

THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES

ACTS 10



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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel to the Gentiles: Acts 10
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Introduction to Acts 10

Acts 10 takes the first steps toward the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the Gospel – that it must reach to and incorporate people from every nation, tribe, and tongue.

Jesus had commanded His followers to make disciples of all nations and to be His witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth. In Acts 10, God used Peter to open the door for a worldwide outreach and mission that continues even to this day.

Acts 10 is breathtaking and universal in its implications. But it is practical and “next steps” in its implementation. As such, it teaches us excellent lessons about how to approach our own walk with and work for the Lord.

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We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. and Susie Moore

1 Cornelius' Vision

Pray Psalm 66.1-4.

Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!
Sing out the honor of His name;
Make His praise glorious.
Say to God,
“How awesome are Your works!
Through the greatness of Your power
Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.
All the earth shall worship You
And sing praises to You;
They shall sing praises *to* Your name.”
Selah

Sing Psalm 66.1-4.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Shout for joy to God, all people, sing the glory of His Name!
Give Him glorious praise and say, “How great Your pow’r and great Your fame!
All the earth shall worship gladly as they praise Your glorious Name!”

Read Acts 10.1-8.

Preparation

1. Who was Cornelius?
2. What happened to him?

Meditation

Luke continues selecting stories, pinned to names, that both report the progress of Christ’s ongoing work and create anticipation in his readers concerning what lies ahead. Is the Gospel powerful to effect even people in *government*? Even a *pagan* government?

God was at work in this Centurion, preparing his heart for the Gospel. He was a “God-fearer,” a Gentile believer in the God of Israel. He is described as devout, generous, and pious (vv. 1, 2). Doubtless, his association with the Jewish religion helped to prepare his heart for the Gospel.

God sent an angel to further prepare Cornelius for something significant, and he immediately complied with the angel’s instructions, sending three people to Joppa to fetch Peter (vv. 3-8). Cornelius did not know why he was doing this. It’s not necessary fully or perfectly to understand God’s reasons for what He commands.

Luke uses the story of Cornelius to prepare us for the Gospel’s spreading into the Gentile world and all the way into Caesar’s own household (Phil. 1.12-14)! God’s preparation of Cornelius should encourage us to believe that God is preparing people for the Gospel still today. It should also lead us to plead with God’s Spirit to *strive* with people (Gen. 6.3), and to God the Father to allow His glory to break through in unguarded moments, reminding lost people of Him (Rom. 1.19-21; Rom. 2.14, 15).

God is at work in the world in various ways, striving with people and preparing their hearts to hear the Good News. This should encourage us in our daily calling in the ongoing work of Christ. God used certain faithful

Jews in Cornelius' case. Today He might use you.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We might be tempted to look at Cornelius and think that he was primed to be saved because he was already a devout man, who feared God, gave generously, and prayed continuously. Then we remember Saul, the antithesis of primed to be saved.

God is in the business of changing lives. All lives. Ready or not. He is Sovereign. And powerful. "But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases" (Ps. 115.3).

In Lydda, Aeneas experienced a physical healing that led to his and many others' salvation (Acts 9.33-35). In Joppa, Dorcas experienced a life-giving that led to the eternal healing of many people (Acts 9.36-42). And in Caesarea, Cornelius experienced a theological healing that led to the ingrafting salvation of himself and future Gentiles who believed on the Name of Jesus (Acts 10.1-48).

"...for it is God who works in you [and all who believe] both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2.13).

Physical healing. Spiritual and eternal healing. Theological healing. All for His glory. All to His praise. And He is calling us to be used in this marvelous work of bringing all those He chooses into His Kingdom.

"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Rev. 4.11).

This work is why we exist; it's the reason we were created.

There are many people out there, in various stages of preparedness, just waiting for a touch from the Lord through us: like Aeneas, Dorcas, and Cornelius. So, "...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus..." (Heb. 12.1, 2).

Please use us, Lord, today. And every day. For Your Kingdom, power, and glory (Matt. 6.13).

