

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 8.10.2025

PART 27 - GRACE FOR EVERY RACE

I. INTRODUCTION

Acts 10:34-38

So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 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. 39 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, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 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. 42 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. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 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. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

II. THE GOSPEL FOR ALL

GOD WELCOMES THE GENTILES

- The bookends of the sermon reveal the universal call of the good news to anyone and everyone.
- Notice Peter starts his message to his eager Gentile audience by stating what God had revealed to him.
- *"Truly I understand that God shows no partiality."*
- The basis for the impartiality of God is grounded in his character.
- Deut 10:17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no

bribe.

- God doesn't play favorites and he can't be bribed.
 - In this case, Peter declares that both Jew and Gentile are equal in God's sight.
 - God does not discriminate based on ethnic origin or social class.
 - God has welcomed the Gentiles, he has shown them hospitality, and Peter must do the same.
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- James 2:1,9 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.
 - If you are harboring any prejudice toward another people group, or social class, or people who think differently from you, repent of the sin of partiality.
 - Like Peter, you need to understand the character of God and the universal application of the gospel message, grace for every race under heaven.
 - Peter states that anyone from every nation, who fears the Lord and does what is righteous is acceptable to him; is welcomed by God.

THE SALVATION MESSAGE

- V36 Peter states that the message he is delivering was sent by God.
 - And that God sent the message first to Israel.
 - And that message came through the preaching of the Lord's Messiah, Jesus Christ who is the Lord of all.
 - That proclamation is central in this sermon and central to the gospel.
 - Jesus is Lord of all! He is Lord of all the earth (Ps 97:5).
 - Jesus is King, not Caesar, of which Cornelius, a Roman centurion would have had to pledge allegiance to.
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- And the Lord of all came to preach a message of peace.
 - Rome brought peace through flexing their military might in order to pacify hostile nations.
 - Jesus brought peace through his suffering and sacrifice.
 - The gospel of grace is that we can have peace with God.
 - We were not at peace with God—we were at war with God.
 - But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and now reconciled we shall be saved by his life (Rom 5:6-11).
 - God has taken the gracious initiative to end the war, to cease the hostilities by sending Jesus Christ who is Lord of all.
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- Peter gives a snapshot of Jesus's ministry, and he notes that his audience were aware of the events surrounding Jesus and all that happened throughout all Judea.
 - Beginning with his baptism under John's ministry.
 - And how God had anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power.
 - And Jesus's ministry consisted of him doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.
 - The presence and power of God were with him so that he could reclaim his own.
 - The unmistakable work of the triune God is declared here:
 - The Father sent and anointed Jesus Christ
 - The Spirit empowered Jesus
 - And the Son accomplished salvation for all who believe
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- Peter states they were witnesses to all of this.

- They witnessed his death. "They put him to death by hanging him on a tree."
 - "They put him to death" as opposed to earlier, "You put him to death..." when he preached to the Jews.
 - They witnessed his resurrection. "*But God raised him on the third day and made him appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses.*" "And not only did they see him, "we ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."
 - And they were appointed and commanded by Jesus to preach the gospel message and testify that Christ is the appointed Judge of both the living and the dead.
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- Here is the summary of the gospel message in Peter's sermon:
 - Jesus is Lord of all (36)
 - To him alone belongs our ultimate allegiance.
 - Jesus is Judge of all (42)
 - Because he is Lord and King, we will all give an account and he will render judgment.
 - Jesus is Savior of all who believe (43)
 - The King judges but also pardons. That pardon and forgiveness is granted to all who believe in him.
 - "All" without exception or distinction. No matter your race, ethnicity, class, or background. All who come to him will find salvation, life and forgiveness of sins through his name.
 - All who believe in him need not fear the judgment of Christ, as they receive forgiveness and pardon.
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- The earliest proclamations of the gospel message included an account of the life and character of Jesus.
 - They included his suffering and death and his resurrection.
 - The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ constitutes the gospel message.
 - And the scope of the gospel message is universal—it is for all.

THE GENTILE PENTECOST

- Something amazing happens as Peter is preaching.
 - The sovereign Lord interrupts his speech.
 - God takes charge of the situation to drive the point home—Gentiles are welcomed.
 - Right in the middle of his preaching, the Holy Spirit descends in power on all who heard the word.
 - The verbs and phrases used of the Spirit falling on all who heard and being poured out and the people speaking in tongues and praising God link this event to the Day of Pentecost, and also the Spirit falling upon the Samaritans.
 - This is the Gentile Pentecost. A unique moment in redemptive history.
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- The Jewish brothers that came with Peter were amazed that these Gentiles got the same thing they had received.
 - The evidence was undeniable. They saw and heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.
 - There was no denying the Spirit's arrival.
 - Any hesitation to welcome the Gentiles had been dealt with.
 - For Peter, that came in the form of the divine vision he received and now witnessing the coming of the Spirit upon the Gentiles.
 - Patrick Schreiner, quoting from Willie Jennings in his commentary on Acts, writes, "*In a quiet corner of the Roman Empire, in the home of a centurion, a rip in the fabric of space and time has occurred.*"
 - This was revolutionary!

