

# Going Boldly

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Preacher: Missions Speaker

[ 0 : 00 ] Our passage today is Acts chapter 10, verses 1 to 48.

And out of respect for the reading of God's holy word, I ask that you would stand with me for the reading of it. But out of respect for your aging knees, we'll just read verses 1 to 8 together.

This is the word of the Lord. At Caesarea, there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people and prayed continually to God.

About the ninth hour of the day, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, Cornelius. And he stared at him in terror and said, What is it, Lord?

And he said to him, Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon, who is called Peter.

[ 1 : 09 ] He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him.

And having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Now, I've always had tremendous respect for people who go first in something, especially if it's something historic.

But oftentimes, we look back and do not remember the context that these events took place in. Because of that, their achievements can seem rather small to us.

For example, we fly in airplanes all the time. Surely the Wright brothers' first flight wasn't that impressive, was it? We cross oceans in an afternoon.

Surely Columbus didn't do anything that significant, did he? There are democracies all over the world. Surely the founding fathers of our nation didn't make that big of a contribution, did they?

[ 2 : 21 ] But in their day, these firsts were radical. They were hard. And they took courage. These people were breaking with the past and forging a new future, with no guarantee that things would turn out well.

In the text that we have read today and will continue reading throughout this message, the apostle Peter is going to go first. He is going to go boldly where no Jewish Christian had ever gone before. Peter is going to go to the Gentiles, the occupiers and oppressors of Israel, armed only with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, our passage is a long one, so there's no way we'll be able to touch on everything from it.

In some senses, we'll be flying over the top today. So we're going to break our passage into four key sections, and from those, I hope to draw five key ideas for our evangelism that will help us reach Bartlesville and engage the nations.

And I think that this is especially significant because this is our missions emphasis month. Also, it's worth noting that this passage is one of the most significant in the book of Acts.

[ 3 : 38 ] Why do you say that? You ask why I say that. It's because it's the single longest narrative in the book of Acts.

It's longer than the spirit coming at Pentecost. It's longer than the conversion of the Apostle Paul. Cornelius's vision is recounted four times in the book of Acts, and Peter's vision is recounted three times.

Now, in the first century world, a way to show that something was important was that you would repeat it. And this story is repeated time and again. This is deeply significant. So we need to pay close attention so that we can draw from it.

So, firstly, our first section, we have verses 1 to 8. And this is a centurion. And forgive me for not having the outline to put up.

I'm not as well practiced as our pastor. We should all be grateful for him. He gets things done, and he gets them done ahead of time. But unfortunately, I was not able to do so. So bear with me.

[ 4 : 42 ] Verses 1 to 8. So we need to start out by describing the participants in our story. So firstly, we have a centurion. Now, we've all read the New Testament.

We see that there are multiple centurions that appear in Scripture. Now, a centurion was a Roman officer. He led about 100 men. And because of this, it was the centurions who were the backbone of the Roman legions.

The generals up at the top gave the orders. But it was the centurions who got those orders accomplished. All centurions started down at the bottom of the ranks.

And they had to work their way up to their level. They didn't just show up and get to leave from the first day. During peacetime, a centurion would walk around with a wooden club in his hand.

This was the symbol of his authority. And he would use that to discipline his men. In battle, centurions were expected to fight in the very first rank.

[ 5 : 44 ] And they would do so wearing a crest of red feathers on their helmet so that all their men could see their centurion was in the front. It also meant that their enemies could see them too.

But that was just part of the job when you were a centurion. Why am I telling you this? I'm saying this because it's important that we understand centurions were hard men.

And they made their living leading hard men in battle. And it is to one of these men that an angel comes. But there's actually more going on here that we miss if we just read too quickly.

Notice what military unit Cornelius was a member of. It specifically says the Italian cohort. In the decades preceding this, as the Roman Empire grew, they needed to fill out the ranks of their army.

So they started to recruit soldiers from Greece and Spain and other places in the empire. But Cornelius is not one of those. He's from Italy. This is a real dyed-in-the-wool Roman.

[ 6 : 46 ] And if you're a Jewish person, this is about the worst type of person on earth. This isn't just a Roman. This is a Roman officer. And he's from Italy.

Oh, and notice where Cornelius lives. The place where God reveals himself to this man. It's in Caesarea. A city named for Caesar.

This was the center of Roman power in Judea. It was the provincial capital where the governor had his seat and where he kept his troops, ready to send them out to crush a Jewish revolt.

