

Sermon Title: God Is Not One To Show Partiality
Scripture Text: Acts 10:23-48 (Acts #26)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 10-22-23

We are going to open God's Word now, and we are going to come to Acts Chapter 10.

In our previous visit to Acts Chapter 10, I called it: "When God Sets The Table." God prepared—set the table, if you will—for a *momentous* event which leads to a turning point in this great book: opening the door of salvation to the Gentiles (cf. Matt. 11:27; 13:11; Acts 11:18; 14:27; 2 Tim. 2:25b).

Today, we are going to see the beginning of widespread salvation to Gentiles which *continues to our generation!* We are part of the family tree that was launched here with the salvation making the jump to the Gentiles.

When I first began the Book of Acts, I was thinking, "28 chapters! What year will we finish that?" But we are dealing with narrative; we are dealing with the only pure book of history in the New Testament. The Gospels are specialized history, but this is historical record; so of necessity, when you come to something like this, actually *all* of Chapter 10 is one incident; we had to break it into two portions because you guys won't stay until dinner on Sundays without putting up a fuss. So we are going to move along pretty quickly. Today we are going to do 25 verses.

God arranges a meeting of a group of devout Jews who believed in Christ, and a room full of Gentiles—that is, non-Jews. Peter spoke to them, and the Gentiles became Christians. And as we walk through this narrative, we are going to pluck some principles and some observations that we can apply from this text.

This is not a doctrinal treatise. This is not Paul explaining the riches of salvation in Christ, like in the first half of Ephesians; or writing Romans on the Doctrine of Salvation in all of its fullness. But this is the record of an encounter in which profound doctrine is put on display in real lives. So I will try to help keep both of those feet on the ground—both the historical narrative and the truth that is revealed or reflected in it.

So here is an outline, just something to hang our hats on; this is not like a logical, sequential outline, but something to help us see what is going on here. Three points for Verses 23 through 48:

1. Who Called This Meeting? (vss. 23-28)
2. What Is The Agenda? (vss. 29-33)
3. Believe And Receive Forgiveness (vss. 34-48)

Now, we left off in the middle of a verse. We left off before this: Chapter 10, Verse 23—"So he invited them in and gave them lodging." (NASB-1995—and throughout, unless otherwise noted) Well, that helps us connect to what is going on:

The "he" is Peter, who received "them"—that was three men who were sent to him from a Roman centurion named Cornelius, who lived in Caesarea: that big seaport town on the west of Israel, the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Peter was about two days journey away in a city called Joppa.

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Those non-Jews like Cornelius are described as "fearing God"—or, "God-fearers." They were people who were not born Jews, they were not raised Jewish, but they had rejected their culture's religion and turned to the one "true God," Yahweh (Jer. 10:10; 1 Thess. 1:9)—the God of Israel, the actual Creator of Heaven and Earth (Gen. 1:1). Most such people were like Cornelius in that they prayed to Yahweh—they did not go to idol temples or anything like that; and they made contributions to the Jews, primarily in the form of alms to help the poor. They could visit synagogues as guests, and that was okay.

Now, there may be somebody here who is a "God-fearer." You don't worship weird things, you are not a Buddhist, you are not a Hindu, you are not an atheist. You believe that there is one God. *I* believed that before I was a Christian. I could not believe that Nobody times Nothing Forever equals Everything; that did not seem to explain anything. I believed in God. It wasn't like I prayed a lot, it wasn't like I hung around in synagogues. But my heart needed to be opened; the eyes of my heart needed to be opened. It is possible to be somebody who says, "Well, *I* worship the one true God. I don't worship anything else."—but you kind of hang around the edges. God needs to bring people like that to Himself.

