

36. The Lord Began Saving Gentiles

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to share the message of the death and resurrection of Christ. Cornelius said that he and those with him were all gathered together to hear the things that God had commanded Peter to speak. We will see that the message God commanded him to speak is the most important message for every person on the earth. Notice as you read through this topic whether that is the message Peter shared that day.

Acts 10:34-36 says, “Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—.’” We see Peter began his message by saying he recognized that God does not show partiality. The word translated “show partiality” means *one who discriminates*. God is not One who discriminates. James 2:8-10 says, “If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all.” Here, God says that a person who discriminates is guilty of breaking the whole law.

We go on to see that the plan of God is to save people in every nation. God is looking for people who will fear Him. The word translated “fear” has two meanings. When it is talking about a fear of people, it means *to be afraid*. When it is talking about God, it means *to have a reverence of God that causes people to be obedient to Him*. 1 John 4:18-19 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” We will have a fear or reverence of God when we have responded to His love that was shown us when Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

Isaiah 64:6 says to the person who depends on his own righteousness, “But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” This verse says that our own efforts to be righteous are like the rags that were used to wrap the open sores of lepers. In contrast, Romans 10:9-10 says, “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” True belief in Christ means that the righteousness of Christ is placed on us. The Father accepts us when we have the righteousness of Christ on us.

The Jews had heard how to have this righteousness through Christ. God had given that message to the Jews through John the Baptist and then through Christ. When the church began, the apostles and those who became followers of Christ received that message and passed that message on to other Jews. Now, Peter said that He realized that this message of peace through Christ was for both the Jews and the Gentiles. Later, Paul would write in Ephesians 2:14-17, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so

as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.” The Jews were those who were near and had been hearing that message. The Gentiles were those who were far off and they now began to hear that message in the house of Cornelius.

Acts 10:37-41 says, “That word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.” The Gentiles in Caesarea had heard about the message of John the Baptist that he had come to prepare the way for Christ, the life and ministry of Christ, how God had anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power, the healing and ministry to other needs that Christ had performed in Galilee and Judea, how Christ had healed many that were possessed with demons and they had heard how God was with Christ. Although they had heard about all of these things, it was the Jews who had experienced these things. They had not had that opportunity as Gentiles.

Peter said that he and the others had been witnesses of all these things that Christ had done both in Galilee and Judea. Since Cornelius was a Roman centurion, he and the other Gentiles in Caesarea had also heard about the fact that Christ had died by crucifixion on a cross. However, they needed to hear the rest of the story of what had happened. It is not unusual for a person to die. That happens to everyone. The thing that made the life of Christ different was the fact that God raised Christ from the dead to show that He was satisfied with the payment that Christ had made for sin. 1 John 2:2 says, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” The word translated “propitiation” means *that which satisfies*. These Gentiles needed to hear that the Father was satisfied with the payment that Christ had made for the sins of the whole world including all of the Gentiles.

Peter told those gathered at the house of Cornelius that day that God had raised Christ from the dead on the third day. He had shown Christ openly, but not to everyone. Instead, the Father had shown Christ to witnesses that the Father had chosen. Those witnesses had the opportunity to eat and drink with Christ after He arose from the dead. Probably, Peter could remember especially that morning when Christ had invited Peter and six other disciples to eat with Him at the Sea of Galilee. John 21:12-14 says, “Jesus said to them, ‘Come *and* eat breakfast.’ Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, ‘Who are You?’—knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This *is* now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.” Peter would never forget that morning, because it was after that meal that Christ personally told Peter feed My lambs and shepherd My sheep.

Acts 10:42-44 says, “And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He

who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.’ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.” Peter next made it clear what God has commanded each follower of Christ to do. One of the things that Christ commanded the disciples is written in Mark 16:15 where we read, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.’” The Gospel is the good news about the death and resurrection of Christ. Later, Paul would testify in Acts 20:20, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Repentance toward God is turning from sin to God. Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ is coming to God through Christ.

We see that Christ is the One ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. When a person places his or her faith in Christ, that person is given spiritual life and will have their works tested to see which have eternal value and can be rewarded – 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. However, each person that lacks spiritual life will be judged for their sinful works and will experience eternal judgment – Revelation 20:11-15.

The Old Testament prophets gave witness that through the name of Christ, all those who will believe on Him would receive remission of sins. The word translated “remission” means *release from bondage, forgiveness or pardon*. Micah 7:18-19 says, “Who *is* a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights *in* mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” Christ is the One who made it possible for God to forgive our sin.

Peter was not finished with his message when God interrupted him. Acts 10:44 says, “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit came on the Gentiles as a group just as He had earlier come on the Jews as a group and the Samaritans as a group the first time. As a result, Acts 10:45-48 says, “And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have*?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the Holy Spirit came on each of these groups the first time as a group. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why God accepts all who come to Him by faith.