For reflection

1. Do you find it hard to believe that God is already at work in the world, beyond the pale of the Church, preparing men and women to hear the Gospel? Do you think God could be doing this with any people in your Personal Mission Field? Explain.
2. What will you do today to reach out to people in your Personal Mission Field with the grace and truth of Jesus?
3. An angel helped to ready Cornelius for the Good News. Could angels be working ahead of your witness, to prepare others for the Good News? Explain.

Doubtless Cornelius had true faith in God's word, as far as he understood it, though not as yet clear faith in Christ. This was the work of the Spirit of God, through the mediation of Jesus, even before Cornelius knew him, as is the case with us all when we, who before were dead in sin, are made alive. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 10.1-8

Pray Psalm 66.5-9.

Pray for the nations of the world, that they might see the works of God and hear His Word of salvation, that many might be saved.

Sing Psalm 66.5-9.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Great and awesome is our Savior in the works which He has done.

He the sea and river dried to let His people cross as one.

Then our joy was great to worship Him our mighty, sovereign One.

He the nations watches ever – all you rebels, humbled be.

Bless our God, all men and nations, praise His Name eternally!

He preserves our souls, and He will keep His paths beneath our feet.

2 Peter's Vision

Pray Psalm 147.12-14.

Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!
Praise your God, O Zion!
For He has strengthened the bars of your gates;
He has blessed your children within you.
He makes peace in your borders,
And fills you with the finest wheat.

Sing Psalm 147.12-14

(St. Ann: *Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*)
O praise your God, Jerusalem, O Zion, praise the Lord!
He strengthens those who trust in Him with blessings from His Word.

Around us He has spread His peace; our borders are secure.
His bounty daily shall increase; His grace to us is sure!

Read Acts 10.1-16; meditate on verses 9-16.

Preparation

1. Where was Peter? How was he feeling?
2. What did God show him?

Meditation

The day after Cornelius had his vision in Caesarea, Peter was on the roof of Simon's house in Joppa, probably observing the sixth hour of prayer (at noon), and he was getting hungry. God really knows how to get through to us.

A sheet was let down before Peter, teeming with all kinds of unclean animals, and he was instructed to eat of them (vv. 9-13). But he demurred, good Law-keeping believer that he was (v. 14).

Then the Lord gave His approval and explanation of what He has commanded, repeating the whole episode three times (vv. 15, 16). The experience left Peter wondering within himself about the meaning of it all (v. 17).

Why didn't God just give a verbal explanation to Peter like He did to Cornelius? Why all this drama? Throughout Scripture, God often used artistic forms to declare His will and manifest His glory – even to prepare His people for new stages of His relationship with them. If we have no place in our lives for the arts, for poetry, fine music, novels and stories, painting and sculpture, plays and operas, or for contemplating the creation, we're cutting ourselves off from areas of divine self-disclosure that God routinely loves to employ. Not all arts, of course; however, especially those wrought under the skilled hands of believing artists, God can use to make Himself and His glory known.

In this story God can be seen doing something He did frequently in the Old Testament and the teaching of Jesus. He employed a form of art in the service of the Gospel. God is the King of all the arts. He used them, and so should we.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian playwright and theatre director said, “A thousand words leave not the same deep impression as does a single deed.” Which has, over the years, morphed into “A picture is worth a thousand words.” So true.

C. S. Lewis maintains that a good writer “shows” instead of “tells”.

And God, the Supreme Author (Heb. 12.2), knew how to convey a completely new thought to Peter. God didn’t “tell this fact slant”, as Emily Dickinson promotes. No. He used every means possible to show Peter that nothing, and particularly no one, is common or unclean. All have the potential to be His children. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3.16). Whoever believes.

Peter was really hungry. And the menu of potential luncheon meats was extensive: all kinds of four-footed animals, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

God could have told Peter the truth of the new way. But it was so contrary to what he had been brought up to believe that it needed all these methods of conveyance. Hunger. A trance. A sheet full of animals. A voice from heaven. Repeated three times.

Luke, in the beginning of his gospel, writes about the importance of extensively documented information used to convey truth. “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account...that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed” (Lk. 1.1-4).

That we might know the certainty of the truth of the Gospel.

That Peter might know the certainty of the truth of a new focus for the Gospel. God, through His Word, has given us an “orderly account” of the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14.6). And the ultimate show not tell? “But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5.8).