If you were a Jewish person and you were going to be put on trial, you would be tried in Caesarea.

And it was also there that you would be executed if you were a rebel. In fact, the apostle Paul would later be imprisoned in Caesarea for a few years.

We read about this in Acts 24 and 25. From the perspective of a Jew, this city would have been the symbol of oppression. The nightmare of occupation that at this point was almost 100 years old in Israel came out of this place.

[ 7 : 52 ] Gentiles. The unclean and the cursed. Ruling over your sacred land. Taxing your people. And profaning Israel with their pagan temples. All of that flowed out of Caesarea.

And it is there that an angel reveals himself to Cornelius. I think it's not much of a stretch when we read this to think, how would a Jewish person have thought of a man like Cornelius?

I think we think a lot of times like of a Roman soldier. Maybe it's a little kid in the church play with a fake uniform on. Peter would not have thought that. I think he would have thought of a Roman soldier about the way we would probably think of a Nazi officer.

Envision him standing there in his gray uniform with the red swastika armband. I don't think that's much of a leap. But there's more here.

Look again at verse 2. It says that Cornelius was a devout man who feared God. This means that Cornelius was what was called in his day a God-fearer.

[ 8 : 53 ] We see these people elsewhere in the book of Acts. They're in chapter 13, chapter 17, chapter 18. These people were Gentiles who worshipped God but had not yet submitted to fully becoming Jewish.

They hadn't been circumcised and they weren't keeping the entirety of the Jewish law. But nonetheless, they feared and revered God. And also notice that Cornelius is a generous man who gives alms.

Now, alms are offerings to the poor. But who is Cornelius giving these to? It says the people. In this context, this most likely means the Jews.

The very Jews whose land Cornelius occupies and who hate Cornelius. And Cornelius is giving back to them. So think about this. The Jews are being taxed by Caesar. Caesar is using those taxes to pay Cornelius. And Cornelius is giving that money back to Israel. Oh, and also notice that Cornelius prayed continually.

[ 9 : 54 ] Prayed over to God was such a normal part of Cornelius' life that it seemed like it was never ending. So you have a Roman soldier who is not yet a believer and is helping occupy the Holy Land for a foreign power.

And yet this man fears God, gives generously to the poor, and prays continually. I don't know about you, but I'm a believer. And I don't know if I want to stack my testimony up against Cornelius' at this point.

And I have Christ in me. He wasn't even born again yet. If our lives were to be described, would they be described in the same way that Cornelius' life was?

I shudder to think what some people might say if they just sat like a fly on the wall and observed my life. So I think that this is the first point for us when we think about our evangelism, specifically here in Bartlesville, that we need to consider our testimony, that we might be known in our community the way Cornelius was known in his.

But we keep reading, and we see in verses 4 to 6 that an angel appears to Cornelius and gives him what must have been some really confusing directions.

[ 11 : 07 ] It says, send for this man. Notice how the angel doesn't say anything about what this man is going to do when he comes to Cornelius. It's like Cornelius doesn't need to know everything.

Cornelius just needs to obey the simple command in this moment. Now, do you ever feel like this in your life? I don't think that angels are speaking to any of us. But oftentimes we feel that we know God wants us to do something.

And oftentimes these decisions are hard. Do you ever wish that sometimes God would show you what comes after the next step? That God would tell you why you're going through something? Here, God didn't do that for Cornelius. But what did Cornelius do? Cornelius obeyed. I don't want to question what has not been revealed by God. Rather, I want to obey what has been revealed. I want to be like Cornelius. Oh, and notice that in verses 5 to 6 we have some more characters added to the story now. We have two men named Simon. What a detail this is.

[ 12 : 12 ] Think about it. We could have had names of anybody, and they both have the same name. And notice the angel actually says the nickname that Simon is known by, Peter.

It's like if an angel appeared to us today and said, you're going to go talk with somebody named Bill. But everybody calls him Roger. And he's going to be staying with somebody else named Bill. It's what a ridiculous thing.

But this is true. This actually happened. This is real life. And at this point, we meet a few other participants in the story in verses 7 and 8. Another Roman soldier and a couple of slaves. So we now have two Romans, roughly the equivalent of Nazis. We have two slaves and two Jewish guys named Simon. In God's goodness, these are the players in this story of redemption. Where are the priests or the prophets? Where are the kings or the generals? They're all absent. Instead, we get foot soldiers and servants and tradesmen.