Okay, so Cornelius was in Caesarea. And while he was there, one day while he was praying at three in the afternoon, God sent an angel to instruct him to send men to the city of Joppa—down the seacoast a ways—where Peter was staying at that time in the home of a tanner named Simon. So Cornelius, having men under his command, sent three men to fetch Peter. When they arrived in Joppa, we are told in Verse 22 what they said to Peter: "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you." That is where it says Peter "invited them in," and they spent the night in Simon's house.

So if you want to take all of Acts Chapter 10, it happened in about five days. Day 1: Cornelius is visited by an angel. Day 2: He sends three men off to Joppa. They are travelling Day 2 and Day 3; and during that time, Peter is given *his* astounding vision about the dietary laws. Then they arrive in Joppa, they overnight in Joppa, and they head back to Caesarea. So on Day 5—or Day 6, at the most—we come to this portion of God's Word.

So the first logical question is: Who Called This Meeting?

"So he invited them in and gave them lodging." And then the rest of the verse is: "And on the next day he got up and went away with them"—"he," Peter; "them," the three guys—"and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him."

Now, that is significant. We find out in the next chapter that "some of the brethren from Joppa" was a group of six, in addition to Peter—six Jews who were solid Christians by then. Now the text doesn't say this, but I *have* to think that Simon the Tanner was also among this group. And we are going to see later how important it was that they were with Peter, so just save that little bit of information.

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This was a *momentous* meeting of seven devout Jews who believed in Christ, and a whole room full of Gentiles. God's providence used what Peter did without being commanded to; he wasn't *told* to bring anybody with him, but he brought those men, and that led to the face-to-face meeting of two worlds—and it was a crucial turning point in the unfolding of the plan of God.

So, Verse 24—"On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends."

Cornelius had been busy. It had been a couple of days—three days, four days—since he sent those guys off. He had been gathering people, inviting people for this meeting, and he gathered as many as he could (cf. Lk. 5:29).

At this first introduction of Peter and Cornelius, we get one of those little details that might seem superfluous. Well, *it is*, in the sense that it is not part of the process of Gentiles being saved, but it is actually kind of important. Look at Verses 25 and 26—"When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, 'Stand up; I too am just a man.' "

Now, you have to think about that: It is not really a surprise that Cornelius did something like that. He had never met an angel before; and all of a sudden, this glorious shining angel tells him, "Go get this guy from Joppa, and bring him here and listen to whatever he has to say to you." He was so excited, he had anticipated the moment for *days*; and Peter got there, and it was like, "Oh, *wow*, Peter!"—and he just fell on his knees in front of Peter. It shows his submissive attitude toward God that he did that, but Peter rightly refused the worship.

But it is no accident that that little tidbit is here, as well as two other examples in the New Testament. Mark this down mentally: In Chapter 14, we are going to see an incident where, during the First Missionary Journey, Paul and Barnabas were the recipients of people trying to worship them; and they called "Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes" (vs. 12). In this case, it is very different. In that case, they were associating Paul and Barnabas with a *totally* anti-God worldview, a mythical worldview. But in this case, Cornelius was making no such connection to false Gods; so in one word, Peter took care of it: "Aw, come on, don't do that. Stand up! I am just a man."

The other situation we have in the New Testament is in Revelation 22:8-9, and there it was not somebody worshipping an Apostle, it was an Apostle worshipping an angel. The Apostle John fell down at the feet of an angel who showed him these *spectacular* things about the new heavenly Jerusalem to come. And so, we read in Revelation 22:9 that the angel says, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God." (cf. 19:10) *Never* are we to worship *anyone* or *anything* other than God Himself (Ex. 20:1-5a).

People ask me sometimes: "My friend wants me to go and worship with them, and it's a Catholic church, an LDS Church, another religion of some kind. Can you do that?" Yes, you can walk in the door, but *do not* participate in *anything they do*, because that is not

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worshipping God! It is ultimately blasphemy (cf. 1 Cor. 10:14, 20-21; Rev. 2:14, 20). See Commandments One and Two of the Ten: Worship God, and God alone (Ex. 20:2-6; Lev. 25:1; Deut. 27:15). And then, Colossians Chapter 2, Verses 18 through 23, *specifically* forbids worshipping angels (cf. Heb. 1:5-14).

