse 33, "Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord." Consider the humility displayed. Cornelius was a centurion in the Roman army. A commander of hundreds, coming only under the command of the emperor. Yet, he invites Peter into his home and gathers all his family and friends to hear what the Lord has been commanded Peter to say. Why? Because he understands they have gathered in the presence of God. What humility and readiness to receive the Lord's commands?! May we have the same. On a side note, why do many strong declarations of faith come from centurions? I believe it shows God's sovereignty in establishing Christ's Lordship because it was a treasonous act for a Roman centurion, who pledged his allegiance to the Roman state, to confess the Lordship of Christ. After this humble confession, we move to the next scene in verses 34-43, where we see,

A Disclosed Command

This scene holds Peter's disclosure of what God has commanded him and opens with a powerful introduction. Look at verses 34-35, "So Peter opened his mouth and said: 'Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.'" The statement "So Peter opened his mouth and said," signals the importance of what is about to be uttered. Before Jesus' famous sermon on the mount, Matthew 5:2 says, "he opened his mouth and taught them, saying." Following those words, Jesus repeatedly says, "You have heard it said, but I say to you." What is the first thing Peter relays? How God's command to not call anything common or unclean that He has made clean changed everything. The term "Truly," indicates this is a decisive truth. God shows no partiality, or favoritism, to any one nation, but people from every nation who fear Him and do what is right are acceptable to Him. Paul later repeats this idea in Romans 2:9-11, saying, "There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality." Now, we might be tempted to think Peter and Paul are focusing on people's piety as what is acceptable to God, but we need to recognize the placement of both statements in their teaching. Peter's falls at the beginning of his gospel presentation that will call for belief.

Paul's comes before he shows in Romans 3:23 how, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and calls for faith. Both statements prepare hearts to fear God and rightly respond to the gospel message being disclosed. Those who "do good" for Paul, and "what is right" for Peter, are those who believe in the message of salvation. What does the gospel message entail? Look at verses 36-41, "As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 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. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 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." Note how Peter starts by proclaiming the good news of peace as the word God sent to Israel. This shows it is the fulfillment of God's prophetic promises to Israel. We never want to separate the gospel of Jesus Christ from how it fulfilled God's promises to His people. Yet, note also how verse 36 ends with, "He is Lord of all." This shows the gospel spreading to the Gentiles is an extension of that fulfillment, not a replacement. God's promise always included more nations being grafted into His true covenant people. The angels at Jesus' birth announced good news of great joy for all peoples, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" Peter may not fully realize it yet, but He is proclaiming Gentile inclusion even at the start of this message. Following these words, Peter shares the gospel by recounting what had happened. He begins with John's baptism which prepared the way through repentance. Then, points to God's anointing of Jesus with the Spirit and power, and that power freeing people from the devil's oppression. This all alludes to Isaiah 61:1, which says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." Finally, Peter points to his witness of those things, as well as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When referring to Christ's death on a tree, he alludes to Deuteronomy 21:23, reminding us Jesus was cursed by God on our behalf. And referencing Christ appearing only to those he ate and drank with solidifies their witness is the confirmation of His resurrection. Like other sermon in Acts, the true gospel message includes Christ's powerful life, purposeful death, and proof giving resurrection. Yet, there is one final necessary part to this good news. Look at verses 42-43, "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. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." The term "commanded" points back to Cornelius' final words in verse 33, emphasizing this as what Peter was commanded by the Lord to say. He was to preach of and testify that Jesus is the one appointed to judge the living and the dead, proclaiming how all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Jesus and the message of His work will receive forgiveness of their sins. Jesus is the Christ, the judge and defender. This disclosed command brings us to the final scene in verses 44-48, where we see,

A Significant Confirmation

Have you noticed how Luke always brings our attention to how the Spirit is moving? Look at verse 44, "While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word." Peter doesn't even finish what he was saying before the Spirit moves in power. "These things" could refer to everything Peter was saying, but it most likely refers to Peter's final statement of "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." I love what Richard Longenecker says about this, "If this is true, then Luke is saying that it was this phrase that struck like a thunderbolt into the consciousness of the assembled Gentiles, releasing their pent-up emotions and emboldening them to respond by faith. With the promise of forgiveness offered 'through his name' and to 'everyone who believes in him,' they were given a reason for hoping beyond their fondest hopes" (Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 394).

