

Series: **The Original**

Today's Title: **"Breaking Down Barriers"** part 2

September 19, 2021 – Acts 10:23b-48

Baptisms - National Back to Church Sunday

Objective: To help people realize belief in Jesus is the only way to have forgiveness of sins.

Opening prayer

If you're new here today - I first want to say *'Welcome'* - So glad you're here this morning!

When we gather for worship, we don't always have baptisms. We have baptisms 2 or 3 times per year - and this morning was our 2nd baptism service this year.

Our worship services always involve 2 elements: Worship through songs - Worship through the sermon / message. Both are ways we worship God.

I titled our current sermon series: *"The Original"* - which is a look at the 'original' church - the beginning of the Church - Church 1.0, as its record is preserved for us in the book of Acts.

Today is sermon #24 in this series.

I will finish this series on Sunday, October 17th.

Then, starting the next Sunday - October 24th - I will begin a short series - 6 sermons - "Aliens 2.0" - in which we will look and see what the Bible has to say regarding some of the cultural 'hot-button', controversial issues of our day.

1. Wokeism

2. Gender & Transgenderism
3. CRT & Intersectionality
4. Christian Nationalism
5. They Myth of Safety
6. Social Justice

We would all be honored if you joined us to learn with us what the Bible says about these issues which are causing so much confusion, controversy, and conflict in our culture.

Then, throughout December, we will focus on Christmas and the birth of Christ.

Turn to Acts 10:23-48 (p. 919)

In today's message there are 2 primary people in the passage: a man named Peter - and a man named Cornelius.

Peter is the Apostle Peter - a Jewish man - the primary disciple of Jesus - the primary Apostle.

Cornelius is a Gentile. He's a military man - a Roman Centurion. He leads one of the Italian cohorts - an elite military unit.

Cornelius is a religious man - but not like his fellow Romans.

He's a man who prays to and worships the God of Israel - and he gives money to help the poor in his community.

He's an upright, devout, respected man. He's married, has a family and servants in his home.

He's a man with influence and some degree of power - given his military command.

He lives in Caesarea, a Roman city on the Mediterranean coast. Caesarea was the center of Roman power and activity in Israel.

We read in **10:3** that one day, when Cornelius was praying to God, an angel appeared to him and told him to send some men to Joppa - a city 33 miles to the south on the coast. The angel told him to send these men to get Peter - so Peter could come and tell him a message from God.

On the other side of the account is Peter.

I already mentioned that Peter was a Jewish man - which is very important.

The Jewish people are often referred to as God's chosen people.

The Bible is clear that God chose them *not* because they were better or more deserving than any other group of people.

God chose them out of His grace - and He wanted to use them to be an example to the nations of the world of what the one, true God was like.

God's intent was that Israel's example would draw the other nations of the world to follow the one, true God - and put their faith in Him.

However, the Jewish people became prideful - full of spiritual arrogance - and believed they were better than the other nations - the Gentiles.

They believed (wrongly) that God preferred them to the Gentile nations.

The result: they kept God for themselves - and put barriers up between themselves and the other nations - to keep the other nations away.

I've referred to this as '*Jewish exclusiveness*'.

Peter believed this too.

This is the mindset - philosophy - world view - prejudice he was raised with - and he believed it deeply.

But this belief was contrary to God's heart - contrary to God's mission - contrary to the mission Jesus gave His disciples to take the Gospel - the message of forgiveness in Jesus - to the "end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

But God was working on Peter.

- God was changing Peter's views.
- God was changing Peter's heart.
- God was helping Peter realize that He loves the Gentile as much as He loves the Jew.
- God was helping Peter realize that He wants to save all people - including the Gentiles - from their sins.

So, that brings us to where we left off last Sunday.

We're going to finish **chapter 10** today.

The Gospel message is for all people. vs. 23b-33

Read vs. 23b-33

This is a group of people who want to know what they're missing.

