

From Jews and Samaritans to the Gentiles

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[0 : 00] It's so great to, I got to sit toward the back today, I'm so glad I did. It's such a beautiful and glorious sight to watch the saints worshiping the Lord side by side again, and it brings me so much joy to be here to worship with you.

It says in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, 17 to 19, but since we were torn away from you brothers for a short time, in person, not in heart, we endeavor the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because we wanted to come to you, I, Paul, again and again, but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy. You are our glory and joy, and it is something that we have longed for this day, to be able to see each other face to face again, and to worship side by side again.

And for those of you who are still away, we will continue to eagerly desire to see you face to face, and to try to stay, though we might be torn from each other in person, make sure that it's not in heart, that we are far away from each other.

And thank you for joining us for worship this evening. Please turn with me to Acts chapter 10. We're going to go through the entire chapter and go past that to chapter 11, verse 18 today.

[1 : 41] And let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, Heavenly Father, we come with a posture of submission to sit under the reading and preaching of your word.

We want to be challenged and comforted by your word. We want the desires of our heart, the concerns of our minds, reflect your love for your people, your love for the lost.

And so we pray that you would impart that to us in your word and by your spirit.

Speak to us, O Lord. Your servants are listening. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, our rock and redeemer.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Acts chapter 10, starting in verse 1, going to chapter 11, verse 18.

At Caesarea, there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people and prayed continually to God.

[3 : 45] About the ninth hour of the day, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, Cornelius. And he stared at him in terror and said, What is it, Lord?

And he said to him, Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter.

He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner whose house is by the sea. When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him.

And having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa. The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

And he became hungry and wanted something to eat. But while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth.

[4 : 43] In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter. Kill and eat. But Peter said, By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

And the voice came to him again a second time, What God has made clean, do not call common. This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what division that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate and called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was lodging there.

And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.

And Peter went down to the men and said, I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming? And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.

[6 : 04] So he invited them to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. And on the following day they entered Caesarea.

Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him.

But Peter lifted him up saying, Stand up, I too am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered.

And he said to them, You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.

So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I asked them why you sent for me. And Cornelius said, Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour.

[7 : 08] And behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter.

He is lodging in the house of Simon a tanner by the sea. So I sent for you at once and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore, we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.

So Peter opened his mouth and said, Truly I understand that God shows no partiality. But in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

As for the word that he sent to Israel preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all. You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.

He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.

[8 : 20] They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. But God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people, but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him, all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.

For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days. Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.

[9 : 35] So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him saying, You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them. But Peter began and explained it to them in order.

I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners and he came down to me. Looking at it closely I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air and I heard a voice saying to me, Rise Peter, kill and eat.

But I said, By no means, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth. But the voice answered a second time from heaven, What God has made clean do not call common.

This happened three times and all was drawn up again into heaven. And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. And the Spirit told me to go with him, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me and we entered the man's house. And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter.

[10:46] He will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household. As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as on us at the beginning.

And I remember the word of the Lord how he said, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?

When they heard these things, they fell silent and they glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.

There's a, there's a, the Korean word for we is uri, which interestingly enough is also the same word for fence.

or a, a pen that you keep your animals in. It's used to keep your animals in and keep intruders out. I think it's related for a reason because the word connection recognizes the fact that in order to define we, you need to define they.

[12:09] You need to define yourselves, your identity in contradistinction to what is, what doesn't belong to that group, what is outside of it. And, and even though that's a necessary marker for defining who, who we are, sometimes, unfortunately, even within the family of God, we can, as simple people, draw lines where there shouldn't be lines.

Erect fences where there shouldn't be fences. the church of God transcends racial, ethnic, political, and cultural boundaries.

We can yield to our worst tribalistic instincts and impulses and divide amongst ourselves at times.

And this passage is a reminder that, of the radical unity of the spirit that we have in Jesus.

And it teaches us that God, without distinction, grants forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who believe in Jesus Christ. So first, we're going to talk about how God sends His witnesses to all nations, how God grants forgiveness of sins to all who believe, God gives His Holy Spirit to all who believe, and how God receives into fellowship all who believe.

So how God treats us without distinction. We've come to, this is a momentous moment in church history, and it begins with a man named Cornelius. He's described in chapter 10, verse 1, as a centurion of what was known as the Italian cohort.

