

Acts 10:34- 11:18 – Part III - The Gospel to the Gentiles

Acts 10:34-48 - Peter's Preaching

1. Read Deuteronomy 10:12-19 and Romans 2: 6-11; 3:9. What does this teach us about God and partiality?
2. How was Cornelius' answer to Peter (in Acts 10:30-33) used by God to teach Peter about God and partiality/favoritism? Partiality in regard to what?
3. What are verses 34 and 35 saying and not saying?
 - a. It's simply restating the fact that Jews and Gentiles are on an equal footing as far as the gospel is concerned. There's no advantage in being a Jew as opposed to being a Gentile. Jews and Gentiles come to God in precisely the same way. That's a possible interpretation of that verse. (Derek Thomas, sermon on Acts 10, 11/21/2006)
 - b. There is an interpretation that suggests that what Peter is saying is that God saves the unevangelized on the basis of their piety - those who have never heard the gospel, those who have never heard of Jesus Christ, those who are not in possession of special revelation. (Derek Thomas)
 - c. "Implicit Faith"- It's the view that says these people are saved, and they're saved on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done. It's just that they don't recognize that. They don't realize that. They have no conscious knowledge of it, but it's still Jesus Christ that saves. Their piety is evidence of the fact that Jesus, despite their unconsciousness of it, has come into their hearts in some way. Now there are various views of that. The present pope, Benedict XVI, wrote a little treatment in the year 2000, when he was still Ratzinger and before he became pope, suggesting that those who are not Roman Catholics could be saved on that basis. Well, that's interesting to know – that you don't have to be a Roman Catholic to be saved. (Derek Thomas)
 - d. Clark Pinnock & John Saunders & C.S. Lewis - Clark Pinnock has written a book called *A Wideness to God's Mercy*. He refers to this particular incident of Cornelius in Acts 10. He refers to Cornelius as "the pagan saint *par excellence* of the New Testament." He needed to become a Christian, Pinnock says. He needed to become a Christian to receive Messianic salvation, including assurance in the Holy Spirit, but not to be saved from hell. In other words, he would still be saved; it's just that in order for him to have assurance and in order for him to have the Holy Spirit, he must now know about Jesus Christ. C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, has suggested something very similar about the unevangelized, expressing some degree of agnosticism, I think, about the fate of the unevangelized; suggesting that it's unfair for those to be treated "harshly," as he puts it, and to be consigned to hell who have never heard the gospel, never heard of Jesus Christ. (Derek Thomas)
 - e. What is Peter really saying in verses 34-35? I think that what he is saying is simply that God recognizes and honors good works and righteous deeds wherever they are done, and by whomever they are done. And I think we need to take a look at the word *acceptable*, not in the sense that the person is saved, but that God sees them and recognizes them. And then, Peter launches into a gospel presentation to Cornelius, which otherwise would make no sense if Cornelius were already acceptable in the saving sense in the sight of God. (Derek Thomas)
4. What is a Christian? there must be a recognition of Jesus as God's Messiah and Lord of my life; that there must be a trust in Jesus as Savior, which involves a turning away from a former way of life in repentance; that there must be a

receiving of the power of the Holy Spirit, enabling me to do so to the glory of God...a recognition of Jesus as Messiah and Lord; a trusting in Jesus involving repentance from a former way of life; and a receiving of the Holy Spirit that enables me so to do.

Of course, it's a solitary lesson. How central repentance was in the apostolic understanding of what a Christian is! When John the Baptist emerges – and do you note that John the Baptist is on Peter's mind here, and he quotes him? – the first words out of John the Baptist's mouth were "Repent." The first word out of the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ was "Repent." And if we had ten or fifteen minutes tonight, we could do a Bible study on The Acts of the Apostles and examine every single reference to *repent* or *repentance*. And you may look it up in your concordance, and you'll find that there are many such references in The Acts of the Apostles, because for the New Testament apostles you cannot be a Christian, you cannot be a true believer in Jesus Christ, unless there is first of all genuine repentance – turning away from sin, and a turning towards our Lord Jesus Christ and embracing Him as He is offered to us in the gospel. (Derek Thomas http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Derek%27s_SERMONS/Acts/acts_index_page.htm)