For reflection

1. Why was it so important that God communicate to Peter in this vision?
2. How did this vision support what Jesus taught about the Kingdom?
3. How should Peter’s vision encourage us in working our Personal Mission Field?

Clearly Peter, the all-holy leader of the apostles, needed the divine revelation concerning the nations. He did not know that there is no distinction between circumcised and uncircumcised with respect to the faith. Furthermore, he did not clearly know that the Lord called for the nations to be made into disciples... Didymus the Blind (313-398), Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 10.10

Pray Psalm 147.19, 20.

Pray that God will move in you, and within all His people, to make us bolder and more consistent witnesses for the Lord.

Sing Psalm 147.19, 20.

(St. Ann: *Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*)

His Word He to His Church bestows – His promises and Law.

The Gospel to the Gentiles: Acts 10

No other nation God thus knows; praise Him with songs of awe!

3 Next Steps

Pray Psalm 113.1-3.

Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD!

Blessed be the name of the LORD

From this time forth and forevermore!

From the rising of the sun to its going down

The LORD's name is to be praised.

Sing Psalm 113.1-3.

(Armageddon: [*Who is on the Lord's Side?*](#))

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

From the time each morning when the sun is raised

to its evening waning, let His Name be praised!

Refrain vv. 1, 2

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!

From this day forever, magnify His fame!

Read Acts 10.1-23; meditate on verses 17-23.

Preparation

1. What happened as Peter was contemplating the vision he had seen?

2. What did God tell him to do?

Meditation

We left Peter perplexed about what he had seen, just as men arrived inquiring as to his whereabouts. Now comes a verbal revelation from God (v. 19), but only the next step, not the whole story. Faith requires obedience only for the *next* step.

God is the only one who needs to know how it all works out. Our duty, like Peter's, is to understand our every next step and take it, looking to the Lord and seeking His Kingdom. The men explained that Peter was to come to the home of Cornelius and speak. About what? Was there some problem with him being out of Jerusalem? Had authorities there sent to Cornelius to call and bring him back? What "words" was he supposed to give?

It will take an "Aha!" moment for Peter to connect all the dots, and that will only happen as God's purpose unfolds fully. Peter reckoned, "Better sleep on this for a night" (v. 23). And they did. Peter wasn't delaying; he was preparing.

We must step back a bit from this story of Cornelius and Peter to appreciate all that God had done and was doing. God was working in each man, in his own place and time, to prepare them for a glorious coming together in Caesarea, where He would fling wide the doors of His Kingdom to the entire Gentile world.

One next step at a time.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Peter's next step was an important one. And Peter was being obedient to God's calling. I think it is important to note that "some brethren from Joppa accompanied him." (Acts 10.23)

Just because Peter was using his common sense doesn't mean he wasn't trusting God completely. It does seem the part of wisdom when two unknown men and a soldier show up to take you somewhere, that you might have some friends accompany you. And who knows, maybe he was just taking them along for the exciting experience of faith that he suspected was about to happen? Either way, "Two *are* better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls, for *he has* no one to help him up" (Eccl. 4.9, 10).

For whatever reason, he didn't go alone. He brought some friends along. Friends who reminded him that God was with him. Friends who would be the physical manifestation of the Spirit of Jesus with him. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always..." (Matt. 28.19, 20). I AM *with* you always.

And here again, Jesus was with His disciples: "Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.' And they launched out" (Lk. 8.22). I AM *with* you in your travels, your going out and your coming in (Ps. 121.8).

Jesus, our Savior, is with us now and forever: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you..." (Jn. 14.27). I AM your peace and will be *with* you amidst life.

And His Presence *with* us might look a lot like an earthly companion.

Peter also could have been remembering Jesus' words, when He was preparing them for their Kingdom work: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles" (Matt. 10.16-18).

Peter, considering all the facts before him, and knowing God's calling to arise and go, "doubting nothing" (Acts 10.20), went with them. But accompanied by friends. A wise and understandable choice.

"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord *is*" (Eph. 5.15-17).

Circumspect next steps are steps well-taken (Prov. 22.3; 27.12).

For reflection

1. How do you determine each day what your next steps should be in seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God?
2. Why is it important that we have companions to encourage us in working our Personal Mission Field?
3. Whom will you encourage today to take the next step in working their Personal Mission Field?