[13:39] A centurion was an officer in the Roman army in charge of 80 soldiers. And this detail tells us that he was a Gentile and he was a Roman citizen because that was required to be a part of the Roman cohort.

Verse 2 tells us that he was also a devout man who feared God with all his household and gave alms generously to the people and prayed continually to God. So that he feared God is kind of a technical phrase.

It means that he was a God-fearer. That's the term that the Jews used to refer to Gentiles who have not fully converted to Judaism by getting circumcised, but nevertheless revered and worshipped the God of Israel.

And so Cornelius was a man who had a humble disposition toward God. He was the ideal God-fearer who prayed and generously gave to people in need. And his piety is emphasized throughout the whole chapter.

It's mentioned again and again, but this is not to imply that Cornelius deserved God's grace in salvation due to his devotion. That's not the point of the passage.

[14:43] Rather, the point is that even a Gentile, if he turns to God as Cornelius does, may be saved. Luke drives this home explicitly, drives this home in verse 35.

He says, in every nation and anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him. Cornelius already believed in Israel's God, but he had never heard of the person and work of Jesus. And because of that deficiency, he had no hope for salvation and he had no hope for inclusion among God's people apart from getting circumcised and becoming a Jew.

But God, who has heard his prayers and has remembered his almsgiving, paves the way for Cornelius to hear the good news of Jesus Christ and be saved and to be included among God's people as a Gentile.

This episode, then, is yet another example of how nothing significant in the book of Acts happens apart from prayer. Cornelius prays, God answers that prayer, Peter, and later Peter is praying and God appears to him in a vision.

[15:56] Some of you here and some of you may be listening outside are not yet a follower of Jesus. You have not come to believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.

But if you sincerely seek God as Cornelius did, if you turn to him, then surely God will not turn you away. God answers Cornelius' prayers by sending an angel to Cornelius in a vision and he instructs him to send for Simon Peter who was residing in Joppa at the time with Simon the Tanner.

And while Cornelius' three envoys are traveling toward Joppa in response to the vision, God prepares Peter by revealing to him another vision and while Peter was praying, it says in verse 10 that he became hungry and wanted something to eat.

That's a sensation we're all familiar with and when we're hungry, I tend to dream of my favorite foods, my daydream about my favorite foods. But that's not what happens to Peter.

It says in verses 11 to 14 that Peter fell into a trance and saw the heavens open and something like a great sheet descending being let down by its four corners upon the earth and it were all kinds of animals, reptiles, birds of the year.

[17:13] And there came a voice to him saying, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. Peter sees specifically unclean animals that he has, as an observant Jew, never before eaten in his life on this sheet lowered from heaven and he's commanded by this voice to eat it.

In the Old Testament, God's people were taught to distinguish between the holy and the common, between the clean and the unclean. The holy places, the holy vessels, and the holy people were all things that were specially set apart for God.

They were consecrated to him. And things and people that were consecrated to God were not to be defiled or made unclean. So they were not allowed to touch things that were deemed unclean.

They were not allowed to eat things that were deemed unclean. And so when Peter saw in his vision the unclean animals that he had never before eaten and he's commanded to kill it and eat it, he would have had a visceral reaction against it.

Think of the time when you were first invited to something, to eat something that you had never before considered eating. Maybe chicken feet, fried tarantulas, maggot cheese, live octopus, I think these are all real foods.

[18:37] Or haggis, the Scottish pudding made of sheep organs. And the wills had that before. Even the thought of such foods might make you gag if you have never even considered eating them.

If you've never been exposed to them. The command to kill and eat these unclean foods would have elicited a similar reaction from Peter these foods have never even entered Peter's mouth and as far as Peter was concerned these animals were not food.

They were not fit for human consumption. And so he emphatically responds in verse 14, by no means Lord for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

But God shows Peter the same vision a second time and then a third time and the voice says what God has made clean do not call common. The threefold repetition of the dream shows that this is a certain revelation of God.

If you remember from the story of Joseph when he interprets Pharaoh's dream in Genesis 41 he says that the fact that God showed Pharaoh the same dream twice means that God has decided for certain that he's going to do this.

[19:51] So the three time repetition this is really something that God has decided it's going to happen this is what he is doing. he has made clean what was formerly considered unclean.

That's the same phrase that is used in the Old Testament to describe the purifying rituals by which priests made things that are formerly unclean clean again. The meaning of this vision is made clear by the event that follows.

