

Preparing the Heart for The Gospel”
The Firstfruits of the Gentiles
Acts 10
Jerry Grey

Introduction:

What’s God doing in your heart today? Where are you spiritually? Has God moved in your heart to change you? Did you know that unless God gives you grace and sparks spiritual birth in you, you will never respond to Him?

John 6:44

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...”

37 All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

Paul would later call this the **mystery** of the Gospel.

Ephesians 6:19-20

19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the **mystery of the gospel**, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

NIV

All of us in this room who know Jesus Christ as Savior can point back to a time when the Holy Spirit prepared our hearts for Jesus to draw us to salvation. Even if you didn’t know what was going on then, you know now. You didn't just wake up one day and think to yourself, “I think I'll get saved today.” God prepared your heart to receive salvation.

My question to you is this. Are you in the middle of that right now? My personal testimony is fascinating to me as I look back to

a time when God worked in my life and I had no idea what God was doing. God silently made me *concerned* and *interested* in eternal matters. That's the love of God.

Since I have known the Lord and walked with Him for 40 years, I know immediately when God is working, calling, prompting, and planning a new direction or plan for my life. It's unmistakable. It's awesome, scary, and greatly exciting.

Context:

Keys to understanding Acts: We will look at **two places**, **two races**, and **two people**.

- *Jerusalem to Rome*
- *Jew to Gentile*
- *Peter to Paul. We are in the process in our text of moving from Peter to Paul and Jew to Gentile right now.*

~Also remember the Keys to the kingdom: We are about to see the third Key revealed In chapter 10.

- **Keys of The Kingdom:**
- ~ Jews Chapter 2:1 Key 1
- ~ Samaritans 8:14 Key 2
- ~ Gentiles 10:44 Key 3

Matt 16:13-20

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “**You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.**”

¹⁷ **Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.** ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter,^[b] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades^[c] will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the **keys of the kingdom of heaven**; whatever you bind on earth will be^[d] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^[e] loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

What have I taught you about truth? Truth is not learned... Truth is revealed. This chapter is truth revealed. That’s called grace. Let’s talk about Grace!!!

Grace is defined as God's dealing with a man in undeserved ways; It is simply an outflow of God's goodness and generosity. Basically, this is unmerited favor.

Note Acts 10:44

I. Prevenient Grace: The Calling. 1-7

*** Cornelius and Peter are being Prepared:** God is calling Cornelius to salvation and Peter to obedience. For the Christian, God often calls, draws, or simply wakes us up spiritually to hear Him speak. God speaks to us all the time but there is an effectual calling for specific changes or directions God has for us. I would say that this is a time of intense spiritual focus. We are waiting on God to speak.

Verses 1-2 Cornelius and his works!

~ Luke tells us Cornelius is: **verse 1**

- A Centurion of the Italian Regiment. Commander of 100 men. His 100 men were called the Italian Regiment. The gospels put these men in high regards.

Matthew 8:10

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶ “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”

⁷ Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”

⁸ The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

- **Verse 2:** He is devout. He was active in piety. Went to worship but made to sit in the back and not participate. A Gentile dog seeking God but was not circumcised.
- He is God fearing. Worshipped Jehovah but was not converted to Judaism.
- He is generous. Gave to the poor.
- He always prayed. Lost people that pray get saved.
- His family was devout too.

*******None of these things will save you. All these things are great but not worthy of salvation. **They do get you recognized in heaven.**

~He gets a visitation from an angel. **He is still not saved. How do I know that?**

Acts 11:13ff says so !

¹³ He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. ¹⁴ He will bring you a message through which you and all your household **will be saved.**’

¹⁵ “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with^[a] water, but you will be baptized with^[b] the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?”

Cornelius’ vision: v. 3-8: Cornelius name means horn or strength.

Types of Grace:

Common Grace: This is grace that is extended to all persons. Through God's general Providence; for example, his provision of sunshine and rain for everyone. In the thought of John Wesley., the term may refer. To a prevenient grace. Coming to all persons and restoring them to the point. Or they are capable of believing.

Define: Prevenient Grace is the belief that although all persons begin life with a sinful nature, God restores each individual to the point where there is sufficient ability to believe. **Boice** says, ***“prevenient grace is the work of the HS in preparing one to receive the Goepel.”***

Erickson's definition of prevenient grace says, “in Wesleyanism an Armenianism the belief that although all persons begin life with a sinful nature, God restores each individual to the point. Where there is sufficient ability to believe.” “I call this – truth revealed.”

From a **Calvinistic perspective**, we have **efficacious grace**. This is a reference to the fact that those whom God has chosen for eternal life will unfailingly come to believe and salvation. Some use the term **irresistible grace**, but that is a more negative concept.

Many refer to the concept of **sufficient grace**. This is a reference to the fact that God's grace is adequate to save the person who believes.

Sufficient grace Is a reference to the fact that God's grace is adequate to save the person who believes.

Special Grace: The grace by which God redeems, regenerates, and sanctifies His people.

Sanctifying Grace. Is the theology in Roman Catholicism, this is grace. Conveyed by the sacraments., combining what Protestants call justification and sanctification. From a biblical perspective. This is heretical.