God knows what services are before us, and how to prepare us; and we know the meaning of what he has taught us, when we find what occasion we have to make use of it. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 10.9-18*

Pray Psalm 113.4-9.

Pray that the grace of God might empower you today to touch other people with His love. Ask Him to use

you as His witness, both by your deeds and your words.

Sing Psalm 113.1, 2, 4-9.

(Armageddon: [*Who Is on the Lord's Side?*](#))

High above the nations, on Your glorious throne,
who is like You, Savior, ruling all You own?
Sovereign and all-knowing, over all above,
praise to You is owing for Your perfect love!

Refrain vv. 1, 2

Praise the Lord, O praise Him, all who know His Name!
From this day forever, magnify His fame!

Though You rule from heaven, looking down on earth,
Praise and thanks be given to Your holy worth!
Down You reach to touch us, clad in ash and dust,
Raising us with such as in Your favor trust.

Refrain

Seated now with princes 'round Your glorious throne,
we by grace are lifted to become Your own.
Barren women, joyous, glad their children bear;
joining in the chorus, they Your praise declare.

Refrain

4 Among Gentiles

Pray Psalm 67.1-3.

God be merciful to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us, *Selah*
That Your way may be known on earth,
Your salvation among all nations.
Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.

Sing Psalm 67.1-3.

(Solid Rock: *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*)

O bless us, Savior, by Your grace, and shine upon us with Your face,
that we Your way may loud proclaim and tell to all the earth Your fame!
Refrain v. 3 (5)
Let all the peoples praise You, Lord, rejoicing in Your holy Word!
Rejoicing in Your holy Word!

Read Acts 10.1-33; meditate on verses 24-33.

Preparation

1. How did Peter react upon entering Cornelius' home?
2. How did Cornelius explain his summoning Peter?

Meditation

How thoughtful of Cornelius to gather a group of family and friends for the occasion (vv. 24, 27) – more of God's sovereignty at work. We see the piety and humanity of both Cornelius and Peter as they meet, the one bowing as to worship, the other lifting him and saying that they are both men (vv. 25, 26). Peter seems to have been making some progress in understanding the Lord's will in this situation, as we see in verses 28 and 29.

Cornelius explained what gave rise to this occasion, as Peter listened intently, doubtless reflecting on his own experience two days previous. Cornelius still didn't know what Peter had been summoned to tell him, but he and his family and friends were all present, like some scene out of Agatha Christie, for the *reveal* that Peter would give. But Peter still didn't know why he was there (v. 29). He needed more information from Cornelius, and Cornelius was happy to oblige (vv. 30-33).

The ongoing work of Christ, advancing His Kingdom against darkness and the lie, is a process. We don't need to know the whole story of what God wants to do with us; we just need to know what's next, what God requires of us today, in this moment. Because, as we obey every *next step* the Lord shows us, the drama of redemption moves forward toward some denouement in our lives or in the life of someone in our Personal Mission Field.

Peter and Cornelius are finally together, yet neither one knows why, except that God had spoken to each. Everything will become clear in just a few moments.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Cornelius and his relatives and friends were an interesting bunch of people. They were Old Testament

believers, but not children of Israel. In fact, the antithesis. Gentiles.

But he was “a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.” (Acts 10.2) To say the least, amazing. Where did he go to church? Who accepted him into their group? How did he do all his acts of mercy? What was his training in all things religious?

But God, in His mercy and ever-watchful care, saw Cornelius, and said to him through the angel, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.” (Acts 10.4)

Whatever Cornelius already knew about God; he had no idea about salvation through Jesus or the gift of the Holy Spirit. He was merely looking for another good thing to do. “Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.” (Acts 10.33) At best, a new “To Do” list.

Cornelius and his relatives and friends are in for the best surprise of their lives! The best gift ever. It isn’t another thing for them to do, but a Savior to rescue them from themselves. The very same gift given to the Jewish people has now been given to the Gentiles. And they are the First Family! The recipients of every good gift shown to The Originals, now belong to them. Never again to be thought of as common or unclean.

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Is. 1.18). “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Ps. 51.2). “...Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word...” (Eph. 5.25, 26). “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1.9).

