



# 19 | ACTS 10:17-48

## THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

*The gospel is powerful to save. It doesn't need editing. It needs proclaiming.*

### Outline

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### Call to Worship

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. <sup>2</sup> My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. <sup>3</sup> Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together! —Psalm 34:1-3

### Songs

*O Praise the Name*  
*Across the Lands*  
*His Mercy is More*  
*How Sweet and Awesome is the Place*  
*Hear the Call of the Kingdom*

## Introduction

We continue our series in the book of Acts called “Life on Life Discipleship.” Our title this morning is: “The Power of the Gospel”.

I am amazed at the power of the gospel. God alone is able to save people. Our sophisticated presentations and lights and wonderful programs are all fine and good, but no power of man ever brought a soul into the Kingdom. We are just instruments in the Redeemer's hands. God uses the power of his message that Jesus died for sinners and applies it by the Holy Spirit to transform sinners into saints. The gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful to save! Paul testified of the gospel's power.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. —*Romans 1:16a*

I wonder if we all realize here today how powerful the gospel is. When you believed that Jesus was your only substitute for sin, and that he was your righteousness before a holy God, you were saved. We have no other plea.

Key Thought: The gospel is powerful to save. It doesn't need editing. It needs proclaiming.

It is the Holy Spirit alone that unites us in that gospel power. He humbles us and shows us our great sin, and our incredible forgiveness. We see this in the amazing story of Cornelius the Roman centurion commander. He had charge over 600 men. He's a rough, tough Gentile—a military commander. You would think he's a most unlikely candidate for salvation. This is not the man you or I would choose to start a worldwide revival with Jesus reaching all the nations of the world. But God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts are so much higher than our thoughts. Our God is a seeking God!

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## 1. OUR SEEKING GOD (10:17-23)

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God's heart for the lost is infinitely bigger than ours. God is right now drawing people to come to him in your sphere of influence.

God stops Peter in his tracks with a vision. It's like Peter is sleeping on the Gentile world. They need Christ. Peter needs a wakeup call.

### GOD'S HEART

The vision Peter receives displays a blanket that comes down from the sky, and on it are all different kinds of animals.

**Acts 10:9-12** | The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour [12 noon] to pray. <sup>10</sup>And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance <sup>11</sup>and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. <sup>12</sup>In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air.

While Peter is waiting for his noon meal, and he can smell the food being prepared (vs 10), a vision in the sky opens up. He has a trance, a vision. God is just like that. He reveals his heart to us at the most unexpected times. Peter is hungry, so God uses a vision of food!

Of course, the vision is about people, not food. The Jews despised the Gentiles and their pagan ways. So Israel isolated themselves from the nations they were supposed to reach. They thought they were doing God's will, but they were actually breaking God's heart.

God is seeking people from all nations. He first called the Jews, but they rejected him. Jesus "came to his own, and his own people did not receive him" (Jn 1:11). **This vision is about God's heart of love being poured out to all the nations.**

Jesus' last command before he ascended to heaven was to "Go into all the world." He wants people in his Kingdom from every nation. **God wants his heaven full!** Remember, Jesus said:

Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. —Luke 14:23

God calls "all people everywhere to repent."—Acts 17:30

God is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." —2 Peter 3:9

The Lord takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live." —Ezekiel 33:11

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. —1 John 2:2

Do you see God's heart? God is a seeking God. He calls all people groups to himself.

### *God's Heart is Not Partial*

It doesn't matter if you were born in a Christian home or raised as a pagan, God calls all men to repentance. Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, people from every culture and family, Jesus says, "Come to me, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). This is the new revelation Peter gets. It's time to share God's love with the entire world, beginning with that Roman soldier, Cornelius.

Peter falls into a trance, where he is awake, but he's seeing a vision. He is shown a strange meal in this vision. God says to him: Rise and eat some unclean food, Peter. "No" says Peter, "Never! I'm a faithful Jew, and I've never eaten anything unclean." Isn't it funny that he's getting a revelation from God, but he thinks he knows better?

**Acts 10:13-16** | And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." <sup>14</sup> But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." <sup>15</sup> And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." <sup>16</sup> This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

Here was this blanket of birds and animals. He had been hungry, but he's not hungry anymore. Actually, this sheet has also been translated "sail" which would also be an appropriate symbol for the Gospel on the move. Again, this vision is not about animals, but about a diversity of nations filled with people.