So, yeah it's a little tidbit in our text; but, again, it is like the tip of the iceberg of a theological truth: Those who bow to worship or to pray to *any human* or to *any angel* or to *any icon* or *any statute*—they are committing blasphemy! It's *wrong!* Praying to dead people—even if you call them "saints"—that is *also* blasphemy (cf. Is. 8:19). We pray to God and God alone, and there is only "one mediator...between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). We pray to God, and the entrance is through His Son, Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:6; Heb. 7:25; 10:19-20; 13:12, 15).

So, not a doctrinal passage, but doctrine is on display. And happily, in this case it was not a big deal between Cornelius and Peter. Cornelius was not hung up on any of that. We are told that Peter and Cornelius did talk for a while; we do not know what they said. I fancy that Cornelius said something like, "Oh, excuse me! I just know God sent you here, and I was so excited. I can't wait to hear what you have to tell us." It did not become an issue.

And they talked some more. Verse 27 says so: "As he talked with him"—that's Peter talking to Cornelius—"he entered and found many people assembled." They were not Ikeans, they were "assembled"—they were already together.

We know, about this meeting, that the exact number of people who were gathered was "many"; we don't know that "many" is. We know it was seven Jews; we know the rest were Gentile friends and family of Cornelius. Cornelius had a pretty significant position as a centurion; he may have had a large house. Maybe he even arranged [the meeting] to be somewhere else; I think it was at his home. But there were a lot of people there.

And Peter's opening line reveals the work of God in his heart. It is *more* theology lived out, more theology on display. Look at Verse 28—"And he said to them, 'You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.' "

Boy, that was a *big deal* for Peter! He is saying, "By how I was raised, by how I have lived my whole life, by how I used to teach, *I should not be here!* You are *foreigners!* I'm not supposed to set foot in this place." But there is this meeting.

Who Called This Meeting? Well, it was Cornelius, at God's leading. And now: What Is The Agenda?

The meeting has been called to order. Peter has come. He has overcome his trepidation about entering a Gentile home—something he had probably *never* done. Cornelius and Peter were both sovereignly prepared by God for this day. They had both obeyed these direct commands from God. And now, the floodgates of Gentile salvation are about to be swung open under the power of the Holy Spirit.

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So, What Is The Agenda? Well, that was the question on Peter's mind. He said: "That is why I came"—because God had told me not to call anybody unclean—"That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me" (vs. 29).

Now, Peter had already been prepared for this. He had been shown by the vision that God gave him that now it is time to lower the deflector shield against the Gentiles, and here he is. *Now what?*

Well, Cornelius recounts to Peter what we saw at the beginning of the chapter. Now, keep in mind, as you see this unfold: Peter did not know what Cornelius had been told. Cornelius had not been told what Peter had been told. So, Verses 30-32—"Cornelius said, 'Four days ago to this hour"—that means the meeting was about three in the afternoon—"I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments, and he said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea.' " " And so, what did he do? Verse 33—"So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God"—he is acknowledging that God arranged this meeting—"we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

"So, Peter, here is the agenda: Tell us what God told you to tell us." How about that for sermon prep? He just found out what his assignment is. But Peter was not at a loss.

Who Called This Meeting? Cornelius, by God's direction. What Is The Agenda? To hear from Peter.

And now, that leads us to: Believe And Receive Forgiveness.

If we are going to stick to the "meeting" motif for analyzing this, Peter is about to "make a motion": "I move that you believe in Jesus Christ, and receive forgiveness. All in favor?" That's where we are headed.

Peter's opening line of his sermon is one of the most profound statements in all of the Bible. It means that salvation is available to *anyone* who will receive it as a "free gift" on God's terms (Rom. 6:23; cf. Is. 49:6; Mk. 1:15; Acts 2:21; 20:21).