This was a specific New Testament message sent to Old Testament Gentiles. An oxymoron? An anomaly? No. Just God at work in His Personal Mission Field drawing all people unto Himself. “And I, if I AM lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (Jn. 12.32).

ALL.

For reflection

1. Do you think God might be preparing the hearts of some people in your Personal Mission Field, to make them open to hearing the Good News of Jesus? Explain.
2. What might be your next step in reaching out to someone with the Gospel?
3. How should you pray for the lost people in your Personal Mission Field? What do you expect God to do in them? In you?

Cornelius invites, but on the admonition of the angel; Peter goes down and meets the messengers, but instructed by a vision. On the one side was a glowing eagerness for the grace of the gospel; on the other an alacrity and promptitude on the part of one who thirsted for the salvation of all races. Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), Paraphrase of Acts 10:23. 22

Pray Psalm 67.4-7.

Pray for the nations of the world, that the Lord might send a fresh wave of Gospel witness over them all, and that multitudes might believe and be saved.

Sing Psalm 67.4-7.

(Solid Rock: My Hope is Built on Nothing Less)

Let all the nations gladly sing, and joyous praise before You bring;
You judge them by Your holy worth and guide the nations of the earth.

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Refrain v. 3 (5)

Let all the peoples praise You, Lord, rejoicing in Your holy Word!

Rejoicing in Your holy Word!

The earth in full its bounty yields – the blessed harvest of the fields.

We gather blessings from Your Word that all the earth may fear You, Lord.

Refrain

5 Aha!

Pray Psalm 22.23.

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

Sing Psalm 22.23.

(Darwall: [*Rejoice, the Lord is King*](#))

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

Read Acts 10.1-41; meditate on verses 34-41.

Preparation

1. What did Peter come to realize?
2. How did Peter describe himself?

Meditation

“OK, now I’ve got it.” Peter finally put it all together – Cornelius’ vision, his vision, his being sent for in Joppa. It all fell together in one sweet “Aha!” moment for the chief of the apostles. He blurted out what to him was the meaning of all this: God’s salvation is offered to people from all nations.

God, Peter explained, is not a God of partiality (v. 34). Verse 35 might be a little confusing, as it seems to indicate that God accepts us because of our works. But Peter is thinking after the fact, as it were – after believing, all who prove their faith by fearing God and doing good are accepted by Him, for *being* accepted by Him is the only way any of us can live this way.

Peter can’t resist a little pique in the presence of this Roman Centurion: “He is Lord of all” (v. 36). And since He is Lord, Caesar is not. That conviction will cost believers a great deal of suffering for the next two-and-a-half centuries.

The facts of Jesus’ earthly ministry would have been familiar to the people in Caesarea. They would have heard of Jesus, about the good works He did, and the power of God that was upon Him, but not about salvation or the Spirit or what any of this means. Peter emphasized the larger, spiritual backdrop for the work Christ began to do, and that was now ongoing – to overthrow and replace the dominion of the devil with good works and healing by the Spirit of the Lord (vv. 37, 38). Peter was getting revved up, and we can feel his enthusiasm growing as the lights came on in his soul and the prospects for the Gospel grew larger than ever in his mind (vv. 40, 41).

Peter was doing something quite extraordinary in sharing with this Gentile in his home. There will be ramifications. But we can see, in Luke’s account thus far, that God has been preparing for this moment. Peter did not hesitate to proclaim the Gospel, once he understood the situation for what it was. We need more of Peter’s understanding, boldness, and resolve in our own work of evangelism.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Partiality is defined as unfair bias in favor of one thing or person compared with another. Also known as

favoritism.

And now we are told that God shows no partiality (Acts 10.34). To anyone.

From the very start, God has not shown preference to the rich or the poor. In Exodus we are taught that “everyone...from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering to the LORD. The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give an offering to the LORD ...” (Ex. 30.15) Seems fair.

And God does not show preference based on looks. “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart’ (1 Sam. 16.7). Seems good.