Above Peter the sun was shining down and just above the buildings of Joppa, he could see the great Mediterranean Sea (so much bigger than his little Sea of Galilee). The horizon stretched to the Gentile nations of the mighty Roman world. He could hear the sounds of his friend, Simon the tanner and his men busy at their trade, making leather items. And up from the kitchen wafted the delightful smell of food sizzling in the pan, probably reminding Peter of his hunger.<sup>1</sup> Peter saw so many different animals in the vision: clean and unclean.

When it comes to people, what makes us unclean is our sin. We are born sinners. But God is willing to make all people clean in Christ. In other words, it's not about race, it's about grace. Peter is told: **"What God has made clean, do not call common"** (10:15). Jesus can make all people clean! We all have our family and cultural sins. But all our sins are personal. We may have been taught to sin by mother and father, but we are accountable for our own sins. But God can cleanse us all from all our sin.

Perhaps you are here today, and God is drawing you. It doesn't matter what your background is. God has no favorites. The ground is level at the cross. We all need the blood of Christ to save us. Do you see the point of this vision? Whether you were raised religious or atheist, you need Christ. There is hope for all of us. We all need a Savior.

### GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

The vision was not about food, but about precious souls that the Holy Spirit is drawing to himself. Jesus said people will not come to him unless they are first drawn by the Father by the power of the Spirit.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. —*John*  
6:44

Just as the vision was concluding, the three men that Cornelius sent to fetch Peter arrived. God will stop at no lengths to draw sinners to himself. He appeared to Cornelius in a dream, and now they were on their way to invite Peter to preach the gospel to Cornelius at Caesarea. The mover in this story is not Peter but the Holy Spirit.

Peter was not thinking at all about reaching the Gentiles, but the Holy Spirit was already working in some Gentiles hearts. Imagine his surprise when he looks out and sees two slaves and an armed Roman soldier there shouting his name!<sup>2</sup> Peter is staying at Simon the tanner's home in Joppa (modern Tel Aviv), 35 miles south of Caesarea Maritima on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, so the men had come a long way.

**Acts 10:17-18** | 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<sup>18</sup> and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there.

It's starting to dawn on Peter what this meal is all about. He's still not eaten, and he's probably no longer hungry!

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<sup>1</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ac 10:17a.

<sup>2</sup> Chalmer Ernest Faw, *Acts*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 126.

## GOD'S INSTRUMENTS

Now the Spirit begins to speak to Peter. Peter listens and obeys! See how gentle the Spirit is with Peter. Peter's like us, a bit hard-headed. He saw this vision of clean and unclean animals, and now he has people who were considered ceremonially unclean, and he a ceremonial clean Jew was to meet with them. The Spirit says, go and rush to them. Join them, fellowship with them "without hesitation." And Peter obeyed the Lord!

**Acts 10:19-23** | And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you.<sup>20</sup> Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them."<sup>21</sup> And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?"

<sup>22</sup> 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."<sup>23</sup> So he invited them in to be his guests.

Cornelius was a well-known example of faith as a God-fearer. He was not initiated with circumcision. He was not offering sacrifices. He would not have been permitted. This tells us that salvation is by faith, not by our rituals. With salvation comes a personal relationship, a deep personal fellowship with Christ.

Peter recognized this man who seemed to be drawn by God but he wasn't yet indwelt by the Spirit. Peter, showing God's favor to this man, sat down to eat with him, as a guest of this Roman warrior and soldier.

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## 2. OUR SAVING GOD (10:24-48)

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God is able to transform the most hopeless cases. All of us are a case study in God's amazing power to do the impossible and save the unsavable.

The purpose for the miracles and the meal is to see the expansion of the Gospel through this Gentile named Cornelius. A Gentile is a non-Jewish person. We have a group of them. Peter has just entered a Gentile home which was unheard of for a Jew.

What Cornelius needs is what we call in the New Testament: conversion. He's been drawn by God, but he's not yet been indwelt by God. He doesn't yet have the Spirit. Something new is happening here.

How can a person be converted? We see it clearly here in the following verses.

### THE DIVINE CALL

Peter is still pondering the dream, and he has been summoned to Cornelius's home. The Spirit is going to teach him why, but initially, this is new revelation that Peter must grasp.

#### *God's Divine Call to Cornelius*

The Gentiles are the next wave of people God is calling into his church. God is calling all people everywhere to come to him. So God calls Peter to go and visit Cornelius. God has opened the way of salvation to the Gentiles.

**Acts 10:24-29a** | The next day he [*Peter*] rose and went away with them [*Cornelius' servants*], and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. <sup>24</sup> And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup> When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

<sup>26</sup> But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." <sup>27</sup> And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without objection.