5. How many sections are there in Peter's sermon?
 - a. vs. 34-35 – Declaration of God's impartiality toward Jews & Gentiles.
 - b. vs. 36-41 – The ministry of Jesus & John as seen by eye-witnesses.
 - *Acts 10:41 - "By resisting all the evidences he had given them of his divine mission in his miracles, they had forfeited the favour of being eye-witnesses of this great proof of it". MH
 - c. vs. 42-43 – The appointment of Jesus and forgiveness through His name.
6. What was related about Jesus' ministry and from whom was his authority? vs. 38
 - a. What was Jesus' message before His death?
 - b. What importance would verse 36 have upon Cornelius as a soldier and as a Gentile?
 - c. What were Jesus' deeds?
 - d. Why would Peter's statement about being eye-witnesses in vs. 39 & 41 be important to Cornelius? What did the eye-witnesses see and do?
 - e. What was the message Jesus commanded the eye-witnesses to preach?
7. How did Peter connect the gospel with the Old Testament Scriptures? Why?
8. How is remission of sins to be received? Who shall receive it?
9. How did God seal the preaching of Peter? vs. 44 (see below for Calvin's commentary on the work of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit).
 - a. What was meant by this outpouring of the Holy Ghost?
 - b. How was this gift of the Spirit manifested?
 - c. For whom was this sign of the outpouring of the Spirit meant as a testimony? For these Gentile converts only?
 - d. Why the astonishment of the circumcised?
11. The baptism of Cornelius and his household:

- a. Why did Peter ask, “Can any forbid water for baptizing...?”
- b. What reason did Peter attach to his question?
- c. What was the meaning of this baptism? Read Luke 24:45-48, Matthew 28:18-20.

Acts 11:1-18 Peter's Report to the believers in Jerusalem

1. How did word get back to Jerusalem regarding Peter's transgression?
2. Who were “they of the circumcision”?
3. With what do they accuse Peter? What does this accusation indicate?
4. Why did Peter report with minute detail the events in Joppa and Caesarea?
5. What description did Peter give regarding Cornelius?
6. What did Peter add that Luke, Cornelius, or his delegation leave out regarding the message of the Angel and what to expect from Peter? vs. 13-14.
7. What evidence did Peter adduce to justify “eating with uncircumcised men”?
8. Whose words did he use to sum up Jesus' actions with Cornelius? What did Jesus say? See verse 16.
9. Did he present the events as being of his own choosing? How do we know this? See verse 17.
10. What was the effect upon the Church? How did they glorify God?
11. We know that the issue of inclusion of the Gentiles would resurface again, most notably in Acts 15 (The Council of Jerusalem) and in Paul's missionary journeys.
READ MATTHEW 20:1-16 What did Jesus teach regarding God's gifts?

Acts 10:44

44. And as Peter yet spake, 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. These gifts, mentioned by Luke, differ indeed from the grace of regeneration; and yet, undoubtedly, God did by this means seal both Peter's doctrine, and also their faith and godliness which heard him. He saith that they were all endowed with the Spirit, like as we saw before, that they came all encouraged to learn and obey.

This visible sign representeth unto us, as it were in a table, what an effectual instrument of God's power the preaching of the gospel is; for he poured out his Spirit as Peter spake, to the end he might show that he sendeth not teachers to that end, that they may beat the air with the vain sound of their voice, but that he may work mightily by their voice, and may quicken the same by the power of his Spirit, to the salvation of the godly. Thus doth Paul put the Galatians (Gal_3:2.) in mind, that they received the Holy Ghost by the hearing of faith; and in another place he saith that he is the minister of the Spirit, and not of the letter, (2Co_3:6.) The gift of the tongues, and other such like things, are ceased long ago in the Church; but the spirit of understanding and of regeneration is of force, and shall always be of force, which the Lord coupleth with the external preaching of the gospel, that he may keep us in reverence of his word, and may prevent the deadly dotings, wherein brain-sick fellows enwrap themselves, whilst that, forsaking the word, they invent an erroneous and wandering spirit. But it doth not, nor shall not, always so fall out, that all those which hear the word with their outward ears, do or shall also receive the Spirit; and the ministers do seldom light upon such hearers as Peter had, who are willing, with one consent, to follow God. Yet he bringeth to pass that all the elect feel in themselves the consent of the external word, and of the secret power of the Spirit. (John Calvin)