So, Verse 34—"Opening his mouth, Peter said: 'I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality.' " He had lived his whole life among the Jews; he was a devout man. He sincerely followed what he was taught. And *sadly*, what he was taught included a *horribly skewed* view of God and His plan for the nations! The fact is, God *had* chosen Israel; He *was* making them His unique people (Deut. 4:20; 7:6). But the whole idea was that then *Israel* would be the pathway through which *other nations* would hear about God (Gen. 12:3; Deut. 32:43; 1 Kings 8:41-43; Ps. 67:1-2; 98:2-3; Is. 11:10; 56:7; Ezek. 39:7; Gal. 3:8). But *they* turned that idea into the *twisted* concept that other people—non-Jews—were to be *shunned* and avoided, or even *hated* and resented.

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And Peter says, "I most certainly understand now..." He had been *persuaded*. This was *not* the way he had lived his life! That vision was *astounding* to him! This was new for him. If you happen to be looking at the Greek text, you'll see that the word "now" is not in the Greek there; but the translators appropriately added it because of the overall context. "I didn't used to see it this way. I see *now*, there is *no* partiality with God."

Peter had seen the Gospel go to the Jews in Jerusalem—that was great. But he also saw it go to the Samaritans, and that was a *stretch*. They were *half-breeds*, but some of them got saved. I am sure he swallowed hard when he began to realize that people he had *always* avoided, people he had *always* regarded as second-class citizens, were saved in exactly "the same way" he was (Acts 15:11).

And it began to show up in his life. Remember when he befriended and temporarily lived with that guy Simon the Tanner in Joppa. Because of his profession as a tanner, Simon was regarded as an outcast; and Peter intentionally stayed with him. And *then* came that *astounding* vision of "all kinds" of clean and unclean animals (Acts 10:12). If you didn't see that last week, go back and watch or listen again. The invitation came from Cornelius, and it was confirmed to Peter by yet another word from God; and now he was getting it.

That word "partiality" is the translation of a picturesque Greek word. It is the compound of a verb that means "to receive" and the noun "face"—literally: "to receive a face." It means "to accept or not accept someone on the basis of outward appearance, outward evidence." The King James translators took the liberty to translate it, as a verb: "respect of persons"; or if it's a noun: "respector of persons." It is a difficult lesson for people to learn that *all* people from *all* races have *equal standing* before God (e.g., Is. 56:6-7; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; Rev. 5:9).

What *is* our standing? All are "created" in "His image" (Gen. 1:27; Jas. 3:9b). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23; cf. Ps. 143:2b; Ecc. 7:20). All need a "Savior" (1 Jn. 4:14; cf. Matt. 1:21; 13:39). "All" are invited to "come" to the Savior that God provided: Jesus Christ; and they can receive "rest for [their] souls." That was *exactly* how Jesus put it: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you...rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29). All are offered "the free gift of God," which is "eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23; cf. Is. 45:22; Acts 17:30). There is *no partiality!* (Is. 49:6; Matt. 28:19; Lk. 24:47)

The first point of Peter's sermon is: God Is Not One To Show Partiality. The next point is: The Gospel Is For Everyone. Verse 35—"but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him." That was a *profound* statement for a Jew to make!

Now, don't misinterpret what it means; some people have wrenched this verse out of its context and said, "Well, as long as you fear the true God, as long as you are sincere, as long as you mean well and you do some good works, that will save you." That's not saying that; that would *unsay* what the rest of this passage says. But what it means is: A God-fearing man like Cornelius was *right on the cusp* (Mk. 12:34)—he just needed to know the last piece of the puzzle; he still needed to be *saved*.

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The fact that he called the true God the true God, the fact that he gave some money, that he did some good works—that was not enough. But to use that phrase, *everyone* "is welcome to" God when they come in response to the invitation to "repent" and "believe" in Christ (Mk. 1:15; cf. Acts 20:21). Ethnicity or where you live or what language you speak—it makes *no difference at all*.