And now God is not showing partiality, even toward His Own special people. The apple of His eye. (Deut. 32.10; Zech. 2.8) He is welcoming Gentiles to the Feast. (1 Cor. 5.7, 8)

Paul confirms this, saying, “God shows personal favoritism to no man.” (Gal. 2.6) “For the love of Christ compels us, because...He died for all...” (1 Cor. 5.14, 15).

God shows no partiality or favoritism. Therefore, we should do the same. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (Jms. 3.17). Seems fair.

“I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality” (1 Tim. 5.21). Seems good.

God’s inclusivity is all of grace. Love. Mercy. All are His people; all the sheep of His pasture (Ps. 100.3). And we all, are now free to pray with David, “Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust *in You* from those who rise up *against them*. Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me under the shadow of Your wings...” (Ps. 17.7, 8).

“Aha! Now, I’ve got it!”

For reflection

1. God is not partial when it comes to salvation. Why should we keep this in mind as we work our Personal Mission Field?
2. Do you think the people in your Personal Mission Field have heard about Jesus? Have you asked them?
3. How should you pray for the lost people in your Personal Mission Field?

These words of Peter have one sense or meaning . . . namely, that whether they are Jews or Gentiles, circumcised or uncircumcised, the important thing is that they fear God, believe in Christ Jesus and do right. Thus they are God’s children, well pleasing to him and heirs of his kingdom, according to the promise which he gave to Abraham saying, “In your seed” (which is Christ) “shall all the heathen be blessed.” Dirk Philips (1504-1568), *The Enchiridion: The New Birth and the New Creature. 6*

Pray Psalm 22.24-28.

Pray for a worldwide revival of spiritual life in the churches of the Lord, and for a great awakening on a universal scale as believers renew their witness for the Lord.

Sing Psalm 22.24-28.

(Darwall: [*Rejoice, the Lord is King*](#))

For He has not despised the anguish of our King,
nor from Him hid His eyes, Who knew such suffering.
Let praise arise from all who love and serve the Ruler of the skies!

Then all the poor shall eat and praise with us the Lord.
Forever we His praise repeat and trust His Word.
Praise God above, all you who keep His vows and who His mercies love!

All nations shall repent and hasten to the Lord;
all those to whom His truth is sent shall praise His Word.
The Lord is King! His sovereign rule on high now we His people sing!

6 The Whole Gospel

Pray Psalm 145.1-3.

I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.
Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness *is* unsearchable.

Sing Psalm 145.1-3.

(Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want*](#))

I will extol You, God, my King, and ever praise Your Name!
I bless You, Lord, for everything each day, and e'er the same!
Great are You, Lord, my praise I bring; unsearchable Your fame!

Read Acts 10.1-48; meditate on verses 42-48.

Preparation

1. What happened as Peter began to preach?
2. How did those who came with Peter respond? How did Peter respond?

Meditation

Peter's Gospel included the righteousness of Christ (good works) and the sacrificial atonement of the Lord (taking our debt upon Himself) (vv. 38, 39). Also, the resurrection (v. 40), for this is the key to the promise of forgiveness and life, and the warning of judgment to come (v. 42). And it was grounded in Scripture (v. 43).

Peter was the master evangelist. He didn't prepare this message. The Lord gave it to him, just as He had promised He would (Lk. 21.12-15). Peter had spent the last several years preparing, so he would be ready when needed (1 Pet. 3.15). He knew all the elements of the Gospel, but the Spirit gave Him just the words he needed on this occasion, with this person and his family and friends. Peter's witness flowed from his experience, his learning, and his sense of calling from the Lord.

The Spirit fell upon those who were hearing (v. 44), and they immediately began to speak in tongues (v. 46). This demonstration served two purposes. First, it established identity with Peter and those who were with him, since this had been their experience as well. Second, it confirmed the moving of God's Spirit to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Meanwhile, those who were with Peter were filled with wonder (v. 45). Wow! Right in front of their eyes God saved those they would have regarded as the least likely people ever to come to the Lord. God is sovereign in the *work* of the Gospel. He doesn't reveal everything to us, but He does give us clear instructions concerning our role in His work. Peter's readiness, obedience, and discernment must be ours as well, if we are to fulfill our calling as messengers in the ongoing work of Christ.