Cornelius is so overwhelmed at meeting Peter he falls down to worship him, and Peter rebukes him (10:25-26).

Notice he **"had called together his relatives and close friends"** (10:24). Before he's even Spirit-filled, he's evangelizing his family and friends.

Peter now gets it! God has shown him. He understands that the ground is level at the cross. Peter is nothing special to be worshipped but a horrible and wretched sinner that has been introduced to the love of God. Remember Peter had denied the Lord three times. He was forgiven, and he knew the forgiveness of God so well, that God chose him to preach Pentecost.

Peter truly gets it. There's no difference between a faithful Jew like Peter and a rough centurion military leader from Rome. Both are wretched sinners and need the mercy of Christ. We are all equally in need of Christ. No one gets in because they are religious. And no one is kept out because they are a notorious sinner. We are all given the same opportunity. God has no favorites.

God calls all men everywhere to repent. —*Acts 17:30*

God is calling every person to himself. All people everywhere are called. Some are called and actually come. Anyone who comes must come by faith and trust in Christ. That means you stop trusting in yourself, your ways, and your ability to change your circumstances. And instead you turn to Christ, trusting him as the Leader of your life. He has control of every detail, and that makes your life sweet even if your circumstances are terrible.

### *God's Divine Call to Peter*

Peter asks, "Why have you sent for me Cornelius?" The answer is because whenever God calls individuals to come to him, he uses people like you and I to preach and teach the free gift of salvation. People can't hear unless they have a preacher. We are called to preach the Gospel. In other words, God uses human instruments to sound his call to sinners. So in our text, Peter asks an important question.

**Acts 10:29b-33** | I ask then why you sent for me." <sup>30</sup> And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing <sup>31</sup> and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.



<sup>32</sup> 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.' <sup>33</sup> 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."

Cornelius basically says, I need you to preach the gospel to me. The Lord has commanded you to preach a message to the nations, and you need to tell me. We are commanded to tell people about how their sins can be forgiven through Jesus.

### *God's Divine Call to You*

What about you? Is God calling you? Are you born again? It's not enough to be called. Many are called but few are chosen. Few are actually converted to Christ. Let me tell you a story about how God calls us to himself.

When I was a child, I used to play out in the bayou in the trails by the Tickfaw River by my house in Louisiana. Sometimes we'd go way out into the blackberry fields, quite a ways from our home. But I could always hear my mom's voice. "**Matthew, it's suppertime.**" You know there's a difference between hearing the call for dinner and actually eating dinner. Many are called to come to God's feast. God says, "It's dinner time. I'm here to call you my own child and invite you to my table." God is calling many of you. Some of you young people have come to Christ recently. But some of you are resisting the Holy Spirit. Don't resist him. You come. God calls so many to his banquet table, but they ignore the call. Just like ignoring mama's call for dinner. Jesus tells a parable about it in Luke 14.

The Master... said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' <sup>22</sup> And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' <sup>23</sup> And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. —*Luke 14:21-23*

You may be called, but are you converted? Have you humbled yourself and surrendered your whole life to Jesus? You don't have to do anything, but simply trust in what Jesus has done for you.

Cornelius knows all about the one true living God. But he doesn't yet know about how God sent his Son Jesus to save us. So now Peter explains this to this Gentile military leader, this Roman centurion. It's just as we read in Romans 10.

How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? —*Romans 10:14*

Are you willing as a Christian to share the good news with your lost loved ones? If not you, who will do it. If you are honest with yourself, you will realize that God is calling you personally to do it. Young person, do you have siblings? You know the good news that Jesus died for you, but do your siblings know? We all need to share Christ to everyone around us.

### **THE DOCTRINE OF JESUS**

We saw the divine call, but now we see the doctrine of Jesus.

This is Peter preaching the way of eternal life and his presentation of the gospel.

Peter is about to do what we all should do in any situation where you're not sure if the person is born again: preach the gospel.

### *The Preparation*

**Acts 10:34-35** | I So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,<sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

Commenting on this verse, Everett Harrison remarks,

The meaning is not that such persons are thereby saved (*cf* Acts 11:14) but rather that they are suitable candidates for salvation. Such preparation promises a spiritual earnestness that will result in faith as the gospel is heard and received.<sup>3</sup>—Everett Harrison

Cornelius responded to the work of God in his soul, yet it must not be thought that he did that on his own, apart from the grace of God. The truth is that no one, whether Gentile (*cf* Rom 1:18ff) or Jew (*cf* Rom 2:1ff) does that (Rom 3:10–18). God had worked in Cornelius's heart so that he sought to know and obey God, and when he heard the saving truth of the gospel, he eagerly responded.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Proclamation*

Peter now presents the story of Christ and the good news of real peace and reconciliation with God. This is the Apostle Peter preaching the gospel message that saves.

