

A Gospel for All the Nations

Acts 10:1-48

Introduction: 1) In the book, *What In The World Is God Doing?*, Allen Fleece says, “This is the decision we do not make, because it has already been made.

Whether we spend our lives for the purpose of reaching all men with the gospel is not optional. Christ has commanded every Christian to do just this. Now there are many different ways of accomplishing this one purpose – but regardless of the particular work God has for each of us to do, the one aim of us all in doing our particular job for the Lord must be the evangelization of the whole world.”

(Quoted in *Expect Great Things*, 22).

2) Allen Fleece is right. We have been commissioned and commanded by a

Heavenly King to evangelize the whole world. Every single person of the 7.2 billion people on planet earth is to be the object of our evangelizing passion.

Every single person of the 11, 168 people groups in the world is to be the focus of our mission strategies. Every single person of the 6, 544 unreached people groups, a population of 4.83 billion, is to be the assignment of our 44,000 plus churches.

And, every single person of the 2, 982 unengaged people groups (no gospel presence at all) must not be left out of our pleas to the Father to “send forth laborers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:37-38).

3) The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel for all the nations. It is for all peoples! Acts 10 makes this perfectly clear. Here God gets directly involved to overcome the bigotry, prejudice and spiritual near-sightedness of the apostle Peter, the one He, as Matthew 16:19 says, gave “the keys of the kingdom.” The big fisherman was not using the keys as Christ intended. Our Lord gets personally involved and in the process, provides a pattern of world missions for every one of us, our churches, our Convention. This is a rich text theologically, missiologically, personally. May our Lord give us ears to hear.

I. Those who seek the Lord will be found by Him 10:1-8

- Proverbs 8:17, “I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.”
- Jeremiah 29:13, “You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”
- The importance of this event is indicated by the amount of material Luke dedicates to telling it (10:1-11:18). Actually he tells the story twice.
- Record of the gospel going to the Gentiles: the nations!
- Sea coast town of Casarea we meet a Roman soldier, a modern army captain, who commanded probably 100 men (Hughes, 300-600; p. 144). He is described as 1) devout, 2) one who feared God, 3) a generous giver and 4) a man who prayed (v. 2).

- Main point: he was a Gentile. He was one among the nations. Jews saw them as inferior, unclean, unworthy of table fellowship, even entering their houses. Curtis Vaughn says the chasm between Jew and Gentile was worse than the Hindu caste system and the racial divide in our nation (p. 67).
- And yet God, looking on the heart (this is where our God is color blind), sees a soul in search of salvation and provides a vision (v. 3-6) telling him how he may find that salvation.
- Note: his obedience was immediate (v. 7-8). He was ready to hear the gospel!
- Cornelius represents, is an example, of unsaved people among unreached peoples who are seeking the truth, who want to know the One true God. They are everywhere among the nations and Luke tells us God sees their heart and honors their search. Indeed he will go to extraordinary lengths to get the gospel to them. Respond to the revelation you have and God will give you more.
- Cornelius was a good man, but he was still a lost man! That is why God moved Peter to take him and his family the gospel. Indeed he could not be saved without the gospel. But hear the promise of Lamentations 3:25, “The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks Him.” Those who want to know the Lord, living up to the light they have in creation

(Rom. 1) and conscience (Rom. 2), God promises to give them more light.

He will find them and get the gospel to them.

II. God will raise up missionaries to get the gospel to those who seek Him

10:9-23

- “The greatest hindrance to the advance of the gospel worldwide is the failure of the lives of God’s people” (Stott, *EGT*, 27).
- People who focus on and have a passion for the Great Commission are seldom troublemakers, ethnocentric, self-centered, focusing on little things that are silly things and sometimes even sinful things. This was a lesson the Lord had to teach the apostle Peter directly.
- Like Cornelius, God comes to Peter in a vision as he was praying around noon time, also lunch time (vs. 9-10).
- The vision included a command (v. 13) to eat the unclean animals one would find in Leviticus 11. Peter is horrified by what is now a daytime nightmare and vehemently protests, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclear” (v. 14). Resisting the Lord’s commands was something familiar to Peter (Matt. 16:22; John 13:8). So was a 3-fold lesson (His denial/ “Do you love Me?”)!
- John Piper captures well the essence of this heated dialogue when he says, “God gave Peter a vision of animals that the Jews regarded as unclean

because of the ceremonial law of the Old Testament. The voice from heaven said, “Rise and eat.” But Peter protested that they were unclean. And the voice came back with these decisive words in verse 15: “What God has cleansed [made clean, ESV] you must not call common!” In other words, with the coming of Jesus into the world and with the final cleansing sacrifice of Christ now offered and with the command to take the gospel to all ethnic groups in the world now given, the old ceremonial laws about foods are lifted and that barrier to the Gentile world is removed. And so Peter’s vision has two points: the food laws are fulfilled and ended in Jesus (Mark 7:19), and the people they kept you separate from (the nations, the Gentiles) are not to be considered unclean or common.” (“What God has cleansed do not call common,” 10-21-91).

- The vision “inwardly perplexed” (v. 17) Peter. He still wasn’t clear what God was saying. The Spirit follows up (something we all often need) in vs. 19-20 with a 3-fold command [Read]. Peter is beginning to get it as vs. 21-23 make clear [Read]. A missionary heart is being birthed! He even invites them in!
- Platt, “What happens here is God, starting with Peter, begins to bring about a conversion from deep-seated prejudice to divinely-ordained openness...the

heart begins to change here. [God says], “You need to be open to what I am doing among the people groups, among the nations around you.”

- And note: Peter was in Joppa (9:43). Might God have, used the story of Jonah too! Running from God seldom works out well!

