

The Salvation of the Gentiles, Part 3

Scripture: Acts 10:34–35

Code: 1736

INTRODUCTION

Acts 10 contains the historical account of the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles. The Jews and Gentiles had been antagonistic for centuries. The outreach of the gospel to the Gentiles, and the inclusion of them in the church was a monumental event. It is the theme of Acts 10. Peter was chosen by God to be the instrument to carry the gospel to Cornelius and others of his household. When they came to Christ, that began the inclusion of the Jews and Gentiles into one body in Christ. The body of Christ had been welded together not only in Jerusalem, but also in Judea, Samaria, and finally to the uttermost parts of the earth (Ac. 1:8). But another important part of the story centers on the conversion of Cornelius and some of his friends and relatives. So Acts 10 is important both historically and soteriologically (regarding salvation).

Before the meeting between Cornelius and Peter could occur, God had to do some tremendous preparation. Peter had been prepared by a special vision his prejudices were being broken down (vv. 9-16). Cornelius had been prepared by another special vision and told to send some of his men to find Peter, who would communicate the truth to him (vv. 17-19). The men have now met and have reported to each other how they were led to this meeting (vv. 27-33).

Now Peter begins to preach. Verse 34 says, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said" Peter pours out the content that was needed to bring an already prepared vessel to salvation.

A. The Message of Peace

The dominant message that Peter gives is stated in verse 36: "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)." The message of the gospel is one of peace. Man is in open rebellion against God; he's not at peace. Only Christ can bring him peace with God. But man is also in rebellion against his fellow man. Men are selfish: They are self-centered, self-motivated, and independent. They will do the things that reflect best on them. Consequently, it is extremely difficult to bring men into peace with each other. But that is exactly what the gospel accomplishes: first, peace with God; and second, peace among men. True peace comes only from God. Peace for the Christian is a reality; peace for an unsaved man is an impossible dream.

B. The Management of Peace

1. THE AUTHOR

In 1 Corinthians 14:33 the Apostle Paul said, "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace"

You say, "If God is who He claims to be, why is the world in such a mess?" God didn't make the mess. He is not the author of it. In his benediction to the church at Rome, Paul called God "the God of peace" (Rom. 16:20; cf. Heb. 13:20). In 2 Thessalonians 3:16 Paul called Christ "the Lord of peace." When Jesus left His disciples He said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled ..." (Jn. 14:27). Peace comes only from God.

2. THE AGENT

In Ephesians 2:14 Paul said, "For He is our peace" What does he mean by that?

a. An Example of Peacemaking

Suppose two people had a quarrel over some particular issue and couldn't resolve it. Some lawyers got into the act and filed suits on behalf of each man. So they went to court. As a result, the court drew up a legal document stating the rights of each man, and then told them to be at peace on the basis of that document. The chances are that the quarrel would continue. The breach would remain because no peace can ever be made on the basis of a piece of paper. But suppose a third party enters the picture. This man is someone that the other two men love, and who loves them in return. Suppose that the third individual takes the hand of the one and the hand of the other and clasps them together. That third person then becomes their peace. The chances of their peace lasting are much greater when there is a common love for an individual. That's exactly what Paul meant when he said, "For He is our peace"

b. The Execution of Peacemaking

God couldn't draw up a document and say, "All you Jews and Gentiles must follow My rules. I want you to be at peace now." It wouldn't work. But God knew that if many Jews fell in love with Jesus Christ, and that if many Gentiles fell in love with Him as well, then many Jews would be in love with many Gentiles.

In 1 Corinthians 6:17 Paul said, "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." If a Gentile is one with Christ and a Jew is one with Christ, then they are one with each other. There's only one body. We are one in Christ. He doesn't teach us about peace or give us a document about peace; He is our peace. Since we are in Him, we are at peace with others who are also in Him.

c. The Efficacy of Peacemaking

Peter knew that peace was the issue. When peace had been established with God, he could have peace with his brother.

1) For the Prodigal Son

The prodigal son thought it would be better to do what he wanted than stay at home. He gathered up all his treasures, told his father that he wanted his inheritance, and took off for a far country and lived it up (Lk. 15:12-13). He had a great time, but he spent all his money (v.14). He decided that he

needed a job, so he took a job slopping hogs (v. 15). I used to do that in high school, and it's a terrible job. He came to his senses one day and decided to go home to his father (vv. 17-18). When he arrived, his father "fell on his neck and kissed him" (v. 20). He was reconciled to his father. But there still was a renegade in the family his brother. First he was reconciled to the father; then reconciliation with his brother was possible.

