

Acts 10:24-48

“Peace Through Jesus Christ”

Keeping the context as we fall into the flow of Acts Ch 10 you recall that ch 10 portrays Peter putting away prejudice ingrained in him by his Jewish tradition as he takes the keys of the kingdom of heaven and opens the door of salvation to the Gentiles. and It's not that God had previously sought to keep that door closed to the Gentiles but has recently had a change of heart. It's that the nation of Israel did have a grip on God's heart with His desire to save all people everywhere. But from the very inception of the nation of Israel God had spoken of His plan to use them to bless *all* the nations of the earth. He told Ab, “*I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*” Gen 12:2-3 So that from the very beginning its always been in the heart of God to reach out *to* and make a way *for* all of mankind (Jew or Gentile) to come to *know* Him and experience/enjoy the salvation provided *through* Him.

But as I mentioned last week somewhere down the line that rationale became distorted in their mentality, and rather than being the witness to the world God had called them to be, they began to believe that they alone had exclusive access to God and that you couldn't *be saved* unless you became a Jew via observing various ritualistic rites. Now Jesus sought to correct all that as He spoke to them of God's love for *the world*, how that He didn't come to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He told them, “*...other sheep I have which are not of this fold; (That is the fold of Israel) them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.*” John 10:16 He spoke of the fact of how that *many* would come from the east and the west and sit down in the kingdom of heaven with Ab, Isaac and Jacob. But that the sons of the kingdom would be cast in to outer darkness where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and He told them that right after responding to the faith of a Gentile Centurion there in Capernaum.

Well, ch 10 here deals with the faith of another Centurion, Cornelius, one who'd come to fear the God of Israel and had brought his household with him in his pursuit of God, he was devout, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. and About 3:00 one afternoon as he's there praying in his home an angel appears to him and says, “Cornelius, your prayers and alms have come up for a memorial before God. Send men to Joppa for Simon whose surname is Peter, He'll tell you what you need to do to be saved.”

Meanwhile, the next day as they're about to reach their destination, Peter goes up on the roof to pray, but he's hungry. and We all know how distracting that can be, so they begin to prepare the meal for him, no doubt he can smell it cooking and all, he falls into a trance. and He sees this sheet, or great sail like thing bound at the four corners descending down out of heave to him there on the earth. and In it are all sorts of animals, clean and unclean, creeping things, birds of the air.

The Lord speaks to him, “Rise Peter kill and eat.” He says, “No way, Lord, I’ve never eaten anything common or unclean, and I have no intentions of doing it now.” The Lord said, “What God has cleansed you must not call unclean.” 3x this happened and then the object was taken back up into heaven. Peter’s sitting there scratching his head, trying to figure out what that meant, how it was that the clean and unclean were on common ground. The fact that they were all taken to heaven by the same means, why was he exhorted to take in that which would otherwise been considered unclean? Just then there’s a yell from the gate, “Is there a Simon whose surname is Peter there?” The Holy Spirit speaks to Peter, “Listen, 3 men are seeking you, go down, and go with them doubting nothing, for I have sent them.”

I can’t prove it but I have a hunch that when Peter laid eyes on these guys, it blew his mind, “These are Gentiles, and the *Holy Spirit* sent them! How is that even possible?” and All of the sudden he began to connect the dots. He asks them why they’re there, invites them in and says, “We’ll leave in the morning.” and In that one action a landmark was established, a Jew inviting Gentiles into his house, unheard of, wouldn’t that defile you? It begins to ring in Peter’s mind, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.” He puts away his previous notions of prejudice and God’s about to use him in another incredible way. Those walls are coming down, believe me God wants to remove the walls of bitterness, unforgiveness, covetousness, pride, prejudice, lust, self-seeking, or whatever it may be that’s inhibiting Him from using *you* in an incredible way. But you have to be open to Him doing the work, flexible, yielded, moldable, this was an ongoing struggle for Peter, you see it surface there in the book of Galatians when Paul rebukes him for not wanting to eat with the Gentiles as if its not about grace. But Peter was open to God, teachable, God knows we’re not perfect, and that we don’t have struggles, but if we’re willing to let Him challenge us, and change us, He’ll use us for His glory.