III. God seeks the salvation of all nations without partiality 10:23-35

“When Jesus arose from the grave, He created a whole new race of people not defined by color but defined by His blood.” Pastor Derwin Gray.

Tony Merida: “We judge by appearance. We discriminate on these factors: 1) appearance, 2) ancestry, 3) age, 4) achievement, 5) affluence” (“Grace For Every Race: Joining God’s Global Purpose”).

- Peter obeys the Lord’s command (v. 20) and makes the 30 mile journey from Joppa to Caesarea (vs. 23-24). Upon meeting Cornelius, Peter exhibits both appropriate humility (vs. 25-26) and brutal honesty (vs. 27-29). He is just a man like any man. And is a sinful man that needed God to straighten him out.
- Cornelius recounts the events that led them to this point (vs. 30-33).
- Peter then “opened his mouth” (v. 34) and makes one of the most important statements in all of the Bible: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality.”

HCSB: “Now I really understand God doesn’t show favoritism.”

AMP: “Most certainly and thoroughly I now perceive that God shows no partiality and is no respecter of persons.”

- Eugene Petersen in *The Message* captures well the massive significance and theological import of what Peter says and now understands: “Peter fairly exploded with his good news: “It’s God’s own truth, nothing could be plainer: God plays no favorites! It makes no difference who you are or where you’re from – if you want God and are ready to do as he says, the door is open.”
- Our God is no respecter of persons when it comes to seeking the salvation of human beings made in His likeness and image.
Racial barriers come crashing down.
Ethnic barriers come crashing down.
Cultural barriers come crashing down.
Social barriers come crashing down.
Economic barriers come crashing down.
All barriers come crashing down.
- Anyone who says otherwise calls God a liar! God’s salvation plan has a laser-beam pointed at all peoples anywhere and everywhere. The question: whose voice are you listening to?

- “Had I cared for the comments [and opinions] of people, I should never have been a missionary.” C.T. Studd

IV. The good news of the gospel is the only means whereby God saves anyone

10:36-43

- “The gospel is good. You know it’s good. We know it’s good. It’s a divine message, but it requires a human messenger...we are God’s instruments to do this. Our responsibility is urgent. His power is available to us.... When we speak this Word, He will bless it. He will bless it to lead people to Christ. His power is available to His people, and His plan is aimed at all peoples” (Platt, “The God Who Holds The World In His Hands,” 2-6-11).
- Peter refused to be treated as a god or to treat the nations as unworthy dogs! He has been called by God to be a gospel heralding missionary and that is exactly what he does in vs. 36-43. Peter’s sermon actually begins in verse 34. God shows no favoritism (v. 34). Those who fear Him and pursue Him will be found by Him and given the gospel (v. 35) a gospel first given to the Jews but now sent to the nations because “he is Lord of all” (v. 36). All nations are under His lordship.
- Peter presents the gospel in 3 movements:
 - 1) The life and ministry of Jesus (vs. 37-39).
 - 2) His saving act of crucifixion and resurrection (vs. 39-41).

3) The promise of salvation to all (“everyone”) who believes (vs. 42-43).

- The exclusivity of the gospel message is affirmed (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5).

The universality of the gospel offer is affirmed (“everyone” how believes).

The missionary imperative of the gospel mandate is affirmed (v. 42).

- Carl F.H. Henry, “The gospel is only good news if it gets there in time.”
John Piper, “We will be worshiping and praising God for eternity, but we have only a limited time upon earth to engage in missions so that the nations would rejoice and sing for joy.”

V. God gives the Holy Spirit to all who respond to the word of His gospel

10:44-48

- “The Spirit is sent to make Christ real to people and to show us who He really is in His glory so that we come to love Him and trust Him and obey Him and show Him to the world....The Spirit loves to come and take the truth about Jesus and turn it into an experience of Jesus” (John Piper, “Exalting Jesus so the Spirit Falls,” 11-17-91).
- Verses 44-48 record the happy results of Peter taking the gospel to the nations. As Peter preached “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word” (*Word & Spirit*). (v. 44).

- The Jews were amazed that God would save Gentiles (v. 45). There was still “heart work” that needed to be done as 11:1-18 makes clear.
- Their speaking in tongues and praising God was an undeniable evidence that a “Gentile Pentecost” was taking place (v. 46). [cf. Acts 2].
- The falling of the Spirit on Gentile believers mandated their inclusion into the community of faith, the church, the family of God, by the initiatory rite and celebration of baptism (vs. 47-48). The Lord had baptized them by His Spirit into His family. Peter would then baptize them with water into the visible fellowship. Barriers of race, ethnicity and nationality have come crashing down thru the power of the cross. The church would never be the same. After all, sameness was never God’s goal to begin with!

Conclusion: We have an indiscriminate, all-inclusive gospel to proclaim to the nations near and far. Our God has placed no limitations on those He longs to save, bring to Himself, and glorify His Son. John Stott says it so very well, “If God desires every knee to bow to Jesus and every tongue to confess him, so should we. We should be “jealous” (as Scripture sometimes puts it) for the honour of his name – troubled when it remains unknown, hurt when it is ignored, indignant when it is blasphemed, and all the time anxious and determined that it shall be given the honour and glory which are due to it. The highest of all missionary motives is neither obedience to the Great Commission (important as that is), nor love for

sinners who are alienated and perishing (strong as that incentive is, especially when we contemplate the wrath of God), but rather zeal-burning and passionate zeal-for the glory of Jesus Christ. ...Before this supreme goal of the Christian mission, all unworthy motives wither and die.” (Quoted in *EGT*, 184).