It is biblically true that we cannot be saved by works. The sacraments or the Eucharist do not impart salvation in any way, shape, form or fashion. But likewise, Without grace, we cannot be saved, or sanctified in our Christian walks. The grace that saves you is also the grace that will sanctify you. Salvation comes in an instant when one believes. Sanctification is a process for life.

A covenant of grace is God's offer of salvation through Christ's work to all who accept it?

How Does God Reveal Truth?

*Holy Spirit – Sin, Righteousness, Judgement (**you start feeling conviction you never felt**). You start desiring God.

***Circumstances (You bump into people that are xns)** – Grace works in a sinners life.

*Softening of the heart (**reaching pout to God for help**), finances, health, children, etc.

There is spiritual activity in the sinners life, and the HS, by grace, allows the sinner to see the truth. Revelation is illuminated for decision making. What you call it matters not to me. Just act on the grace given.

1 Cor 2-12-14

¹² What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. ¹⁴ *The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.*
It must be revealed

Eph 2:1-10

² As for you, you were **dead** in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh^[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ **But** because of his great love for us, **God**, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ **made us alive** with Christ even when we were **dead in transgressions**—it is by **grace** you have been saved. ⁶ And God **raised us up** with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ **in order that** in the coming ages he might **show the incomparable riches of his grace**, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith**—and this is **not from yourselves**, it is the **gift** of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Quote: JRG- "I may not understand all the workings of grace in salvation and sanctification, **but I do know it when I see it.**"

Illustration: Friend of mine in Memphis had a father in law who was lost. He would not go to church, would not listen to a witness. However, He would listen to his grandchildren when they shared with him about what they learned in Sunday School. He didn't

know it but that was the effectual call of God by grace. He didn't respond. That's resisting grace.

A Holy Spirit Interruption

Verses 3-6: A visit from an angelic host. (Note- A field guide to Biblical Angels, Bible gateway-).

<https://www.biblegateway.com/learn/topics-themes/explainers/biblically-accurate-angels/>

Seems to me that many people talk about Angelic Host giving them a visit. I'm a little skeptical. The Bible says that today it's angels unaware. We don't even know what angels look like. I think that if an Angel came to visit me, they might scare me to death. Read Isaiah 6. Unless you can confirm an experience biblically it dangerous to trust your emotions. Remember that Satan is an angel too and can change forms. He has other angels too and they can change forms.

Why trust an angel when you have the scripture!!!

2 Peter 1:18-19

The good deeds and prayers of Cornelius came to heaven as a memorial (**memnosunon**). This was now recorded in glory. His seeking after God was now a memory in heaven. How would you like your deeds to be a memorial in heaven?

The request was to send for Peter who was staying at Simon the Tanners house. God knows where we are at all times.

God confirms Cornelius' vision with the Apostle Peter. God will confirm Peters vision with Cornelius. You getting this?

Verse 7-8

When God's grace is active, people do what God wants them to do. Two servants and a devout soldier went to Joppa, no questions asked.

- What if we can't find Peter?
- What if you really did not have a vision from God?
- No – They just submitted! **May seem crazy but you just know what God has said.**

Question – Is your heart being prepared for eternity? Have you experienced this, or is it happening to you now? Are you being prepared to hear the gospel.

Do what Cornelius did. Be obedient to the vision you have been given until you get more vision. God most often works in stages.

II. Progressive Grace: Peter's Vision- Revelation and Clarification.

Verses 9-16. The Calling and Revelation Progresses. This is Clarification after obedience.

Verse 9: While they travel, Peter is having his vision right before lunch.

We have a hard time with this passage because we can't fully understand the culture. Peter has only seen Gentiles come to Israel's God through the nation.

Two Examples:

1. **Rahab** – A Gentile who comes to Yahweh through the People of God. - Joshua 2
2. **Ruth** 1:16 – Where you go I will go, where you stay, I will stay – Your people will be my people, Your God will be my God.

Now, the Gentiles are called clean in Jesus Christ. That's new.

Verse 10: Peter is waiting on lunch and has a vision about eating. The Greek text says

- Two slaves and a soldier are OTW.
- Peter transitions into another state of the spirit. **Ginomai**. To become. Peter is in an **ekstasis**. We get our word ecstasy, amazement, trance from this word. Used in a biblical sense in the NT to show a controlled spiritual state of total focus. When used in a negative sense it refers to uncontrolled ecstasy from Satanic influence or the spirit world, e.g., the ecstasy in the books to Corinth. I love the HCSB translation, **visionary state**.
- Peter and Cornelius are both in a perfectly controlled state. No flopping around. No running. No uncontrolled physical movements or strange gibberish. Just in a hyper-spiritually controlled focus and supernatural state of fellowship with God. Just like John in Revelation.
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Rev. 1:9-10

⁹ I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰ On the Lord's Day **I was in the Spirit**, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹ which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

~ **He saw heaven open! Illustration in verse 11:** I take it that the four corners speak of the totality and encompassing nature of this vision. I don't want to spiritualize the text or teach you bad habits, but I do think that the context is about including the unclean world into the gospel message, so to say God is communicating the necessity of the Gospel message going to the four corners of the world is not a stretch.