Vs24-27

Its interesting that centuries before this there was another Jewish man in Joppa that God wanted to use to reach out to the Gentiles, his name was Jonah. But as to where Jonah sought to stand *against* his call to share God’s invitation of forgiveness to the Gentiles, Peter *opened up* to God’s desire to use his life. Jonah didn’t really share God’s heart for the lost, but Peter was willing to re-examine his position/prejudice and traditions in the light of God’s Word, he shared the heart of God for the lost. and Again the question that confronts you and me with regards to this principle is am I willing, are you willing to re-examine your position, your traditions, or any preconceived notions that you may have in the light of the Word of God in order that you might share in God’s heart for the lost in order that He might use your life in a greater capacity? Many of us come to Christ with baggage of some sort, we’ve been taught this, or raised with a certain mind set, be it about the bible, or personal convictions that many times have nothing to do with what the word of God says, and if anything it goes against the grain of God’s heart. Now God’s going to accomplish His will regardless, but we have a choice as to how available we are to Him in it. and It’s a simple matter of how willing we are to be emptied of self, that we might be filled with Him. Be open to God challenging you, changing you, placing His heart, where yours used to be. Is that easy? No, Is it worth it? Absolutely.

So we see sort of a double dynamic happening here, God is stretching Peter, taking him to the next level in his growth, but Cornelius is coming to Christ, seeking/finding, asking/receiving, both of them being given greater light that they might walk therein.

We're given a little more light even with regards to the character of Cornelius, last week we took note of the fact that he seemed to lead a more godly life than much of the body of Christ today, and he doesn't even know Jesus yet. The record shows that he was devout, that he feared God with his whole household, that he was a cheerful and generous giver, a man of prayer. Here we see that he took the Word of God at face value and acted upon it, he trusted in the Word of God. and That's demonstrated in the fact that he was *waiting* for them. That word "waiting" speaks of "anticipation" and "expectation." Which means that when he was told that Peter would come, he believed that Peter would come, he didn't say, "Well, Jews hate Gentiles and I'll send for him but I don't really expect that he'll show." He *anticipated* his arrival, and *expected* to hear a message. As a matter of fact he was so confident in what was about to transpire that he called for all of the relatives and close friends that he had in the neighborhood to come and hear the message.

We pointed out Wednesday evening the fact that the way that I know that you *believe* the Word of God is based upon how you *respond* to the Word of God. Whether you act *upon* it, take heed *to* it once you've come into the light *of* it. Or if it just seems to bounce off of you like a rock skipping across the pond never being allowed to sink down in and permeate *through* you working its purpose *into* you. Cornelius was one who was ready to respond positively to the Word of God. He also obviously had a real care/concern and compassion for the lost, he loved his friends, loved his family, his relatives and all, so when the word of God was about to come to him, he made sure his friends and family was there to hear it as well. He has a burden for his friends and his family, he's unashamed of the Word of God, wants them to hear it, be transformed by it. We might say he's being a witness even before he gives his own heart to Christ, it's like he's doing the work of an evangelist, grabbing his friends, grabbing his family, saying, "You've got to come with me and hear God's Word." When's the last time you invited someone to come and hear the Word of God with you?" Cornelius was unashamed, maybe you don't feel like you can really share effectively yourself (I would say that where you're weak God will show Himself strong on your behalf just step out by faith) but at the very least you can say, "Hey, come check out where I fellowship, its pretty cool they just go through the bible." and You can bring them into what God's doing in your own life. God help us that we'd have compassion, and be concerned for the lost.

Before we move on we want to see what's happening here in vs 25. This angel of God spoke of Peter which no doubt communicated to Cornelius, "This must be a special man of God. At the very least he's going to give me a message *from* God." So Peter comes in, and Cornelius falls on his face, begins to worship Peter, but in vs26 Peter lifts him up, and says, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." "Hey, I'm made from the same clay you are, don't place me on the platform worthy of worship!"

It's so easy for us to elevate the men that God uses, but even *the best* men of God are *at best*, men. and The bible teaches that there's only one that's worthy of our praise, worthy of all honor, worthy of our worship and that's of course God Himself. Consequently whenever you find a man of God in the scriptures being worshipped, they quickly refuse it.

You recall when Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra (we'll see it in ch 14) but they sought to make gods out of them, but they began to tear their clothes saying, "Men why are you doing these things, we're men of like nature just like you, worship God who created the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them."