2) For the Church

The same reconciliation is possible in the church. When men are reconciled to the Father, they can be reconciled to their brother. But that happens only in Christ. If Jew and Gentile were to be one in the church, they would have to be one in Christ. There had been too many years of fighting and hatred. The Jews had said that Gentiles were created to provide fuel for the fires of hell. Gentiles had said that Jews were good for nothing but slave material. That kind of animosity had been ingrained in those two groups for too long to ever be settled by a document. It had to be settled by overwhelming love through a miracle from God in the form of Jesus Christ. That's the message that Peter wanted to get across. Peace is Peter's theme.

There is a twofold theme in Acts 10: The record of Cornelius's salvation and the record of the Jews and Gentiles becoming one in the church. We have been concentrating on the salvation of Cornelius, discovering features that made up his salvation.

Salvation is not a process; it is an instantaneous miracle. For example, physical birth is not a process; it happens in a moment. A child is born. But there is a period that leads up to that birth a time of preparation. There is also a preparation for life after that birth. The baby is first prepared by God for birth, and then it is prepared for life after it is born certain things need to be done to care for that baby. The same thing is true in salvation. Although the actual new birth is a momentary miracle, there is a time of preparation before salvation and a preparation for life after salvation. It is not a process. You can't say, "I'm in week six of being saved; the whole thing is a nine week process." Salvation is not that way at all. As we look at the outline of Acts 10, we will see this sequence of events: Sovereign Call, Submissive Will, and Simple Presentation followed by Spiritual Power, Symbolic Confession, and Sweet Fellowship. The first one we looked at was God's ...

I. SOVEREIGN CALL (vv. 120; see pp. xxxx, xxxx)

Peter had been prepared by God to meet Cornelius, and God had prepared Cornelius to be saved. Salvation is initiated by God. It begins from the divine side. The natural (unsaved) man has no capacity to understand the things of God because they are spiritually discerned; he's spiritually dead (1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1). He cannot comprehend it by empiricism or philosophy. In Romans 3:11 Paul says, "... there is none that seeketh after God." Second Corinthians 4:4 says, "... the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Men are locked into deadness and blindness. They are unable to reason or make a rational conclusion concerning God and salvation. They are completely trapped in their sinfulness. Therefore, salvation must come from God. That's why the Apostle John says, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1:12-13). Salvation is initiated by God. In Romans 8:28 Paul says, "... all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Paul later says, "... whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them

He also glorified" (v. 30). Salvation begins with God. Paul was traveling on the road to Damascus when God confronted him with a vision of Jesus Christ, who said, "I want you to be saved!" (Ac. 9:36).

II. SUBMISSIVE WILL (vv. 2133; see pp. xxxx)

God does not manufacture a bunch of rubber ducks and robots with no will of their own; there is activity on the part of a man. Salvation involves our response to God. That's where the submissive will fits in salvation. In verses 2133 we find how responsive Cornelius was. He was so open that all God had to do was move on his heart and he responded immediately. Verse 33 says, "Immediately, therefore, I sent to thee" Salvation is a matter of the will. Jesus said this to the religious leaders: "... ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (Jn. 5:40). Sovereign call demands a human response. People don't say, "I hope God will save us one of these days; we're waiting." You didn't wait for some divine act; your will was involved. The Spirit of God moved on your will until you came to a crisis point of decision when you received Jesus Christ.

Cornelius had a desire to respond to God. The preparation had been done in his heart. God took a blind pagan who couldn't understand or see Him, and did a work in his heart. God turned him around; He gave him sight so that he could see Him. Cornelius saw the light that God had given him and he lived up to it. When a man lives up to the light that God gives him, God will give him more light. People will say, "What about the heathen?" Don't worry about the heathen. God knows exactly what He's doing with them. No man will be damned by God if he has lived up to the light that he has been given. Genesis 18:25 says, "... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Cornelius was a pagan, but God had worked on his heart and he had seen the light. Then Cornelius perceived that Jehovah of Israel is the true God, so he attached himself to Judaism as a "Godfearer." He was a good man. God saw that his heart was right, and that he had lived up to every revelation that He had given him. So God moved to give him full revelation that he might become saved. That's how God deals with pagan people whether they are in New Guinea or New York. Thus Cornelius illustrates submissive will.