Church, God doesn't wait till the people gathered openly confessed their belief. They didn't need an altar call or invitation to respond. As their hearts believed, they were redeemed and given the promised Spirit. Notice what happens next in verses 44-46, "And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God." Pause there. People get distracted by theological debates at this point. Things like, are tongues the sign of the Spirit? Or is this the same kind of tongues speech as Acts 2? But that is not Luke's point. Note how Luke focuses on the believers with Peter being circumcised before highlighting their amazement "because the gift of the Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles." That is Luke's point. The only thing that matters about the tongue's speech is to see it as proof of the Spirit being poured out "even on the Gentiles." Consider the significance of this. The promise of the Spirit comes in the prophetic books of Joel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. Each hold significant prophecies which appear to relate only to the nation of Israel and go on to disclose other future promises. And Peter proclaimed the tongues speech at Pentecost was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy ushering in the last day. This moment is another Pentecost of sorts. I believe the focus on the Jewish believer's amazement serves to show they understood that God was showing Gentiles were fellow heirs of God's covenant promises. Pay attention to what immediately follows in verses 46-48, "Then Peter declared, 'Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days." Using the same language from the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch, Luke immediately connects baptism with evidenced faith. This time, Peter is who asks why baptism would be withheld. Likely, as with the Eunuch, though Cornelius was held in esteem by the entire Jewish nation, he and his family were not full converts to Judaism. They had not been baptized or circumcised and therefore did not fully belong to the covenant community. Yet, when Peter sees the Spirit's evidence of their faith, he recognizes nothing should withhold them full acceptance. They had already been baptized in the Spirit, so he commanded they be baptized by water in the name of Jesus Christ. The Spirit preceding baptism confirms water baptism is not an act that saves but a sign of redemption and being welcomed into the new covenant community. This powerful story, then, comes to a close with words of fellowship at the end of verse 48, "Then they asked him to remain for some days." Peter not only went as commanded, and shared as commanded, he entered fellowship as commanded. Family, let the significance of this hit our hearts. Peter was recognizing they were part of God's new covenant people and treating them recipients of the new covenant promises together with the believing remnant of Israel that formed the early church. Christ Jesus, by the Spirit's significant confirmation had converted all the Gentiles present to a new and necessary view of Jesus and converted Peter to a new view of God's covenant people. He had shown He shows no partiality. The primary point of this story is to solidify the apostolic witness and confirm how the gospel of Christ's kingdom began to spread to the end of the earth, just as Jesus promises in Acts 1:8. Its application is to ensure our hearts know Christ is the King of the Kingdom and all who believe, from every nation, will be forgiven, are part of God's covenant people, and recipients of God's covenant promises. Do you have that surety? Aside from that application, I see two implications of this passage to consider. First,

1) Are You Willing to Receive All God Commands of You?

When studying this passage, I was personally struck by Cornelius' confession in verse 33. Look at it again, "we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord." One purpose of Acts is to confirm and establish the authority of the apostolic witness. Recognizing Peter's authority, everyone gathered was ready to hear and receive what the Lord commanded Peter to say. So ready, that while Peter was speaking, everyone responded in obedient faith. Family, do you approach God's Word with a readiness to hear what He is commanding? Do you come to church, knowing you are in the presence of God, ready to receive all He commanded? I am not saying everything preachers say are God's commands like Peter's words were.

Our role is not to deliver fresh commands, but to set before you the apostolic witness and say listen to the Word of the Lord. Often, I simply feel like a kid at a candy store saying “Ooh, look at that! Do you see how this amazing this is?!” Are you approaching this Word with a heart ready to receive? Has God’s command to not call any person common or unclean from last week changed your heart? Do you believe that Christ is the judge of the living and the dead, and the only way to receive the forgiveness of your sin? Have you obeyed the command to be baptized? Note that Peter commanded them to be baptized. Baptism is a command to obey, not an act to consider. Not to save you, but to proclaim to others what God has done to redeem you. What is keeping you from being baptized? We will have baptisms at the end of our worship gathering on September 28th. If you need to walk forward in obedience, we will help you do that. The second implication is,

2) Are You Sharing the True Gospel Message?

Were you struck by how Cornelius is described in this passage? He was God-fearing, prayerful, giving, and upright. Yet, God makes sure Cornelius, along with his family and friends, hear the gospel. Cornelius and his family aren’t brought into God’s covenant people until they responded in faith to the gospel. Church, being a good person isn’t enough. Being close to God isn’t enough. People need to hear and respond to the gospel message. And, in Acts, that message consistently is the truth of Jesus Christ’s life, power, death, resurrection, and Him as the only way we can receive forgiveness and reconciliation. That is the message we are called to share. Certainly, your personal story may be part of it, but it isn’t our story that redeems. Sharing the gospel means we speak about the perfect life of Christ, His power over all things, His death to secure our forgiveness, and His resurrection and ascension as Lord of all. Then, we call for belief in Him as the judge of all people and the one who provides forgiveness of sin. Bury that story deep in your heart and you can find a way to share it in any conversation. Let me give a simple way to share it this week. How often are you asked how your week is going? What if you answered, “God reminded me this week through Acts 10 of the incredible price Jesus paid on the cross to provide the forgiveness of my sin and make me part of His covenant people. Can I show you what it says?” One of the easiest ways to share the gospel is to talk about what you learn from God’s Word. This is why we rehearse the gospel each week through singing and preaching. Don’t make it over complicated. Know the gospel deeply and then look for ways to turn any conversation to a statement about what God has done for you through it.

Conclusion:

As the worship team is coming to lead us in a time of reflection and response, I encourage you to use the apostolic witness today to increase your surety in Christ as King and the gospel of His kingdom. Let this passage anchor you deep in the fulfillment of God’s promise and strengthen your resolve to live in that promise. Ask if you have and continue to receive all God commands of you. Maybe today is the day you need to respond to that first command to believe. Don’t wait for an invitation. Respond now in faith. If you are following Jesus, consider the gospel message relayed by Peter in this passage and bury it deep in your heart. Then, go and share it with others who need to hear it. Let the truths of this story embolden your trust in the apostolic witness and power of the Spirit. As always, you are welcome to come and kneel before the Lord in humility, sit and reflect, or stand and sing. We also have a team of people ready to pray with you and for you worshipping on the front rows with lanyards on. Let’s pray as we respond in faith together.