It says in verses 17 to 20 Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean behold the men who were sent by Cornelius having made inquiry for Simon's house stood at the gate and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there.

And while Peter was pondering the vision the spirit said to him behold three men are looking for him rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation for I have sent them. Three times Peter

saw this vision of the sheep being lowered from heaven and not coincidentally there are three men three Gentile men who are standing at his door calling upon him.

By God's sovereign guidance right at the conclusion of the vision is when they knock on the door and they come to him and the spirit prompts Peter to go down and accompany them without hesitation.

[21 : 09] If you're using the English Standard Version of the Bible ESV you'll notice that there's a footnote next to the phrase without hesitation and if you follow that footnote to the bottom of the page it says quote making no distinction so that's the more literal translation in fact the same word is translated making no distinction later in verse 12 of chapter 11 so Peter is not to discriminate against these men because they are Gentiles he is to accompany them making no distinction between Jew and Gentile that's the command don't it's not just don't hesitate make no distinction between Jew and Gentile that this is the real point of the vision is seen clearly in the ensuing verses in verse 23 Peter invites them to be his guests despite the fact that as Peter says in verse 28 it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation they didn't want to be defiled Jews avoided sharing foods with Gentiles because of their idolatry they didn't want to be defiled by that also because

Gentiles often ate unclean foods were in contact with unclean things that could be defiling for the Jew and so just as when God gave the dietary laws in the Old Testament in the first place he wasn't so much concerned about food as he was about distinguishing and setting apart the people of God marking them out especially set apart from the other nations what he's doing here is similar he is saying that not just that the foods are declared clean but that it is no longer necessary to mark out Jews as separate from the Gentiles that the Gentiles have been declared clean and that's why Peter is to accompany them without making a distinction now this is a fulfillment of the verse that we've been seeing play out throughout the book of Acts again and again in Acts chapter 1 verse 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth so the gospel has reached the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea it has reached the Samaritans in Samaria and now it's finally reaching the Gentiles in the end of the earth

Revelation 5 verse 9 teaches us that Christ by his blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and every language and people and nation there are people whom God has appointed for salvation among every tribe people and nation and language this is why we cannot complete the Great Commission unless we go to the nations to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people groups and the ethnic groups that have not heard it this movement of the gospel toward the Gentiles is a momentous development in the history of the church and it would not have happened without God driving these events notice how he's the one who takes initiative he's the one who guides the process he's the one who shows the visions to make this series of unexpected events happen but as he does that it doesn't merely show

God's sovereignty it also shows human responsibility in the same way early in chapter 9 God prepared both Saul and Ananias by showing them visions but then he sent Ananias to minister he now sends Peter to minister to Cornelius and his companions and it's not uncommon for God to reveal himself in visions in this way nowadays as well according to a report published by Mission Frontiers magazine out of 600 Muslim converts to Christianity 25% experienced a dream or a vision that led to their conversion there's actually an entire book just cataloging dreams and visions like this entitled dreams and visions is Jesus awakening the Muslim world often there's a pattern they see a picture of Jesus or an angel telling them follow me and they're led to a Christian who can share the gospel with them or to a church or to someone who can give them a Bible one particularly dramatic story is about a migrant family that was traveling by boat from Turkey to Greece let me read it for you not too long it says on the way they lost their seven year old daughter into the water everyone in the crowded boat was looking for her but couldn't find her suddenly she appeared on the other side of the boat saying over and over a man who walked on the water took me and brought me to the other side of the boat the parents dismissed her words as silly upon arriving on the island of Lesbos they met a Christian who made a fire and offered to talk to them that day without knowing what happened he asked if they would like to know about a God who walked on water they started crying the man had never used that illustration in evangelism but that morning he felt like he had to they asked him who are you to which he replied

I'm a Christian they said what do you mean walk on the water he opened the Bible and read the story of Jesus walking on the water they continued crying our daughter fell off the boat they explained we thought she was crazy because she was dry on the other side we didn't understand it but she kept on saying it was a man who walked on the water that took me to the other side to this day God is sovereignly saving people to this day God sometimes uses dreams and visions to reveal himself to people and that's his gracious providence but God doesn't do everything by himself God could have shown Cornelius everything he needed to know in his vision to be saved but he doesn't do that he takes the longer and harder route of involving Peter having Cornelius send for Peter and having Peter travel to Caesarea to preach the gospel to Cornelius once again this is a pattern that we see over and over again in the book of

