

# The Gospel to All Nations

September 30, 2007

**Icebreaker:** *Aside from those with different religious beliefs, what group of people would you not want to be associated with?"*

Acts 10 marks a turning point in the book of Acts. A hint to what is about to happen was given last week in Acts 9:15. *Who does God say Paul will spread the Gospel too?*

- The Gentiles

*Why would that be surprising?*

- They were considered unclean and Jews or Jewish Christians believed they were not to fellowship with the Gentiles.
- The Jews believed that in order to fellowship with Gentiles the Gentile males had to be circumcised and obey the law.
- Up to this point the Gentiles had been excluded from the church.

## Acts 10:1-8

*What four positive things does it say about Cornelius and his family?*

- Devout, God-fearing, gave generously, and prayed to God regularly.

*How obedient was Cornelius to the angel of God?*

## Acts 10:9-20

Unlike Cornelius who does not question or waiver, Peter has some doubts about his vision. *Why does Peter have more questions and concerns about his heavenly command than Cornelius did?*

- Cornelius had no religious baggage or preconceived ideas.
- Peter knew that this command went against much of what he had been taught about God what makes someone a child of God.

*What reason does Peter give why he should not eat the animals?*

- The animals were unclean according to the Law and were not to be eaten.
- He was not supposed to have contact with unclean things.

*What message is God sending Peter by telling him to eat animals that he had previously seen as unclean?*

- He was getting him ready to accept Cornelius and the Gentiles even though they too had been seen as unclean under the law.

Peter goes to Cornelius' house. He recognizes the lesson God was trying to teach him about going to

the Gentiles—**Acts 10:28 & 10:34-35**. He preaches the Gospel of Christ to them. If there was any uncertainty about whether or not God had fully accepted the Gentiles it was shattered in **10:44-46**.

*What did God do to show his acceptance of these Gentiles?*

- He sent his Holy Spirit on these Gentiles just as he had done the Jews earlier.
- The Gentiles began speaking in tongues just as the Christian Jews who had received God's Spirit had done.

God was showing Peter that he was not playing favorites. He is going to accept people from all nations into his kingdom even though it would not be popular with the Jews. Signs of the Spirit were there for Peter to see that if God had accepted them he must as well.

*How did Peter learn that God does not always do things just like we think he will?*

*What barriers do we have that divide people today?*

*How can that be used by Satan to harm the church?*

We are challenged to see people as God sees them and to accept whom God accepts. Whether it is race, socio-economic status, or any of a number of other social barriers that separate people, we are called to love them as God loves them and to accept others even if they are not like ourselves. It was not easy for Peter and it may not always be easy for us but it is the way God intends for it to be.

### **Acts 10:47-48**

Peter orders that they be baptized. He could have said, "They have already received the Spirit so what good is baptism?" But he didn't say that. Cornelius and his household were baptized marking the very first Gentiles to become Christians. *Why was baptism still a necessary part of their conversion to Christianity?*

We are all called to tell others about Jesus. Like Peter we may face many obstacles. Our culture may tell us that we should not associate with different groups but we do anyway. *Why?*

- Because who God has accepted we cannot reject.

The Gospel is to go into all nations. The only thing that can keep that from happening is ourselves. If we are unwilling to accept people who are not like ourselves we will miss out on God-given opportunities to spread the Gospel of Christ.

### **Application:**

*What barriers and walls have blocked you from reaching out to others?*

*How can we overcome obstacles that have kept us from reaching the lost?*

*What steps can we take to see people the way God sees them rather than the way our world sees them?*