[ 13 : 16 ] Normal people. People like you and like me. God has sent a holy angel to reveal himself to an unclean Gentile who is at the heart of the Roman occupation of Israel.

And it is this man who is going to experience the mercy of God. So now we continue on and we come to the heart of our passage. Verses 9 to 33. Let's look at verses 9 to 24 together.

It says, The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. And he became hungry and wanted something to eat. But while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth.

In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

And the voice came to him again a second time. What God has made clean, do not call common. This happened three times and the thing was taken up at once to heaven. And 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 and called out to ask

whether Simon, who was called Peter, was lodging there.

[ 14 : 40 ] And while Peter was pondering the vision, the spirit said to him, Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them. And Peter went down to the men and said, I am the one you are looking for.

What is the reason for your coming? And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man who was 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.

So he invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them. And some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. So then we move now into this second section of this longer text.

We see Peter, who's at this point, the leader of the new church in Jerusalem, sitting up on a rooftop. Peter has a vision that is truly strange and difficult to describe. If you notice here as Luke is writing this, he says something like a sheet comes down.

He didn't even have the words to describe it perfectly. It was something sort of like a sheet. We don't really know, but that's kind of what it looked like. And what's on this sheet? Everything that crawls or flies or swarms.

[ 15 : 54 ] If Luke had been an Oklahoman, you just know he would have said that this sheet is covered in critters, because it was. But seriously, if we read the accounts of Genesis 1 or in Genesis 6 at Noah's Ark, beasts of the field, birds of the air, and things that crawl, those are the three main categories that we see for how the ancient Israelites categorized nature.

So what they're saying here is that everything is on this sheet. All the categories are considered. And what does the voice say to Peter? It says, Peter, kill and eat these things. Now, we are Americans.

We will eat a lot of creatures. But there are some that we either feel are just gross, so we don't eat those, or others that we feel like eating them is just wrong.

For example, even now, most of you in here would be really bothered by the thought of eating horse, even though I can say from experience they're delicious. And whoa to any American who admits traveling through Asia and trying a dog or a cat.

We just don't do that. We have categories of animals that are for eating and categories of animals that are not for eating. And all cultures are this way. But Israel was more so.

[ 17 : 08 ] Because of the Old Testament law, it just wasn't that Jewish people thought eating pigs or camels was bad. It wasn't that. It was that when they ate these animals, it made them ritually unclean.

When they were in an unclean state, they couldn't worship God anymore. And they were cut off from their people because they could make other people unclean. For example, Leviticus chapter 11.

In this context, it's talking about eating unclean animals. The scripture says, you shall not make yourselves detestable with any swarming thing that swarms, and you shall not defile yourselves with them and become unclean through them.

For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground, for I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God.

You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. So for the Israelites, to be holy like the Lord meant they had to keep these rituals. It was very significant to them.

[ 18 : 12 ] And being ritually clean was hugely important to them. And this is why I say something like leprosy was always such a big deal in scripture. If you became a leper, you were permanently unclean.

And your fate was to dwell, cut off from your people, and prevented from worshiping God. It was a fate truly worse than death. And this idea of clean and unclean was so important to the Jews that their diet became one of the defining characteristics of their entire life.

Even today, the sign of a religious Jewish person is that they actually keep the laws of kosher. Muslims are similar to this. I cannot tell you how many times, speaking with Muslim people, they would ask, do you actually eat pork?

You know they're filthy, right? Pigs are filthy. That's a huge issue for Muslim people. So much so that times I've even asked Muslims, like, what does it mean to actually be a Muslim?

And they thought long and hard and came back with, I guess it means we don't eat pork. That's the only thing that they thought of when they thought of their own religion. Now these dietary laws are different because these dietary laws were given by God to Israel.

[ 19 : 24 ] They were good laws and they were meant to set Israel apart from the countries that were around them. They were meant to help Israel be a holy people, set apart unto the Lord. But now that Christ had come, the Old Testament law had been fulfilled.

The ritual law of the Old Testament had been set aside because Jesus had kept it perfectly on our behalf. Where else do we see this? We see this in Matthew 5.17 where it says that Jesus did not come to abolish the law.

He came to fulfill it. We also see in Mark 7.14-19, it says, And he called the people to him again and said to them, Hear me, all of you, and understand.

There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him. But the things that come out of a person are what defile him. And when he had entered the house and left, his disciples asked him about the parable.

And he said to them, Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart, but his stomach and is expelled.