**Acts 10:36-42** | As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),<sup>37</sup> you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed:<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree,<sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear,

<sup>41</sup>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.<sup>42</sup> 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.

**Listen to the message preached by Peter.** Believe that Christ lived and died for you. He is God Almighty, the Judge of the living and the dead. Jesus is either your deliverer or your judge.

Believe that God the Son became human and died for you. Believe that he defeated death and hell. Believe that his death was a substitution for your death. God gave the perfect one in

<sup>3</sup> Everett Harrison, *Interpreting Acts: The Expanding Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 182

<sup>4</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Acts*, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 301.



your place as a wicked sinner, so you could be made perfect. Believe that, and you will have eternal life.

### *The Promise*

Forgiveness! That's what God promises. An erasing of all our sins.

**Acts 10:43** | To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

The prophets of the Old Testament had much to say about the forgiveness Messiah would bring.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. —*Isaiah 53:6*

I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." —*Jeremiah 31:34*

On that day there shall be a fountain opened... to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. —*Zechariah 13:1*

As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. —*Psalms 103:12*

You are offered forgiveness of all your sins: past, present and future. Christ takes your record of sin and wretchedness and failure. He cleanses you from all your filth. He takes on your filth and gives you his robe of righteousness. That's good news. This is not just the promise of the New Testament but the Old Covenant as well.

**Cornelius believed this good news, and something amazing happens.**

### THE DISPLAY OF THE SPIRIT

Suddenly as Peter is preaching, **his sermon is dramatically interrupted by the Holy Spirit!** No altar call! **No invitation!** They simply believed and were born again on the spot!<sup>5</sup> This is the kind of interruption we long for! As soon as the Roman centurion Cornelius and his Gentile companions believed, the Spirit took residence inside of them, and they began praising God!

**Acts 10:44-48** | While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> 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.

<sup>46</sup> For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, <sup>47</sup> "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

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<sup>5</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 152.

By the manifestation of the Spirit, we see that God had welcomed Gentile believers into his family on equal terms with believing Jews. The right conclusion was immediately made: **since God had given the same gift of the Spirit to Gentiles and Jews, the church must give them an equal welcome.** If God had given them Spirit baptism, the church must not deny them water baptism. “God does not show favoritism.”<sup>6</sup>

Peter doesn’t say they need to go through any Jewish ritual, like circumcision. He doesn’t give them a Jewish dietary list. He simply says: **go public with your faith and be baptized.**

How about you? Do you believe? Do you have the evidence of the Spirit? These Gentiles got the gift of tongues immediately, as an immediate confirmation that they were born again. Not everyone would get the gift of tongues as some wrongly teach. This was the Gentile Pentecost. We had the Jewish Pentecost in Acts 2. Now in Acts 10 you had the Gentile Pentecost.<sup>7</sup>

The greater sign of salvation for all believers is that “**they were extolling God**” (11:46). That’s the mark of the Spirit in your life. When Christ becomes the blazing center of your life, and you are infinitely more grateful for the work of Jesus on the cross for you than for anything, by far, you start extolling and worshipping God. That is one of the first signs of salvation.

What about you? Are you in Christ? Have you surrendered? Then you are clean. God has removed your impurities from his sight and given you access into his presence. He knows the sin that remains in you, but if you have put yourself at the feet of Christ, he cleansed you completely, embraced you, and adopted you into his family. Others may call you unclean, but remember that God said to Peter, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.”<sup>8</sup>

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### 3. OUR SOVEREIGN GOD (11:1-18)

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God is calling a people for himself and will save them. He saved you not just to sit and soak, but to be his instrument to bring the gospel to everyone around you.

Of course, God is the only one that can save people. So God has indwelt you by his Holy Spirit. He is the great physician that is guiding your hands, your heart, and your words as he brings people to salvation.

Peter, though reluctantly, has experienced the love of this sovereign God saving the most unlikely of sinners. Now Peter goes back to the apostles and Christians throughout Judea who at this time were all Jewish, and some of them criticize Peter for preaching the gospel to these unclean Gentiles.

#### A STORY OF GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY

Peter says basically, “I was just a passenger on something God has done. The sovereign God wants to save the Gentiles.” Peter recounts the story of what God commanded him to do.

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<sup>6</sup> John Stott, *Through the Bible: Through the Year* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 328.