Peter also illustrates the submissive will of a Christian. God not only chooses people for salvation, but also chooses believers for service. In Acts 10:40-41 Peter says, "... God raised up [Jesus] the third day, and showed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before by God" God had selected certain people to be the witnesses of the resurrection. In John 15:16 Jesus says, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" God chooses His servants, but they need to be submissive. God may have chosen you for specific duties, but you need to be willing to be involved in those duties. God's not going to pick you up in a divine chariot like He did for Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:11); you have to go. So Peter illustrates the submission of the will of a Christian by doing what God called him to do.

The Spirit of Obedience

Psalm 119 has one hundred and seventysix verses that discuss how much the psalmist loved the Word of God. He had the spirit of obedience. For example:

1. VERSE 16 "I will delight myself in Thy statutes; I will not forget Thy Word." Can you imagine someone who loved commands so much that he had to obey! Let me show you what I mean.

Suppose you tell your daughter to wash the dishes. You'll find out whether she has the spirit of obedience or not. She might grumble about washing them, but she'll do it because she's afraid you'll discipline her if she doesn't. But have you ever had your daughter say, "Mom, can I do the dishes for you?" The point is this: In the first example, the daughter was obedient; but in the second one, she revealed the spirit of obedience.

2. VERSE 60 Here is a classic definition of the spirit of obedience: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." Someone with the spirit of obedience says, "I'm in a hurry because I have some commandments to keep." It's one thing to be obedient, but it's something else to have the spirit of obedience. Some people are obedient out of fear (they're afraid of God's punishment), and some out of legalism (they think they can please God by their own efforts). But some people are obedient because they love Him so much that they would rather serve Him than do anything else. Incidentally, the spirit of obedience is synonymous with spiritual maturity. Spiritually mature people are in a hurry to obey God.

3. VERSE 20 "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thine ordinances at all times." The psalmist is saying, "God, my heart is breaking because I can't get over my desire to keep Your commandments!"

4. VERSE 24 "Thy testimonies are also my delight"

5. VERSE 47 "... I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved."

6. VERSE 70 "... I delight in Thy law." That's like saying, "Mom, give me some commandments! I'm eager to obey them!"

7. VERSE 97 "Oh, how I love Thy law!..." Obedience to God's law proves your love.

8. VERSE 103 "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth."

9. VERSE 140 "Thy word is very pure; therefore, Thy servant loveth it."

10. VERSE 167 "My soul hath kept Thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly."

Peter had the spirit of obedience. He had the desire to submit himself to the will of God not grudgingly, but because he loved to do it. That's the spirit that God wants. We also have seen the submissive will of Cornelius. He obeyed the information God gave him, so now God is about to give him the final information he needs.

III. SIMPLE PRESENTATION (vv. 34-43)

Peter gives a simple gospel message. There aren't many sweeping, theological, grandiose statements in it. Why? Because Cornelius was ready. In fact, Peter doesn't even finish his sermon. He later said this to the Jews in Jerusalem: "... as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them ..." (Ac. 11:15). What does that mean? God was saying, "Peter, you've said enough; they're already saved." Peter spoke, the people were saved, the Spirit came, and the Lord ended the meeting. They

were ready. All they needed was simple content. And that's what Peter gave them.

Someone can believe many things, be a good and righteous man, but not know Jesus Christ because he hasn't heard the gospel. Cornelius was such a man, but he was prepared by God. He had all the necessary ingredients but he still needed to hear the gospel. I believe that no man will ever enter into heaven apart from faith in Christ. You say, "What if someone can't hear the gospel?" He will. God will never hold back truth from a man who wants to know it. John 7:17 says, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." In other words, if a man lives up to what he has, God will always give him more light.

A. The Introduction (vv. 34-35)

Peter has a fantastic approach as he begins his sermon. He was a master at introductions. In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit created a city wide illustration for him: The believers miraculously spoke in different languages and put the city in turmoil (vv. 213). So Peter stood up and said, "... Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words" (v. 14). Peter took advantage of the illustration that the Holy Spirit had just provided. A great way to introduce your message is to accommodate the situation. That immediately ties you into it. Peter did that beautifully.

Picture the scene: Jews and Gentiles are gathered in Cornelius's house. That in itself was a precarious situation because Jews didn't go into Gentile houses. Even the Jews who accused Christ wouldn't enter the house of Pilate because they would become defiled and not be able to eat the Passover (Jn. 18:28). The religious leaders had said that a seven-day defilement resulted from entering a Gentile house because they believed that Gentiles put aborted babies down the drain. But here were Jews in a Gentile house, probably very concerned about being defiled. And there were also Gentiles in the house. The tension was probably so thick in that house that you could have cut it with a hatchet! Peter probably sensed what was in the air the Jews and Gentiles were like two feuding parties so he began his introduction.