Whenever you see an angel being worshipped, *they* quickly refuse. Remember there in the book of Rev, John tells us that when he saw the angel "...*I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!"* Rev 19:10

So the bible is very clear, we're to worship the Lord our God and Him *only* shall we serve. Which is quite interesting considering that Jesus commonly and with consistent regularity received the worship of man. When Jesus was born we find that the Magi worshipped Him, in Matt Ch 9, Jairus worshipped Him, in ch 8 a leper worshipped Him, in Ch 15 a Gentile woman worshipped Him, there at the Great commission all 11 disciples worshipped Him. He never once rebuked anyone, or rejected anyone's worship of Him, but rather He received it openly. That can only mean one thing, Jesus was more than a man, He was God incarnate. You remember the words of Thomas, he may've had some doubt, but when he came around it was full circle, as He fell at the feet of Jesus and there proclaimed, "*My Lord and my God!*" John 20:28 Jesus didn't correct Thomas at that point, why? Because he was right Jesus is God. But Peter was not; therefore he stood Cornelius back up, went in and found everyone there just waiting on him.

Vs28-33

Peter says, "Look, I've got to be honest with you, under normal circumstances I wouldn't be here and you know it. But has shown me that I'm not to call any man common or unclean." You see he made the connection, he was teachable, their law didn't specifically state what he's reporting here, but that was the general consensus of the Jewish nation and what they lived by. and Really *there was* a connection between unclean foods and unclean people, if you ate what was unclean you were unclean, so there was a connection between the otherwise unclean animals in the vision, and the otherwise unclean people that Peter was to minister to. But Jesus tried to make it clear to them that it wasn't what was in their stomach that made people unclean; it's what's in their heart. He said, "*...whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?* And He said, *'What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.'*" Mark 7:18-23

So certain foods might make you *healthier*, but they won't make you *holier*. Be that as it may Peter tells them that he came as soon as he was called for so he asks them straight out, why he was called for? At 1st you read that and you think, "What do you mean, 'for what reason have you sent for me?'" But this may simply be sensitivity on his part, I'm sure he's prepared to preach the gospel, he's ready to give a defense for the reason of the hope that lies with in *him*. So though he's prepared to preach, he doesn't presume, maybe someone is sick, and God would have him minister that way, through prayer, perhaps raising them up. That's what happened in the last city, the Holy Spirit didn't tell him why he was going, just that he was to go. and We've spoken of this before, we want to know it all before we commit, but God only leads us one step at a time, and when we're faithful in step one, He'll show us step 2. Peter just steps out in obedience and goes with them, so it stands to reason now that he's there he wants to know why.

Cornelius recounts the chain of events leading to that point, in vs 30 we're told that he was *fasting* as well, denying his flesh, while seeking the Lord. By the way that's the point of fasting, its pointless to fast while you go to the movie, or play a video game, or watch TV, or something along those lines, because though you're seeking to deny the flesh in a literal sense from food, you're just feeding the flesh in another sense through entertainment. The point of a fast is to deny the flesh and seek the Lord, that's what Cornelius was doing here, he was seeking the Lord, fasting, praying. We don't know what he was praying but it would seem to me that he was probably praying something to the effect that God would just show him how to be right with Him, and how he could lead a life that was pleasing/acceptable before Him. So God is going to have Peter share Christ with him, because that's how we lead lives pleasing *before* God, acceptable *to* God, by being robed in the righteousness of Christ. So Peter's coming to him is God's answer to his prayer, but we should note that even though Cornelius was an honorable man in every respect of the word, it still wasn't enough. He still needed to receive Jesus as his personal Lord and Saviour if he was to be found righteous in the site of God.

Vs 33 shows us his diligence and ready compliance again with God's Word, he was given an instruction and followed it immediately. and Here we find every preacher/bible teachers dream, a congregation of people who are prepared receive and ready to respond to God's Word. They've come to that place excited about what's going to happen, what they're going to hear, they're looking forward to the message. He says, "We're all here before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God." They're ready to receive with meekness, the implanted word, which is able to save their souls.

Vs34-35

Few things quickly here 1st of all what's the truth that Peter perceives? That God shows no partiality, that should be underlined in your bible. Social/economic status, ethnicity, gender, none of those things matter to God, God sees one race, the human race and we're all sinners who've fallen short of the glory of God.

It's interesting again that this is a new revelation for him because though you'll find scriptures laced through the NT to this effect the fact that God is not partial is not a NT concept. Deut 10:17 says, "*For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.*" The Law commanded that *they* weren't to be partial, yet if a Jew married a Gentile, the Jewish community would have a funeral for the Jew and consider him/her dead.