<sup>7</sup> Adrian Rogers, “Who Is the Man Jesus Christ?,” in *Adrian Rogers Sermon Archive* (Signal Hill, CA: Rogers Family Trust, 2017), Ac 10:34–43.

<sup>8</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Acts*, St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 183.

**Acts 11:1-15** | Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. <sup>2</sup> So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, <sup>3</sup> “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” <sup>4</sup> But Peter began and explained it to them in order:

<sup>5</sup> “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 it came down to me. <sup>6</sup> Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. <sup>7</sup> And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’

<sup>8</sup> But I said, ‘By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ <sup>9</sup> But the voice answered a second time from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, do not call common.’ <sup>10</sup> This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. <sup>11</sup> And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea.

<sup>12</sup> And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. <sup>13</sup> 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; <sup>14</sup> he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ <sup>15</sup> As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning.

So Peter, says, basically, “This was an act of God. The Spirit himself was poured out on these Gentiles. I am just a human instrument.”

### THE SPIRIT OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

I want you to notice that Peter calls attention, that this salvation of the Gentiles is a sovereign act of God. Peter basically says, I couldn't have stopped it if I wanted to. The Spirit of God is sovereign. He called and converted Gentiles. When God works, it is an omnipotent occurrence from our great God.

**Acts 11:16-18** | And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>17</sup> 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?” <sup>18</sup> 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.”

I love Peter's words, “who was I that I could stand in God's way?” (10:17). I would ask you the same question. God wants to do some great things in the days to come. We are asking you to actively invite your friends and family every Sunday. We are asking if you are visiting with us and you don't have a church home, to commit to God and to this congregation as a member. We are asking you to get busy for God. Will it be uncomfortable? Peter would tell

you, yes! It will be a bit uncomfortable. You may not be as popular when you preach the gospel as when you keep your mouth shut. But I'm asking you to not remain silent. More importantly, God is commanding you to open your mouth and preach the gospel, like Peter does with Cornelius, and leave the results up to God.

### Conclusion

D.L. Moody once pondered the question of an evangelist he heard make the challenge to full consecration.

The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him. By God's help, I aim to be that man.<sup>9</sup> —D.L. Moody

We see the sovereign, saving, seeking God who is here calling the most unlikely people for salvation. But Paul asked, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Look at our great God who sovereignly saves sinners. It's glorious. But we are his conduits. We are his instruments. Let's put aside our prejudices and reach the people around us.

Do you know that God can call prejudiced people and fill their heart with love instead of hatred? He can take those who take advantage of women and make them good husbands. He can take homosexuals and transform their desires. Jesus is the answer for the transgendered people of this world in all their dysphoria and confusion. God can give us a new mind and a new heart to the self righteous. God calls and cleanses those who abuse alcohol, who try to self-medicate.

The church is a spiritual hospital, and you are the emergency room doctors. The ambulances are piled one in front of the other at your door. But for some of you, the ER doors are locked, and you won't open the doors to treat the patients. Whatever your excuses are, you must answer them with this fact: people are dying and going to hell today. Unlike an ER doctor, the greatest danger is not the physical life of your patient, but the spiritual life. If you allow people around you to perish without Christ, where do they go for eternity? Do you have a heart like God's? He can't just tune out and forget about the dying. He sent his Son for them to be saved. God is calling sinners. He's awakening them from their sleep of death. Will you rescue them or leave them to perish? Our sovereign God is a saving and seeking God. Will you seek souls in cooperation with the Father?

Lift up the cross of Christ! Anyone can do this. **Yesterday morning, I had two young men, aged 17 and 12 ring my doorbell** and give me the gospel. I told them I was a pastor and how I was so grateful that at such a young age they were going door to door sharing the love of Christ here in Elgin. They said it was part of their youth group activity. Now that's what I call a youth activity! Dear saints, children are doing this in Elgin. What a wonderful example of Spirit-filled living.

Let's open up the ER doors and see how God brings in sinners that he is sovereignly calling. How?

Pray for God to lead you to sinner he is drawing.

Learn how to clearly present the gospel. Know the gospel from God's word (Rom 6:23; Jn 3:16; 2 Cor 5:21, etc.).

Open your mouth and give the gospel everywhere.

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<sup>9</sup> D.L. Moody in Roberts Liardon. *God's Generals Dwight L. Moody* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2008), 4.

Give out gospel tracts when you are in the drive-thru, when you are with your neighbors. If you have children, give the gospel to your children regularly.

Let's end where we began. The message of the gospel saves. We don't have to edit it. We just have to proclaim it.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. —*Romans 1:16a*