Verse 34 says, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said" I used to think, "Why does that verse say that?" But the phrase "opened his mouth" is a colloquialism in the Greek language indicating that he was going to say something very important. It was so important because it would shatter centuries of prejudice.

1. THE FAIRNESS OF GOD (v. 34)

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons"

The Jews might have been thinking, "What are we doing here with these Gentiles?" while the Gentiles were thinking, "What are we doing here with these Jews?" Then Peter says, "... God is no respecter of persons." What a beautiful introduction! It riveted their attention on him. He cut right through the tension with one statement.

a. The Absence of Condescension

Peter didn't say, "We Jews have come to you Gentiles because we care. We know you are needy people." There is no such condescension in Peter's message. When I was ministering in the South to

black communities and churches, one man said to me, "John, I think what makes your ministry so effective here is that you don't condescend to us. We have many white people who come in and say, 'We white people love you Negroes.'" That turned them off because that was condescending. That's like saying, "We've decided that you're worthy of our attention." That's treating them like secondclass people. But there was no condescension on Peter's part.

b. An Awakening to Understanding

Peter says, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (v. 34). The term "I perceive" is a lineartense verb indicating continuous action. So Peter is saying, "I'm starting to understand that God's grace embraces all classes of men." Just the fact that he was in Cornelius's house was important, as was the fact that his six Jewish brethren had come along. So Peter immediately shocked his audience by saying that nationalities and racial prejudice weren't even an issue in salvation. He says, "I am beginning to understand that truth." That was quite an admission.

1) By Paul

a) Romans 3:2930 "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, seeing it is one God, who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." Faith is the issue, not whether you're a Jew or a Gentile.

b) Romans 10:12 "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord overall is rich unto all that call upon Him."

Paul understood that there was no distinction.

2) By Peter

Peter thought back to the sheet that came down from heaven with clean and unclean animals in it. Its meaning was beginning to get clearer in his mind. But he should have seen that truth a long time before.

a) God's Teaching in the Old Testament

You say, "Didn't God teach in the Old Testament that He liked the Jews better than anyone else?" No. For example:

(1) DEUTERONOMY 10:17 "For the +LORD your God is God of gods, and +LORD of lords, a great God, a mighty, and an awesome, who regardeth not persons" God doesn't have any favorites.

(2) 2 CHRONICLES 19:7 "Wherefore, now, let the fear of the +LORD be on you: take heed and do it; for there is no iniquity with the +LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes."

God is impartial. And that's exactly what Peter was beginning to awaken to. God had already taught that long before. In Romans 2:11 Paul said, "For there is no respect of persons with God." There never has been, and there never will be.

b) God's Treatment of All Men

You say, "That is obvious to me, but why wasn't it obvious to the Jews?" Many traditions had grown up and many rabbis had confused the issue. Instead of becoming missionaries and evangelists, the Jews had become separatists. But God doesn't care just about Israel; He cares about all men.

(1) AMOS 9:7 "... Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? And the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" You say, "What does he mean?" Just this: God is also active in other nations. He is not a respecter of persons.

(2) MICAH 6:8 Here are God's requirements: "... to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." That statement has nothing to do with national importance. A Gentile can fulfill it as well as a Jew. God has never been a respecter of persons.

c. The Application of Love

The phrase "no respecter of persons" (v. 34) is one word in the Greek text. It means, "to honor a person above someone else." It is used in one other place in the New Testament. James 2:1 says, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." If you're a Christian, you shouldn't rate people. James gives a painfully practical illustration: "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in fine apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool, are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges with evil thoughts?" (vv. 24). Then James says, "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well; but if you have respect of persons, ye commit sin ..." (vv. 89). Did you know that respecting certain people over other people is sin?

Can God sin? No. Then can God respect Jews more than Gentiles? No, all are equal in His eyes. God didn't select Israel because He liked them better, but because He needed people to be His witnesses. There is no respect of persons with God, and there shouldn't be within the body of Jesus Christ. We need to make sure that we are equally sharing the love and ministry that God has given us with the poor. When we do that to the glory of the Lord and not to make social points, we're on the right track.

Peter's message tore down the prejudices of both the Jews and the Gentiles.

2. THE FAVOR OF GOD (v. 35)

"But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him."