[ 20 : 28 ] Thus he declared all foods clean. So Jesus had already said this, but that doesn't mean that those who heard him had understood it. No longer were people clean because they kept the dietary laws.

Rather, they were clean because Jesus had taken away their sin, the ultimate uncleanness. Now in verse 15, we see the same principle at play. What God has called clean, we do not get to call common or unclean.

God has made the dietary laws unnecessary. Things are changing since Christ has come. Now we know from the story that God was speaking to Peter about more than just food. And Peter will confirm this later.

The more I have read of history and of culture, the more I have traveled, the more I have seen prejudices of one sort or another that divide humans from each other. Different ethnic groups who often appear almost exactly the same hate each other.

Different political parties who think their opponents are beyond redemption. Rich people who despise the poor and poor people who covet everything that the rich have.

[ 21 : 36 ] Men who hate women. Women who disdain men. The list goes on and on. These prejudices are not to be seen in us. There is no one who is so far that they cannot be touched by the grace of God.

And we have a part to play in that. Now this includes your relative who struggles with drugs or alcohol addiction. Your co-worker who frustrates you. Your neighbor who is obnoxious and inconsiderate.

Oftentimes our tendency is almost to speak back to God like Peter did and say, those people are unclean. I don't have to reach them. But I want to encourage you today to see that human barriers are small in the light of eternity.

And that God wants us to go through these barriers for the sake of his kingdom. Oh, unless you think that we Gentiles are something special and that these Jewish Christians should have just been thrilled to accept people like us into the kingdom, just look at the story and see what represents us.

Salamanders and bats and porcupines. It's not too impressive. We brought nothing to the party but our sinfulness. And yet God had mercy on us. Praise to his name.

[ 22 : 49 ] Now looking at verses 16 and 17, notice the response that Peter has to the vision from God. He argues back. This shows how tightly Peter held on to the dietary laws.

God said, eat these creatures. And Peter, an apostle, actually says, no, I'm not going to, never. And this happens not once, not twice, but three times. Now we have to remember that this is Peter. Some other things have happened three times in Peter's life. We remember that Peter betrayed the Lord. He denied the Lord three times. And that in his restoration, the Lord asked him three times, Peter, do you love me?

And Peter three times said, yes, Lord, I love you. You know that I love you. We've seen this before in Peter's life. But something about Peter that I really appreciate is that maybe Peter was

argumentative, but Peter was quick to obey because you notice he has this vision. He argues back. The vision ends and he's wondering, what happened? Immediately, he hears an accent calling out his name. It's a Roman soldier and two slaves looking for him.

[ 23 : 53 ] And what do we see Peter do? He gets up and he immediately invites these people in. This is a Gentile. This is like a Nazi soldier. And he invites this guy in and shows him hospitality.

So Peter might be argumentative, but once he understands, he's quick to obey. And I want to be like Peter. And in verses 23 and 24, we read that Peter and these men walked back to Caesarea. Now, this is important because Caesarea was 30 miles away. This takes two days to get there. And I think that this helps us see that this is the second point that we need for our evangelism. He walks back there and he sees that Cornelius is there ready for him.

And who has Cornelius gathered? His friends and his family. And I think for us that this is our second point. We oftentimes think about evangelizing, sharing the gospel with people that we don't know and haven't ever met.

And of course, this is important. But I think something that we can all do, like Cornelius, is gather that circle of people who are already around us, our friends and our family.

[ 24 : 54 ] Look what Cornelius did. He brought those people in so that they could hear the word of the Lord. And guys, I want to be like that. And I think that we all should. Now, notice something else.

An angel comes to Cornelius and he immediately obeys. Peter, on the other hand, has a vision. Peter's an apostle. He's seen the risen Lord. And Peter argues back. I love Peter. Something about his life resonates with me because oftentimes I feel like him. Something else I want us to see about our evangelism, our third point is that Peter goes to evangelize in obedience to the Lord.

Do you think it was uncomfortable for Peter to do so? You bet it was. Peter had to walk for two days to get to Caesarea. And when he arrived, he risked getting arrested by this Roman soldier. And Peter did it anyways. Now, if we are going to reach Bartlesville Highland Park, then we need to obey the Spirit's prompting to go and to speak even when it's challenging.

[ 25 : 57 ] If Peter can walk two days to the house of a Roman soldier, then I hope that we can walk across the yard and knock on the door next door. So let's look at our third section.