And by the way: Jesus had said this, but it was another one of those things like we saw last week, when He had "declared all foods clean" back in Mark 7 (vs. 19), and they didn't really get that until Peter's vision and the application of that (cf. 1 Tim. 4:4-5). Jesus had said this thing also, that anyone from all nations is welcome, but even His closest disciples didn't fully grasp it at the time. What I am referring to is John 10, Verse 16, where Jesus said: "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd." In that verse, "this fold" is Israel; "other sheep" refers to Gentiles; and the work of Christ makes them all together in Christ "one flock with one shepherd" (cf. Eph. 2:14-18; 3:6).

So we will follow Peter's little sermon outline within our sermon:

Point Number 1: God Is Not One To Show Partiality
Point Number 2: The Gospel Is For Everyone
Point Number 3: Jesus Is Our Message

It is not about *where* to go to worship, it's about *who* to worship, and how you can know Him. Verses 36 to 38—"The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."

The message is: Come to Jesus! This was *not* a message about "how you God-fearers can finish your conversion process to Judaism." It is *not* a message about how to correct the false teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. It is *not* about how to reform the corrupted world of Judaism (cf. Matt. 9:16-17). This is about the fulfillment of the promise of God to provide a Savior (Is. 59:20). Yes, Jesus was from the Jews, but *Jesus is the message* (Acts 5:42; 8:12, 35; 11:20; 17:18; 1 Cor. 2:2).

I checked, and in 78 words of our translation that I just read to you, Peter summarized all four Gospels and the whole life of Jesus. Look what he said: Only in Jesus is there "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1); Jesus "is Lord of all," not merely the "in" crowd (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36; Phil. 2:9-11); He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (Matt. 2:1, 6; Lk. 24:27; Jn. 5:39; Acts 26:22); John the Baptist was that final Old Testament prophet, who makes the connection to Jesus (Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:14; Jn. 1:29); and all of Jesus' miracles "attested" to His identity as the God-Man and our Savior (Acts 2:22; cf. Lk. 7:20-22; Jn. 3:2; 5:36; 9:30-33; 10:25, 37-38; 14:11; 15:24).

So, Peter—boy, for a guy that didn't have any time to study, pretty good sermon!

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- Number 1: He says God Is Not One To Show Partiality.
- Number 2: The Gospel Is For Everyone
- Number 3: Jesus is Our Message
- Number 4: We Are His Witnesses

This message is *not* about Peter (1 Cor. 3:5-7; 2 Cor. 4:5). When we preach the Gospel, it is *not* about us or what we can do or what any man or woman can do to gain a relationship with God or to earn merit with Him (Rom. 3:20). We are—just as Jesus said it would be—His witnesses. Remember: After the Holy Spirit comes, "you shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8). That is what we are!

And we are just witnesses: We tell what *He* did. Look at Verses 39 to 41—"We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem." "Jerusalem" is the Temple headquarters. "Land of the Jews" would include Galilee, Idumea, and the southern regions as well. "They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead."

"We are witnesses." We cannot save *anyone* (Ps. 49:7-9); but we give honest, true testimony to what Jesus did. What does a witness do? Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about Jesus. "We are witnesses" to His life—"all the things He did," *all through* Israel "and in Jerusalem." "We are witnesses" to His "death" when they "hung Him on a cross." "We are witnesses" to His resurrection "on the third day." We know it happened because of the testimony of those select ones who saw it—we are told in First Corinthians that on one occasion, as many as "five hundred...at one time" (15:6). Peter was among those "who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead."

So, what do we do now? We do just what He ordered us to do: Verse 42—"And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead."

We "preach to the people"—we "proclaim" (1 Pet. 2:9). You don't have to stand behind a giant wooden box and have a microphone to preach the Gospel. It means you tell the truth, you bear witness to who Jesus is and what He did.