[27 : 32] Acts just as God used Ananias to preach the gospel to Saul and even in the story I shared Jesus walking on the water Jesus doesn't tell them everything right then he prepares them to meet the family the Christian who will then open the Bible and share the gospel with them this is the normal way in which God works through his people look with me at Cornelius' initial encounter with Peter in verses 24 to 26 it says Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends when Peter entered Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him but Peter lifted him up saying stand up I too am a man Cornelius was so eagerly awaiting Peter's arrival he had called together all of his relatives and close friends because he wanted them to hear this important message from God as well and Cornelius falls prostrate at his feet at Peter's feet and worships him and this is a revealing detail Cornelius thought that the person who would be conveying to him so important a message from God himself the saving news of

God must either be God himself or at least a divine figure an angelic being of some kind maybe so he bows down to worship Peter and Peter lifts him up saying stand up I too am a man this is something that we take for granted sometimes but the good news of Jesus Christ that we have been entrusted with to share with the nations to share with our neighbor is the message from the king of kings it is the most important message you have never received a more important message you will never be entrusted with a more important message than this 1 Peter 1 12 says that this good news this message is something that even the angels long to look at that expression describes them bending over to gaze at something that they don't quite have full access to that message that even angels are not fully privy to is given to us entrusted to us to be the stewards and the messenger of it in 2019

I saw a British war film entitled 1917 you guys see some of you guys see that it takes place during World War I I don't see that many movies so you guys probably know all the movies I've seen after the Germans are kind of retreating from the western section of the western front the British army has been ordered to go and continue to press the attack to pursue the retreating German army but the aerial reconnaissance finds that actually the Germans were only feigning retreat they were not actually retreating they were instead creating a new front line and assembling and gathering all their troops and they were just waiting for the British troops to charge at them so that they can just demolish them with heavy artillery they were just waiting on them the aerial reconnaissance finds this out however they can't let the people in the front lines know because the communication line has been broken it's damaged and so what the general does is he appoints two soldiers William Schofield and Tom Blake to relay the order calling off the attack to Colin McKenzie at the front lines this is an urgent message because it could mean the life or death of 1600 men among whom is Tom Blake's brother Joseph Blake the film is shot gorgeously and it seems like one continuous take almost so you're following intimately these two men from the beginning of their journey to the end and as they're going it's a harrowing journey they have to escape from an exploding tripped wire they get damaged their arm gets damaged they are running away from people shooting at them and Tom Blake actually gets stabbed by a German soldier and he dies and they continue to go and more and more bad things happen he has to swim through a river he falls over a waterfall and he gets knocked unconscious at some point and at some point he's tempted to just abandon his mission and stay in hiding with the

French woman that he finds but he keeps getting up and he keeps going because even though he's just a lowly soldier really unimportant in the grand scheme of things but because he's carrying an urgent and important message from the general of the army because precious lives are at stake and at the end when he can't reach the colonel at the end in the front lines he climbs up above the trenches and while the enemies are firing at him and runs parallel in order to reach the colonel to

relay this news and to his relief he finds that Joseph Blake is alive if that's how a man can be focused on the mission to rescue and save the temporal lives of people how much more should we who carry not the message of a man but the message of God himself the Lord of hosts the Lord of the armies how much more should we be focused on this mission how much more than should we who carry not the message merely of temporal rescue but the message of eternal salvation obey our king's orders with utmost dedication

[33 : 34] God sends his witnesses to all nations a study by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity estimates that 87% of all Hindus Muslims and Buddhists have limited if any contact with a Christian Operation World estimates that a quarter of the world population approximately 2 billion people have not had the gospel presented to them in a way that they can appreciably understand and respond to the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention estimates that there are approximately 7,400 unreached people groups meaning that these people groups have no indigenous church among them to share the gospel with and there are approximately 3,000 unengaged people groups meaning they don't even have a gospel witness among them let alone a church Jesus said in Matthew 24,14 and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come we are living in the end time since the first coming of