- Peter recognizes what has taken place and he asks the brothers that came with him, *“can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit as we have?”*
- And he commands them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.
- Since God had accepted these Gentile believers, so too, must the church.
- These new Gentile converts have already been welcomed and affirmed by heaven and now they need to be ritually welcomed into the church.
- Water baptism is an important step after the reception of the Spirit. Baptism follows faith.
- As these new believers were welcomed into God’s household, they in turn ask Peter to remain for some days in their household.
- Peter accepts their hospitality demonstrating and reinforcing the solidarity the Lord had established between Jews and Gentiles.
- They were now one in Christ Jesus.
- Whomever Christ saves, we must welcome and disciple, regardless of where they came from, what previous lifestyle they were living, or what ethnic group they are a part of.
- Christ is our example of tearing down pre-existing barriers.
- He tore down the wall that divided sinners and a holy God through the shedding of his blood.
- He tore down the walls that existed between peoples and cultures by sending his Spirit.
- Be willing to go beyond your comfort zone.

III. THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE

- Acts 11:1-18, Peter decides to return to Jerusalem.
- But not everyone at the Jerusalem church was thrilled to hear what had happened. It's hard for some to let go of their prejudices.
- Acts 11:1-3 Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. 2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, 3 “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”
- News quickly spread about how the Gentiles received the word of God.
- The apostles and all the believers in the Jerusalem church heard about it.
- The news caused quite a stir among the Jewish believers. But not all of them were celebrating.
- The Jerusalem church was made up of Jewish believers. These were “circumcised” believers. They were Christians who still adhered to the Jewish law and viewed Gentiles just like Peter had—as unclean and outside of the covenant.
- And they criticized Peter. But notice the criticism that they level against him. It's not that he preached the gospel to the Gentiles.
- It's that Peter went to uncircumcised men and sat down and ate with them!
- Their issue with Peter wasn't just a theological difference, it was cultural and racial.
- Now Peter has to give account of his actions.

PETER'S DEFENSE

- Peter had to make his case. He had to mount a defense. Peter had crossed a boundary and he had to give an answer.

- The unity of the church is at stake. This has the potential to divide the church.
- Peter needs to help these brothers overcome their racial prejudice and welcome those whom God has already welcomed.
- Peter doesn't start by addressing their criticism of table fellowship with the Gentiles.
- Vv 4-17 Peter recounts his vision and the sequence of events.
- John Stott writes that *"It took four successive hammer blows of divine revelation before his racial and religious prejudice was overcome."*
- Four Hammer blows of divine revelation:
- First, the hammer blow of divine vision.
- Second, the hammer blow of divine command.
- Third, the hammer blow of divine preparation.
- Fourth, the hammer blow of divine action.
- Those four hammer blows were all aimed at Peter's prejudice.
- All of this demonstrated conclusively that God had now welcomed believing Gentiles into his family on equal terms with believing Jews.
- Gentiles didn't need to become Jews to be accepted and welcomed into God's family.
- That's why he baptized them in water in the name of Jesus.
- They received the sign of the reality they had already experienced by the hand of God.
- God's grace is for all people. God's grace is for every race!
- Share your faith with everyone, even those who seem far from God, even with those that you think are likely to reject the good news, share the gospel without distinction because God doesn't make distinctions.

UNITY AND REJOICING

- Acts 11:18 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."*
- The church has the appropriate response.
- The ones who confronted Peter were silenced. Their prejudices were confronted and they were convicted.
- They all glorified God recognizing that the Gentiles were also immersed in the river of God's grace.
- God is creating one people, Jew and Gentile, through repentance and faith in Christ.
- We must also be open to and rejoice at seeing God work in unexpected places and saving unexpected people.
- We must be willing to have our traditions and comfort zones challenged.
- Who are the Gentiles in your mind and heart—who are the people you resist engaging with the gospel?
- We don't get to determine who belongs in God's kingdom. Who are we to stand in God's way?
- We need to help other believers overcome their prejudices.
- God is gathering people from every nation, tribe, and tongue.
- He will succeed in his saving mission. The question is will we join him or resist him?
- Let us be a church that welcomes, disciples, and sends out people of every kind.
- God's grace is boundless, let's not draw artificial boundary lines around God's grace.
- May we like the Jerusalem church be humbled, surprised, and silenced by God's grace.
- And let us rejoice and glorify God as he saves the most unlikely and unexpected.

- And let us do that until that Day, when standing before the throne, clothed in white, we all will unite in echoing the chorus of the great multitude of the redeemed from every nation, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, crying out with a loud voice, *“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?