And what is our message? Jesus Christ is "appointed by God" the Father "as Judge of the living and the dead" (cf. Acts 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5; Rev. 20:11-15).

And then, the proverbial bottom line: Verse 43—"Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."
"Everyone who believes"!

The issue for *anyone, anywhere, at any time, in any nation*, is: Do you receive and believe "the testimony concerning Jesus Christ"? (1 Cor. 1:6; cf. 1 Jn. 5:9-11) Christ and He alone provides "forgiveness of sins."

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As a matter of fact, it was Peter who said what we now consider a famous Bible verse. The first time that he and John were arrested for preaching Christ: Acts 4:12—"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (cf. Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5).

Now, if it had actually been a meeting following Robert's Rules of Order, Peter would have said, "Therefore, I make the motion that all present should believe and receive forgiveness of sins." "Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

This was a very special situation; it was a unique situation. And understand here that this is about the simplest presentation of the Gospel that you could ever have. These were divinely prepared people who simply needed to hear the Gospel (Acts 16:14). Now, in our world, sometimes there are people who, when we start to share the Gospel, they have, "But-but-but-but what about...?" And sometimes you have to deal with some things: What if they were raised in a different religion? You have to be ready sometimes with a little bit of apologetics to explain the "reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15, ESV). These people were *ready!* They just needed the Gospel.

And *anywhere else you go*—even if somebody *does* have some questions, some obstacles for you to overcome—you could say something like: "That's a really good question. Let's get back around to it after—if I could, please—explain to you what the Bible says is the way to know God." And then, you tell them the Gospel. And if they say, "Yes, but..." then you say, "Okay, well then, let's get together again next week, and research that. Let's talk about that."

That was not the case here! There was a God-fearing man who got his friends and his relatives—he was a pretty influential guy; he was a centurion who commanded a hundred soldiers. Who knows how many people were there? And they were ready!

Now, this divinely arranged meeting—oh, and by the way, *every* meeting is divinely arranged, because God is sovereign (Ps. 103:19; Pr. 16:9; 20:24; Jer. 10:23; Eph. 1:11b)—this divinely arranged meeting concludes with the glorious salvation of the first group of Gentiles to turn to Christ.

Simple message:

1. There Is No Partiality With God
2. The Gospel Is For Everyone
3. Jesus Is Our Message
4. We Are His Witnesses

And that leads to: Belief And Two Baptisms

Verses 44 through 46—"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers"—that's the Jews; those six "who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God."

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Remember, when we saw the gift of tongues the first time, we pointed out to you that, according to First Corinthians Chapter 11, the gift of tongues was the sign to Israel that what Jesus said was true: that Israel was being set aside, and the Gospel would now be going *primarily* to Gentiles during this age (Rom. 11:25). But of course, Jews are always included (Rom. 11:1-5). They were seeing *the very same phenomenon*. Cornelius and the people he invited *all* turned to Christ in faith. They were immediately indwelt and "baptized" by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), and God granted them the *identical* miraculous signs that He gave the first group in Jerusalem, back in Chapter 2; and that first group of Samaritans, who believed in Chapter 8.

They were baptized by the Holy Spirit. That is not something you can see (Jn. 3:8). Yes, there were miraculous manifestations then, but that is not typical. That baptism by the Holy Spirit always happens at the moment a person repents and calls on Christ for forgiveness and salvation from sin (cf. Rom. 8:9).

And *then* came the *second* baptism. Remember, the word "baptism" simply means: "immersion." You are immersed in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit immerses you into the Body of Christ (cf. Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27a). And then comes baptism in water: That is the *outward* declaration of your allegiance to Jesus Christ, who has saved you in response to your faith (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:41; 8:12, 36-38; 9:18; 16:33-34; 18:8).

And so, Verse 46—"Peter answered, 'Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?' And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days" (vss. 46b-48). Those "few days" are in the white space between Chapter 10 and Chapter 11, where we will jump in next time.