There were times when Peter made statements that he didn't understand. In Matthew 16:13 Jesus said, "... Who do men say I, the Son of man, am?" The disciples said, "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living

God" (vv. 14-16). Then the Lord said to him, "... flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father, who is in heaven" (v. 17). Peter often said things through divine inspiration.

Peter's statement, "... in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him" went totally against what he had learned all his life. That is the kind of revolution that God can bring about in the heart of a man through the Holy Spirit. Have you ever seen a man change? If ever a man has been truly changed, it has happened through Jesus Christ. After you become a Christian, Christ still changes you. That was true of Peter all his prejudices were falling apart.

a. The Issue

The phrase "in every nation" indicates that salvation has always been an issue for every man. Peter says that God accepts the one who "fears Him, and worketh righteousness" God looks for two things: the right attitudes (fearing, or reverencing God) and the right actions (righteousness). If a man lives up to the revelation that God gives him which he makes obvious by fearing God and desiring righteousness then God accepts him. Two things lead to God's acceptance: right attitudes and right actions. James said, "... faith without works is dead" (Js. 2:20). The action verifies that the attitude is legitimate.

1) The Response of Man

If a man lives in agreement with the knowledge that God puts in him, God will increase his knowledge. Even a pagan Gentile who has never seen the law of God can be led to God by living up to the revelation that He has given to him. Romans 2:14 says, "For when the Gentiles, who have not the law [they don't have the Old Testament to reveal God to them], do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves." What does that reveal? Verse 15 says that they "show the work of the law written in their hearts ..." (v. 15). God plants His law in the heart of the pagan. If a pagan wants to live up to that law, God will give him more light.

Cornelius revered God, but He was not saved. In Acts 11:14, Peter reports what the angel told Cornelius: "[Peter] shall tell thee words, by which thou and all thy house shall be saved." He wasn't saved, but Cornelius had lived up to the full light that he had been given. His desire was to serve the true God the God of Israel. Cornelius was doing good things, such as giving alms and praying. Cornelius had the right attitudes and the right actions; therefore, God accepted him.

2) The Response of God

a) Acceptance

What does the phrase "accepted with Him" mean? Does it mean that you earn your way to heaven by good deeds? No. It doesn't mean that God saves you apart from Christ; it means that He accepts you for what you are. And what was Cornelius? He was a man who had lived up to the light that had been given to him, but he still wasn't saved. If he were, he wouldn't have needed Peter to explain the gospel to him. God regarded him with favor, and presented him with more light.

In Genesis 18:25 Abraham said to God, "That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked" Do you think God is going to send to hell those who have lived up to all

the light they've been given along with those who have completely rejected Him? No. Verse 25 continues, "... that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" In verse 26 the Lord says, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." You say, "What did He mean by fifty righteous?" Those would be people who God knew had lived up to the light they had within them in the midst of a pagan city. God knows the heart of every man. If a man has lived up to the light he has, God will invade his life with the truth of Christ. I don't believe that any man will ever go to heaven apart from Jesus Christ. And if a man lives up to the light that he has, somehow God will communicate to him the facts concerning the atonement of Jesus Christ.

b) Rejection

In Hosea's day, the people were offering sacrifices to God and going through many rituals. But God said, "I don't accept those things from you because they're superficial" (Hos. 8:13). You've got to have the right attitudes and actions, not just the right actions. That takes us to the Jews. They weren't accepted by Him either. Why? They had the right actions: they followed through on all the activities. But they didn't have the right attitudes. The Gentiles may have had the right attitudes, but they didn't know all that they should do. The two must go together. God accepted the Gentile with the right attitudes, but He rejected the Jew with the right activities but the wrong heart (Rom. 2:17-29).

So God communicates through Peter that salvation is an issue for any man who reveres God and endeavors to serve Him.

b. The Illustration

Here is a good illustration involving another centurion: "And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Mt. 8:58). He believed that Jesus could heal across miles. He didn't feel worthy to have Him in his house. He was a humble man with the right attitudes. He also knew where the truth was: in Christ.