They seem to know God has something more for them.

Two interesting things to note...

1) Cornelius has gathered his friends and family.

Circles!!! Cornelius cares for those he loves - and since he knows the importance of spiritual things - he invites them to come hear the man God told him to invite to his house!

2) He bows down to worship Peter - but Peter stops him.

The great Apostle Peter is just a man. God did great things through him - but he's just a man - a sinner - saved by the grace of God through his faith in Jesus Christ - just like you and I can be saved through faith in Jesus.

Peter enters Cornelius' home - which was probably the first time Peter had ever been in a Gentile home.

vs. 28 - shocking! It was “unlawful...for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation”

Look how far the Jewish people have moved away from God's plan to save the nations of the world!

God wanted to use the Jewish people to draw the Gentile nations to Him.

The Jewish people put up barriers - made it illegal to befriend a Gentile!!!!

Is there anyone in your life - anyone that you have refused to love - refused to serve - refused to be nice to - to talk to - because there is something about them you don't like - don't approve of?

Peter asks: *'Why did you send for me?'*

Cornelius then explains the vision he had - 4 days prior - that God told him to send for Peter.

Now that Peter is before Cornelius, his family, and friends - he says to Peter: *'Tell us what God has commanded you to say.'*

So, Peter begins to tell them about Jesus.

The Gospel in 10 verses. vs. 34-43

Read vs. 34-43

vs. 34 - "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality..."

God shows no favoritism.

This is an amazing statement - a *'light bulb'* above the head moment for Peter.

Galatians 3:28-29

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.”

The Gospel in 10 verses.

- Jesus - the anointed of God (vs. 38).
 - Jesus - proved He was God through His miracles (vs. 38-39).
 - Jesus - died on the cross (“tree” - vs. 39b).
 - Jesus - raised from the dead on the 3rd day (vs. 40).
 - Jesus - resurrected - appeared to many (vs. 40-41).
 - Jesus - resurrected - ate & drank - proving He wasn’t a ghost or spirit - but a real, physical, resurrected, glorified body. (vs. 41).
- vs. 42 - Peter repeats the Great Commission - the command Jesus gave to His followers to tell others - tell the world about Him and the “forgiveness of sins through His name.”

The Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit. vs. 44-46a

Read vs. 44-46a

Cornelius and those with him receive the Holy Spirit while Peter was still speaking. ***No altar call here!!!***

One commentator calls this, “The Pentecost of the Gentile world.” (F.H. Chase, quoted by The New International Commentary on the New Testament, by Bruce, p. 229)

This revealed God’s full approval of their faith.

God didn't use Peter - or another Jewish believer to lay hands on Cornelius and the others for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

At the moment of their faith in Jesus - the Holy Spirit indwelt them, and the Spirit's presence was evidenced by their “speaking in tongues and extolling God.”

The Gentiles are baptized. vs. 46b-48

Read vs. 46b-48

Once again...just as in the previous chapters, we see that baptism follows belief.

In the N.T., this is always the order - belief - baptism.

Second, the urgency is again present.

Why wait? These folks are obviously saved through their faith - they obviously have the Holy Spirit in them - let them be baptized right away!!!

Peter and the other Jews stay with them - in the Gentile house - “for some days.”

This is significant because Peter - and the other Jews - stayed for a number of days in Gentile home.

The walls of division are starting to come down.

It will take years...but the demo is starting.

Apply it...

Ephesians 2:14-16

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”

Through Jesus we can be reconciled to God.

Jesus is the only way we can be reconciled.

Jesus is the only way to have our sins forgiven.

Religion - spirituality is not enough!

You must put your faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.

Through Jesus we can be reconciled to each other.

Jesus forgives us when we believe in Him - but He also brings us peace.

Peace between us and God...

Peace between us and others - as we forgive - give grace - love.

We can't do it on our own - but we can when we have Jesus in our life.

Close in prayer