Jesus but the end Jesus' second coming has not yet come and that means our mission that our Lord Jesus has given us is not yet finished sometimes I think we can live like we've already finished the race and we're just waiting for the award ceremony if you're alive your race is not over the end is not here that means our task is not finished there are people like Cornelius among all the nations who are waiting for someone to proclaim the good news to them some of them may already have seen a vision from God to prepare them and may and God may send them to you to open up God's word to them to preach Jesus to them so let's go obediently and courageously and humbly to them as Peter did as errand runners as servants as messengers that's my first and longest point God sends his witnesses to all nations my second point is that God grants forgiveness of sins to all who believe Cornelius says to Peter in verse 33 now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord after this invitation Peter begins to preach in verses 34 to 35 truly I understand that God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him he reiterates this idea in verse 43 everyone who believes in him in Jesus receives forgiveness of sin through his name there is no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile in the Old Testament times God had consecrated the Jews as his special people because he had chosen to send his Messiah the Savior as a Jew from among the Jewish people Jesus Christ in order to preserve that line from Abraham to David in order for that message of salvation that faith and relations with God to be preserved it was important for in the

Old Testament God's people not to mix with the nations not to intermarry with the nations lest their faith be diluted but that the purpose the reason for God setting apart of Israel was so that from Israel from the Jews might come the Savior who will save all the nations that has been the plan from the beginning whether you're in America Asia or Africa Gentile you need the gospel of Jesus Christ whether you're white brown or black whether you're a Jew or a Gentile you need the gospel of Jesus Christ this message is further described in verse 36 as the good news of peace through Jesus Christ what is this good news of peace in verse 38 Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit he says he was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power by God anointing represents kingship he's being anointed as the messianic king that's why Jesus is lord of all not just over the Jews but of all the nations when rebels and usurpers and enemies vie for supremacy within a nation there's chaos turbulence and war but it's peace and that's what that's the peace that this passage is talking about when Jesus comes to usher in the kingdom of God he sits on the throne and he brings peace to all of his subjects and that's a key concept in the gospel of Luke it says in Luke 2 14 glory to God in the highest and on earth peace on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased that was at the time of Jesus birth God Jesus brings peace on earth but at the time of his death during his triumphal entry it says in Luke 19 38 blessed is the king who comes in the name of the

[39 : 09] Lord peace in heaven and glory in the highest Jesus brings peace both to earth and to heaven because he is the one mediator between God and man he the one who makes peace with God possible for us for humankind Jesus established his reign and brought his peace not by

crushing the rebels with force but by ruling the rebels with grace by dying on the cross to bear the curse and punishment that these sinners deserved that's what verses 39 to 40 are talking about he says they put him to death by hanging him on a tree but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear the expression hanged on a tree reflects Deuteronomy 21 22 to 23 which states that a person who is hanged on a tree is cursed by God every single human being is a rebellious sinner each of us has lived for ourselves and has forsaken our creator his purposes and priorities for our lives and for this reason we are all under

God's curse apart from Jesus and being under God's curse entails condemnation and defilement uncleanness it means utter rejection being cut off from God but Jesus who never sinned Jesus who never was defiled redeems us from that condemnation under the law by becoming a curse for us he becomes the curse for us all the shame all the guilt all the condemnation and punishment that should have fallen on us now falls on Jesus on the cross we warred against him but he brought us peace we should have been punished we should have died but instead Jesus dies to give us eternal life this is the good news that we call the gospel without which no one can be saved and you must hear and believe this good news in order to be saved and there is no exception the impartiality of

God spoken of in verse 34 is connected to Jesus appointment as the judge of the living and the dead in verse 42 God saves all who believe without distinction but God will also judge all who reject him without distinction the world divides among various lines along various lines but the only dividing line that will matter on the final day of judgment is whether you believe in Jesus or rejected him your earthly accomplishments and status will not matter on that day your wealth will not matter on that day your ethnicity or race will not matter on that day your gender will not matter on that day even how relatively moral you were will not matter on that day the only criterion by which God divides the world on that day of judgment is whether you have a relationship with

Jesus Christ do you know this Jesus have you pledged allegiance to him are you living for him he says in verse 44 that while Peter was still saying these things the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word this is the third point God gives his Holy Spirit to all who believe I love verse 44 because it reveals God's generous disposition toward us notice Peter hasn't even finished preaching yet he hasn't even had a chance to baptize anyone yet but God is so eager to save and bless those Gentiles who have heard his word and have believed that the Holy Spirit falls upon them while Peter is still speaking don't ever think that