Verse 10 says, "When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." In other words, "You people have the right actions but the wrong attitudes." The centurion may not have known all that he should, but he sure had the right heart and his actions were righteous. The actions of the people of Israel was unrighteous because their attitudes were wrong. Then Jesus said, "And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west [Gentiles], and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom [Jews] shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (vv. 11-12). Right actions without right attitudes are nothing. God will accept a pagan out of the darkest place of ignorance if he fears Him and practices righteousness the best he can. God doesn't say, "You're saved for doing that"; He says, "You've lived up to the light you have, so I'll give you the light you need to be saved."

c. The Indictment

The thing that grieves God's heart is that neither Jew nor Gentile live up to the light they have. Romans 1:18 says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Then Paul goes on to say that the truth of God is manifest in the heart of every man and is obvious from the visible world around them, but they didn't glorify Him (vv. 19-21). They worshiped the creature instead of the Creator (v. 25). The Jews had done a similar thing. In Romans 2:17-23 Paul says that they boasted in many things, and that they preached to others when they should have preached to themselves. Then he says, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you ..." (v. 24). The sad thing is that neither Jew nor Gentile live up to the light that they have. In Romans 3:9 Paul concludes that both are under sin.

Peter sets the theme by saying that salvation is available to any man who will live up to the light that God has given him. God then calls him, and he needs to respond with his will. If he responds, then he is prepared, and God never rejects a prepared heart. John 7:17 says, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" But God needs people like Peter to reap those prepared hearts. And that's where we come in. I realize that I must be available because God has prepared fruit that is ready to be picked. Jesus said, "You say that the harvest comes in four months, but the harvest is already ripe" (Jn. 4:35). We need people to pick that prepared fruit right now. God needs people who know the gospel and can do the work that God has already prepared. There are people in this world who have lived up to the light that they have, listened to the call of God, and submitted their will; they're just waiting for someone to explain Jesus Christ to them. I've had the occasion to lead people like that to Christ. They dropped off the tree like ripe fruit at the first indication of the gospel. Let's be the kind of people who will reach others for Christ.

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1. What is the dominant message of the gospel according to Acts 10:36? Explain. (see p. 1)
2. Who is man in rebellion against? (see p. 1)
3. Who is the author of peace? Who is the agent of peace? (1 Cor. 14:33; Eph. 2:14; see pp. 12)
4. Describe what Paul meant when he said that Christ is our peace. (see p. 2)
5. What must be established first before man can have peace with his fellow man? (see p. 2)
6. Describe how salvation is like the birth of a baby. (see p. 3)
7. Describe how Cornelius and Peter illustrate submissive will. (see pp. 45)
8. Define the spirit of obedience. What are some scriptures that describe it? (see pp. 56)
9. Describe how Peter's introduction to the gospel message fit the situation at Cornelius's house. (Ac. 10:34; see p. 7)
10. According to Acts 10:34, what was Peter beginning to understand? (see p. 8)

11. What did God teach in the Old Testament concerning His partiality with different groups of people? (see pp. 89)
12. What does James say that you are doing if you are a respecter of persons? (Js. 2:9; see p. 10)
13. What are the two things that lead God to accept someone? (Ac. 10:35; see p. 11)
14. If a man lives up to the knowledge that God puts in him, what will God do for him? (see p. 11)
15. What does the phrase "accepted with Him" mean? (Ac. 10:35; see p. 12)
16. What is it that both Jew and Gentile do that grieve God? (see p. 14)

+ponder

1. Once peace has been established with God, men can live at peace with each other. Are you experiencing peace with all men in your walk with God? Look up the following verses: Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18; Ephesians 4:3; Hebrews 12:14; James 3:17-18. Are you pursuing peace with all men? Make it your goal to live peaceably with all men. Memorize Romans 14:19: "... let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another" (+NASB).
2. Read the verses of Psalm 119 recorded on pages 56. Are those verses characteristic of your obedience to God? Based on your answer, do you think that you have the spirit of obedience? If you think that you don't have that spirit, perhaps you are disobeying God more often than you are obeying Him. Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14. What does God do for those who obey Him consistently? Commit yourself to obey God in everything. As you faithfully obey Him in all things, you will find yourself delighting in His Word.
3. Read James 2:1-13. According to verse 1, what does James say that all Christians are to do? Have you shown partiality to your brothers and sisters in Christ? If you have, what do verses 4 and 9 say that you have done? Based on that, what must you do to love your neighbor as yourself? According to verse 12, what should be your motivation? Strive to treat everyone fairly. Thank God that although you stumble in fulfilling the royal law, God forgives you.
4. Are you available to be used by God? If He were to call you to lead a prepared person to Christ, would you be ready to share the gospel with Him? There are two things you need to do: First, learn how to share the gospel. Learn the facts of what Christ has done to set men free from the bondage of sin and death. Second, when you have prepared yourself to share the gospel, seek for opportunities to share it. Ask God to lead you to people He has prepared to receive the gospel.

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