What else can we say after that? The obvious application of this passage is to "examine yourself" and be *sure* you are among those who are saved and redeemed in Christ Jesus! (2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Pet. 1:10; cf. Matt. 7:21-23; Rom. 8:9, 13-17).

God Is Not One To Show Partiality. Every person needs to respond to God on his own or her own (Prov. 9:12). You cannot get there on *anybody else's coattails*! There is *no* "inside track" to Heaven. *You* must recognize *your* sin (Prov. 28:13). *You* must "repent," *you* must "believe" in your Savior (Mk. 1:15; cf. Acts 26:18).

Therefore: The Gospel Is For Everyone. There is one and only one message of salvation (Gal. 1:8-9). Have you embraced it? Obviously, that is where this text leads us.

Jesus Is Our Message. It is not some system or code of conduct (Gal. 2:16; Titus 3:5). "Every spiritual blessing" is yours for the taking, but *only* if you are "in Christ" by faith (Eph. 1:3). We are all about Jesus, and *unapologetically* about Jesus (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:10; 2 Tim. 1:8).

We Are His Witnesses. We do not add to the message, we tell it. We recount what we know. We declare the truth. We cannot add to it or change it—we *dare* not (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Ps. 119:89; Is. 40:8; Prov. 30:6; Matt. 5:18; 15:3; 24:35; Rev. 22:18-29).

Sermon Title: God Is Not One To Show Partiality
Scripture Text: Acts 10:23-48 (Acts #26)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 10-22-23

And so, the result is: Belief And Two Baptisms (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 8:12).

Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ? I am not saying, "Do you check the box 'Christian' on the survey?" I am not asking if you come to church, or if you have come to church *a thousand times* before. I am asking: "Are you trusting in Christ *and Christ alone* for your salvation?" (Phil. 3:8-9)

If not, if you have not come there, don't be ashamed. *Today* is the *right day* for you to come (2 Cor. 6:2). And I would repeat to you what the Apostle Paul would later write: Second Corinthians Chapter 5—"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ..." Another way to put it: "We are *witnesses* for Christ." We tell what we know. We are "ambassadors"—we are the representatives of the Kingdom of God in this world (Phil. 2:15). "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Now, *why* can you "be reconciled to God"? Look at the last verse there, in Second Corinthians 5—"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (vss. 20-21). God put *your* sins on Christ (Is. 53:5-8, 10; 1 Pet. 2:24a), and Christ made atonement (1 Jn. 2:2). He withstood all "the wrath of God" against your sin (Rom. 5:9), so that when you come to Him and put your trust in Him, He can then put *Christ's* righteousness to *your* account (Is. 61:10; Rom. 3:22; 4:3-5; Phil. 3:9).

That, my friends, is a *great* exchange—and you are the recipient. Do you believe? Do you trust *wholeheartedly and exclusively* in Jesus Christ? If you say you do—well, have you been baptized to declare that faith? The first and *simplest* way to tell the world you belong to Christ is baptism—and that is why we do it! And we will *keep* doing it.

Do you need to clarify some of those things? I have another good deal for you: In two weeks, start the H.B.C. Distinctives Class. *Ask all the questions you want to!*

If you are not sure you belong to Christ today, I will be here after church. Scott Freeman, one of our elders, will be here after church. Several of our deacons are around, or somebody sitting next to you that knows how to introduce a person to Jesus Christ. Let us have the privilege, if you never have done that before.

And let's pray:

Father, thank You for that momentous day in the house of Cornelius in the city of Caesarea. That was just the beginning of the non-ending chain, from generation to generation, of faithful witnesses who have told the truth about Jesus Christ, and it has come to us. Oh, Father, please don't let a person leave this place without embracing our wonderful Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And whatever else might need to be done in our lives to make us all the more effective witnesses, do it, we pray. We humble ourselves before You in Jesus' name. Amen.