God is a miser that you need to coax or pry blessings out of God is lavish he is extravagant he is generous the Holy Spirit does not descend imperceptibly like a fog upon the Gentiles no the Holy Spirit falls all over them like a gushing waterfall he erupts upon them like a geyser he overcomes them and washes them in the water of the Spirit he washes them with the love of the father it's not Peter who is leading the charge of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles God reluctantly following him saying well I guess since they believe I have to bless them no it's God who is leading the charge opening up new frontiers it says in verses 45 to 46 and the believers from among the circumcised who come with

[44 : 37] Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles for they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God because God now offers salvation to all who believe in Jesus without distinction the Holy Spirit now indwells all who believe in Jesus without distinction and much like how the Holy Spirit fell upon the Jews in chapter 2 he now falls upon the Gentiles here in chapter 10 of course every believer can be more filled with the Holy Spirit in our lives but when we are converted when we are baptized we come to faith in Jesus every single Christian is indwelled once and for all by the Holy Spirit the normal order that we saw in Acts 2 38 is you first repent and believe and are baptized and then you receive the Holy Spirit but the order is a little mixed up here which shows that that order is normative but not invariable and it's the gift of the

Holy Spirit that decisively marks a true believer in Ezekiel 36 there was a prophecy that God will put a new Spirit upon us and he will cleanse us by sprinkling us with the Holy Spirit Peter's logic is this if the Gentiles have received the gift of the Holy Spirit that means that according to this prophecy their hearts are already cleansed how then can Peter withhold from them the rite of baptism which signifies the cleansing that they have already received by the Holy Spirit God pours out his Holy Spirit on all who believe without distinction my fourth and final point is this God receives into fellowship all who believe by the time Peter returns to Jerusalem word has spread all throughout

Judea and the Gentiles also have received the word of God and this made Peter a target of criticism by the circumcision party they say in verse three you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them the circumcision party are Jews converted Jews who insisted that observant Jews should not be associating with and having table fellowship with uncircumcised Gentiles they insisted that every convert be circumcised and follow other Jewish customs in order to be fully Jewish and these Jews had no regard for Cornelius whatsoever look at the way they refer to Cornelius and his companions they don't describe Cornelius as a God-fearing man as he was described earlier someone who was well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation instead he just says this about them verse 22 uncircumcised men that's all they are to these circumcision party members this prompts Peter to explain how God had led him to do these things in verses 4 to 18 of chapter 11 he retells the story and if stories are repeated in the book of Acts or any part of the Bible it's because they are important they're saying something that we need to pay attention to and Peter had said to the Lord by no means Lord for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth but after the Lord's rebuke he enters the house of unclean people verse 12 and when Peter explains this whole thing the Jews who had objected are silenced and they glorify God saying then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life but this decisive change that took place in Peter's perspective does not mean that he could never again be misled by the circumcision party we see in Galatians 2 11 to 14 that that Paul at one time rebuked Peter because Peter drew back and withdrew separated himself from the Gentile Christians he was eating with them and happily associating with them before but then when some people came who were members of the circumcision party out of fear of them Peter withdrew from them and Paul rebuked him because he believed that Peter's conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel it is possible to believe the gospel on the one hand and then to deny the gospel by the manner in which you live we too can slip into this hypocrisy the circumcision party looked down on the uncircumcised Gentile believers is there a group of or class of people that you are tempted to look down upon what are some ways that you are tempted to draw lines and put up fences within the church of God do you see people of other races or ethnicities as inferior do you look down on people of certain political persuasions do you treat with contempt those who are less educated than you or less intelligent than you do you ever assume that you can't truly enjoy [50 : 04] Christian fellowship with certain people in the church for any of these reasons or for other reasons God without distinction grants forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who believe in Jesus Christ and we are not to draw lines where God has not drawn we can only reply as Peter did in chapter 11 verse 17 who am I that I could stand in God's way because God receives into his fellowship all who believe this truth also implies that we must cross national and cultural boundaries to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ we must treat every person in the world with a fundamental human dignity not calling them common or unclean every person whether they look like you or not dress like you or not talk like you or not smell like you or not can believe in Jesus Christ and be saved so let's also go without distinction to every tribe every nation every language every people group to proclaim the gospel of Jesus until that glorious day when every knee will bow before Jesus and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father please take a moment to reflect on that truth what is it that the Holy Spirit is highlighting for you bringing to your mind from this passage and after some time of reflection we're going to have time of corporate prayer