And God is sovereign in the *progress* of the Gospel and His Kingdom. We are responsible to hear God's instructions and follow them explicitly, day by day. God doesn't reveal His will through visions or dreams, not normally, anyway. But His Word is sufficiently clear: "You shall be My witnesses." Now we know what that requires.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

This was not a user-friendly presentation of the Gospel. It was not meant to soothe and comfort the Gentiles. It was preached to show the full extent of Jesus' suffering on the cross, His resurrection, the observed truth of the historicity of these facts, the Judgment to come for the living and the dead, and the abject need of every person alive to repent and be restored to God through Jesus Christ.

It was a message that resonated with Cornelius and his family and friends; and those who accompanied Peter. All the hearers were blessed. Some received the gift of the Holy Spirit; some already had the gift but were blessed to see others repent and receive the gift. All participated in the baptisms. All were affirmed and grew through Peter's preaching. "For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must* give account" (Heb. 4.12, 13).

Peter preached the whole truth. An inconvenient truth for some, and life-giving power for others.

I fear that many pastors today are remiss in preaching the whole truth to their sinful, and hard to please congregations. Paul spoke of this same fear: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4.3, 4 NASB).

This is why the qualifications for pastors are so Biblically stringent. "For a bishop/overseer/pastor must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict" (Titus 1.7-9).

It is so important that all the Gospel is preached. Not just the palatable part. Or the pleasing part. But the Gospel according to Peter, and Paul, and Jesus. The Gospel that causes the Holy Spirit to fall into a heart. That produces power and changed lives. That Gospel. Not the watered-down version that permeates so many churches today. Tickled ears never produce fruit. They just feel right jolly about themselves.

What a tragedy it would have been for Cornelius, for the Church, and for all of us who followed, if Peter had only preached a user-friendly sermon.

For reflection

1. How would you summarize the Gospel as Peter preached it?
2. Why do we need to preach the whole Gospel, and not just the "palatable" or "pleasing" parts?
3. What is the Spirit's role in communicating the Gospel? What is ours?

God declareth now by a new miracle, that the doctrine of the gospel is common as well to the Gentiles as to the Jews. And this is an excellent seal of the calling of the Gentiles; because the Lord would never have vouchsafed to bestow upon the Gentiles the graces of his Spirit, unless it had been to declare that even they were adopted together into the society of the covenant. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Acts 10.44

Pray Psalm 145.13-21.

Pray that God's Spirit would work in the hearts of people everywhere, to create in them a longing for life, peace, and joy, and to open them to the Good News of Jesus. Pray that God will revive us, His people, and help us to recover our calling as witnesses for the Lord.

Sing Psalm 145.13-21.

(Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want*](#))

Your Kingdom evermore shall be; You reign forever, Lord!
Your works You do so faithfully, according to Your Word.
The falling You uphold and the oppressed You rescue, Lord!

The eyes of all look up to You to meet our needs each day.
Open Your hand, provide the food we need, O Lord, we pray!
Kindness and righteousness You do, O Lord, in every way!

Be near to all who call on You; all those who fear You, bless.
Preserve all those whose love is true; save us in our distress.
Our mouths will speak with praise of You; Your holy Name we'll bless!

7 Next Steps Faith

Pray Psalm 25.4, 5.

Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You *are* the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.

Sing Psalm 25.4, 5.

(Festal Song: *Revive The Work, O Lord*)

Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O Lord!
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

Read Acts 10.1-48; meditate on verses 4-6, 19 and 20.

Preparation

1. What did God reveal to Cornelius? To Peter?
2. What was God's larger plan for them both?

Meditation

Paul had it just right when he wrote that we “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5.7). It pleases God to reveal the path He has marked out for us in small steps. He tells us just enough to let us know what we must do, but He doesn't tell us everything. Our duty is to keep walking, looking to His Word and listening for the guidance of the Spirit – in Whose power we walk (Acts 1.8; Gal. 5.16) – so that we faithfully accomplish every next step in our journey with Him.

This is precisely what we see in this beautiful story of Cornelius and Peter. God told neither of them what He was about to do. If He had, we can imagine (a) Cornelius might have said, “Whoa, hold on here”, and (b) Peter might have said, “Say what?” We saw God do the same thing with Saul and Ananias. God delights for us to move into His story by increments – here a little, there a little (Is. 28.10-13) – so that we share in the joy of seeing the divine economy unfold in all its beauty and the Kingdom advance by God's power (“Aha!”, vv. 34, 35).