This is the perfect application to the theological teaching of progressive revelation and prevenient grace. Peter is being prepared to receive Gentiles into his **oikos**. This Jewish boy has

never been so close to the Gentiles. **Now He has to accept them, love them, and share the gospel with them.**

Boice says the vision's purpose was clear... "Don't call anything unclean that I have made clean."

Peter must have been confused. Then he gets the same command a second time. Then, like a good Baptist (Peter), God has to tell him a third time rise and eat.

Verse 11: What an amazing statement. Peter gets to see into glory like Stephen did. The Greek word for opening heaven is **anoigo**.

Anoigo: To open- When heaven opens, it signals a supernatural event. The gospel going to the Gentiles is a monumental event.

Overview of Biblical Usage

Strong's Greek 455 gathers every New Testament occurrence where something closed becomes accessible—**doors, eyes, heavens, Scriptures, mouths, hearts, prisons, tombs, and scrolls. The verb forms span the earthly ministry of Jesus, apostolic mission, and the Revelation visions, binding together salvation history from Bethlehem's manger (Matthew 2:11) to the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:12).**

Physical Openings: Doors, Gates, and Prisons

- Household doors: When Rhoda forgets to let Peter in, "they opened the door" ([Acts 12:16](#)).
- City gates: The iron gate of Jerusalem "opened by itself" for Peter's angelic rescue ([Acts 12:10](#)).
- Prison doors: "An angel of the Lord opened the prison doors" freeing the apostles to preach ([Acts 5:19](#)).
- Temple treasury: In a cultural snapshot, the ritual of "opening their treasures" to present gifts is recorded of the magi ([Matthew 2:11](#)).

These narratives underline providential sovereignty over human barriers; no lock withstands the Lord's purpose.

Healing Miracles: Eyes, Ears, and Mouths

- **Blind eyes:** “Their eyes were opened” after Jesus touched them ([Matthew 9:30](#); [John 9](#) entire).
- **Deaf ears and mute tongue:** “His ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed” ([Mark 7:35](#)).

Physical restoration dramatizes spiritual illumination (see [Acts 26:18](#)).

Heaven Opened

- **At Jesus’ baptism “heaven was opened”** ([Luke 3:21](#)) affirming messianic identity.
- **At the transfiguration of daily life:** “He said to him, ‘You will see heaven opened’” ([John 1:51](#)).
- **At the Second Advent:** “I saw heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse” ([Revelation 19:11](#)).
- Heaven opened for **Stephen** [7:55](#)

Each scene discloses divine initiative: the Father authenticates the Son; the Son grants revelation; final victory is unveiled.

When heaven opens or God opens something, it’s always a supernatural.

Scripture and Understanding Opened

Though Luke records the concept with a different verb, Acts demonstrates the pattern: Philip “opened his mouth” and explained Isaiah ([Acts 8:35](#)); Peter “opened his mouth” to declare impartial grace ([Acts 10:34](#)). Opening one’s mouth signals **Spirit-led proclamation that itself opens hearers’ hearts** (cf. [Acts 16:14](#), using a cognate).

Missional ‘Open Doors’

Paul speaks of evangelistic opportunity: “A great door for effective work has opened to me” ([1 Corinthians 16:9](#)), **echoed in “when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and a door opened for me”** ([2 Corinthians 2:12](#)). **Believers are urged to pray “that God may open to us a door for the word”** ([Colossians 4:3](#)). **The imagery encourages expectancy for gospel advance, viewing receptivity as God-granted.**

Covenant and Communion

Revelation 3:20 brings the motif home: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If **anyone** hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in.” Fellowship with Christ depends on responsive openness from within, yet initiated by His gracious approach.

Eschatological Scrolls and the Lamb

Revelation repeatedly marks each seal: “He opened the first seal... the second... the third...” ([Revelation 6](#)). Only the slain Lamb is worthy “to open the scroll and its seven seals” ([Revelation 5:5, 9](#)). The culmination is judicial: “The books were opened” at final judgment ([Revelation 20:12](#)). History’s meaning is inaccessible until unveiled by Christ; ultimate destinies are exposed when He opens the records.

Pastoral and Devotional Implications

1. Pray expectantly for God to open understanding, opportunities, and impossible situations.
2. Minister the word boldly, trusting the Spirit to open hearts as visibly as prison doors.
3. Rejoice that the One who opens also guards: “What He opens no one can shut” ([Revelation 3:7](#)).

The consistent Scriptural testimony of Strong’s 455 *Anoigo* is that opening belongs to God in Christ—He initiates revelation, salvation, mission, and consummation, inviting believers to live and serve with doors wide open.

~ **Lev. 20:25 *ff*** speaks of the law that prohibits consumption of unclean animals. Peter was devout. God was using this vision as a way to show Peter that the Gentiles were no longer to be unclean.

* This is Progressive Revelation! Before now you could not go to a Gentiles house – now they are coming into the kingdom.
God is preparing hearts for the gospel. .

Closing: Verse 14- What? No Lord!!