But now the lights are coming on for Peter, and he realizes that it doesn't matter which nation you're from, if you fear God and as demonstrated by your life, God will make Himself responsible to lead you to Christ. The point here is that which we discovered last week, if you walk in the light that you've been given as it pertains to who God is, God will grant you greater light. But you have to be careful to keep the context here or else you might lean towards works righteousness, but if that were the case, Cornelius already had that whipped. Peter is simply saying here that if you fear God and seek after God, it doesn't matter who you are where you've been, or what you've done, God is going to draw near to you and make Himself accountable to save you. You see before Peter thought that even the great commission was to be taken in the context of going through the ceremonial rites to be recognized as a Jew, now he realizes what it means that it's not the outward that God is concerned with it's the inward man of the heart.

Vs36-38

Look at vs 36, what's the 2 key statements in that vs, "Peace through Jesus Christ" "He is Lord of all." You can never know true peace until you make peace with God, and the way you make peace with God is through Jesus Christ The bible says, "*For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*" Col 1:19-20 There is no other name under heaven, given among men by which we must be saved. "He is Lord of all." Jew, Gentile, things terrestrial, celestial, things natural and supernatural, He is Lord of all. The Word of God is clear, "*...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" Phil 2:10-11

God declared Him His only begotten Son, the Messiah of the Israel the Saviour of the world when He anointed Him with the Holy Spirit at His baptism. John the Baptist bearing witness when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." and What was the result of the Holy Spirit coming upon Him? He went about doing good, what's going to be the end result of the Holy Spirit indwelling, in filling, and overflowing through your life, you're going to go about doing good. Jesus said a good tree, bears good fruit, and the Holy Spirit's anointing *upon* your life will bring about good fruit *from* your life, because God is with you. and Peter is here speaking of the *man* of Christ, the *mission* of Christ, and the *message* of Christ. Who He is, (God's Messiah) what He did (Gave His life for us on the cross), and How we're to respond (By believing in Him to receive the remission of sins.)

Vs39-43

Peace through Jesus Christ, it's not an act of baptism or doing good things, its by faith in Jesus Christ that we receive the remission of sins. and How important it is that we be reconciled to Christ, because it is He who is ordained by God to be judge of the living, and of the dead, its interesting that Jesus was judged by man, yet He's the judge *of* man. We all have a judgment to make of Jesus Christ but really the judgment we make of Him, only determines our own judgment, in judging Him we judge ourselves.

To reject Him is to be rejected by Him, to deny Him is to be denied by Him, but to receive Him is to be received by Him, but make no mistake every individual who ever has, or is, or will walk the face of this earth will stand before Christ to be judged by Him.

I'm so thankful that when He reviews my slate it come up clean whiter than snow because I've made peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work of the cross.

Vs44-48

No doubt helping to ground them in the Word of God, and instructing them in the Lord, but I love the fact that as soon as they heard that all they had to do to be made right with God, to receive the forgiveness of sins was to believe in Jesus, they were immediately saved. That's all they needed to hear, they were white for the harvest, Peter was going to continue on, but they didn't need an altar call, they gave their hearts to Christ right there. and It blew these guys away because they hadn't gone through the rituals of Judaism, they were full on Gentiles, and yet God received them just as they were. and Here's another amazing thing, God will receive you, just as *you* are. God saved them through simple faith, before they were baptized or anything else. How can you say that God gave them His Holy Spirit yet they weren't saved yet because they hadn't been baptized? They were magnifying God, speaking in tongues, it was like Pentecost revisited. They were received by God in an exact manner, on equal par as were the Jews. Peter's all, "They've received the greater (the Holy Spirit) who can forbid the lesser? (Baptism)" All of his Jewish buddies just stood there speechless, blown away by the work of God in these guys lives. and You know what? God wants to blow people away by His work in your life too. Why resist the work of the Holy Spirit in your life? You may not speak in tongues, but He'll certainly use your tongue to magnify Him, preaching peace through Jesus Christ

Maybe you don't have the peace that passes understanding guarding your heart and your mind, God wants to give it to you, but it comes through Jesus Christ Be reconciled to God today, let Him forgive you of your sin and wash you white like snow. As far as the east is from the west, that's how far He'll remove your sin from you, an immeasurable distance as by the blood of Christ, so if Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart, do yourself a favor and receive Him in.

Prayer points: God we want to magnify You with our tongues, to speak healing into peoples lives, not hurt, or harm, help us to share in Your heart for the lost, to be caring concerned and compassionate towards not only our bros and sisters, but those who don't know You, who need to know You. and If there's something in us that needs to be redirected, perhaps a tradition, an aspect of our upbringing, a preconceived notion, Lord lead us in Your ways, that we might walk in the light of Your Word.