Obedience is the key. We learn what our next steps must be each day (Matt. 6.34) by meditating on God's Word – as Cornelius and Peter did – and waiting on the Lord in prayer to discern how to fulfill what the Scriptures teach, one next step after the other. Cornelius and Peter obeyed explicitly as much as they understood of God's Word to them. That's all God asks of any of us.

If we're faithful in the small stuff and obedient in every next step, God will meet us, use us, bless us, and show us His glory in everything we do (1 Cor. 10.31). Let the Word of Christ indwell you richly, and do not grow weary in prayer (Col. 3.16; Lk. 18.1). Trust God to show you every next step in your journey of faith, and go forward in it boldly, joyfully, and expectantly.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“God delights for us to move into His story by increments...” Slowly. Fully. Trustingly. Faithfully. If we understood everything, it wouldn't be faith. And “without faith it is impossible to please Him.” (Heb. 11.6)

Our main goal in life must be to please Him, so we must have faith. We move into His story without fully understanding. In this God finds delight.

Jesus was the only person who knew the beginning and the end. Of His Own life. And even for Him, it was difficult.

He knew of His death, and the means needed to fulfill the prophecies. “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...smitten by God, and afflicted...He *was* wounded for our transgressions, He *was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Is. 53.4, 5). “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You* so far from helping Me, *and from* the words of My groaning?” (Ps. 22.1)

He knew His calling. And He sweat great drops of blood in anticipation of its fulfillment. He prayed: “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Lk. 22.42). “And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Lk. 22.44).

God in His mercy does not call us to bear the knowledge of our beginning and end. We could not carry the heavy weight of that burden.

But He does call us to follow Him. Incrementally. Daily. “For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand” (Ps. 84.10). “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6.11). “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Lk. 9.23). “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. 3.8).

*Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before
Every day with Jesus I love Him more and more.
Jesus saves and keeps me and He's the one I'm waiting for.
Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before.*
(Robert Claire Loveless, 1936)

“Trust God to show you every next step in your journey of faith, and go forward in it boldly, joyfully, and expectantly”! His grace is sufficient for that! (2 Cor. 12.9)

For reflection

1. What does it mean to walk by faith and not by sight?
2. How can we know what our next steps of faith should be?
3. Jesus saw the end of things from the beginning. So we don't have to. Looking to Him and seeing Him, we see all we need to see. How should knowing this guide your time of study in Scripture?

Doubtless Cornelius had true faith in God's word, as far as he understood it, though not as yet clear faith in Christ...Without dispute or delay Cornelius was obedient to the heavenly vision. In the affairs of our souls, let us not lose time. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 10.1-8*

Pray Psalm 25.11-22.

Ask God to direct your steps today, to keep you through temptations, sustain you amid trials, and guide you in the path of righteousness. Listen for His guidance every next step of the day, and be ready to show His love and share His truth as He leads.

Sing Psalm 25.11-22.

(Festal Song: Revive Thy Work, O Lord)

For Your sake, Lord, forgive. All they who fear You, Lord,
Shall know Your blessings day by day and follow in Your Word.

Your friends are they who fear and seek Your holy face;
Your covenant with them You share and save them by Your grace.

Be gracious, Lord, to me; my heart is weighed with woe.
My troubles and affliction see; let my transgressions go.

Consider all my foes, who hate me all the day;
and rescue my poor soul lest I should stumble in the way.

Preserve me in Your way, redeem Your people, Lord!
We wait for You and refuge seek in Your own faithful Word.

The Gospel to the Gentiles: Acts 10

For reflection or discussion

1. How is it apparent to you that God is working today to prepare lost people for the Gospel, and His people to proclaim it?
2. What do we mean by saying that God typically leads us only to our *next steps* in sharing the Good News? How do you expect to see this in your life?
3. How can we prepare daily to make sure we're ready, like Peter was, when opportunities to share the Good News arise?
4. What should local churches be doing to prepare their members for working their Personal Mission Fields as witnesses for the Lord?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 10?
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The Fellowship of Ailbe

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