We're going to skip to verses 34 to 43. Peter's going to preach his sermon. So Peter opens his mouth and said, Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

As for the word that he sent to Israel preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all, you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed.

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. 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. But God raised him on the third day and made him to appear not to all people, but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

[ 27 : 04 ] 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. To him, all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

So now we see Peter enter in prepared by the Lord to bridge the division between the Jews and the Gentiles that had existed for more than a thousand years. And also think of how Peter has been changed.

At the Lord's arrest, Peter denied him three times even when asked by a servant girl. And now we see Peter boldly enter into the house of a Roman officer. Peter's been transformed by seeing the resurrected Lord and by being filled up by the Holy Spirit.

Now Peter preaches a sermon that is brief but it's densely packed with truth. Now let's walk through it together and we're just going to hit some of the main ideas. It says in verses 34 and 45 that God shows no partiality and that those who fear God of any nation are acceptable to him.

Now what a truth this is because we're all Gentiles in here. Our standing with the Lord is not dependent on our nation or on our family. Our wealth or our capabilities all are welcomed and valued by God.

[ 28 : 22 ] We should never forget how wonderful this is. This isn't a gospel just for Israel. This is a gospel for all humanity and we get to be a part of that story.

But there's more. Notice in verse 36 we see that God through Christ was preaching the good news of peace. And what peace are we talking about? We're talking about the conflict that rages right now between sinful humanity and a holy God who has the right in his justice to condemn all of us to an eternity of torment for the evil that we have done.

And yet in the person of his son Jesus Christ God has said peace. Peace. The conflict is overcome and we are delivered from the penalty of our sins.

This brothers and sisters is the good news. Are we sharing it? Are we letting Bartlesville hear this good news? Are we telling them that they can have peace between themselves and God?

Oh also notice that it says that Jesus is Lord of all. Jesus is not Lord just of Israel. He's Lord of the whole world. As the theologian Abraham Kuyper once said there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ who is sovereign over all does not cry out mine.

[ 29 : 48 ] Now we see in verse 38 that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit. This is what occurred at his baptism when the spirit in the form of a dove descended on him. But he was also full of power.

You notice how Jesus went about doing good deeds and defeating the devil in his works. It's not just that Jesus did not sin. It's also important for us to remember that Jesus did the works of righteousness that we should have done but have failed to do.

Jesus has totally fulfilled the law of righteousness on our behalf. Oh and don't miss it look at verse 38 again. This is the description of the salvific work of Jesus.

And what do we see? We see God the Father anointing Jesus the Son with the Holy Spirit. We see the blessed Trinity for where one member of the Trinity is working all are working each in their own way.

Their desires purposes and actions are perfectly unified. Now in verse 39 Peter uses a phrase that he also uses elsewhere to describe the crucifixion.

[ 30 : 57 ] He doesn't say that Jesus was nailed to a cross. He says that Jesus was hung on a tree. Now as a Jew who knew the scripture Peter was doing this on purpose to make his listeners remember Deuteronomy 22 22 and 23 which says that every person who is hung on a tree is cursed.

This is actually an interesting study if you care to do it but evil people throughout scripture die and are hung on trees. A great example actually is Absalom David's son.

Remember he gets his hair hung up in a tree and he's killed. There are a few assassins in 2 Samuel chapter 4 that came to David thinking they had done a good thing by murdering an innocent man and so David had them killed and he hung them in a tree.

How about in the book of Esther we see Haman the scripture says the word gallows but really it's a pole that Haman is hung on. How about Judas the most evil man perhaps in the Bible son of perdition as he's called.

How does he die? He's hung in a tree. And Peter uses this exact phraseology to describe the death of the Lord. This is very Jewish in his thinking.

[ 32 : 13 ] And why is he doing this? He's saying that Jesus shared a cursed death so that you and I would not have to do so. Paul picking up this exact theme writing in Galatians 3 says Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

For it is written cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree so that in Christ Jesus the blessings of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

The curse of sin and death that Adam brought on this world the curse that we have participated in by our own nature and by our own conduct this is the curse that Christ became on our behalf when he was hung on the tree and he did so that we might enter into life.

What love is this? But this cursed death is not the end of the story for we see in verse 40 that God raised Jesus from the dead in victory vindicating everything that Jesus said and did proving forever that he is the son of God in power like Paul says in Romans chapter 1 verse 4 and that Jesus is indeed mighty to save those who will call upon him.

also notice in verse 41 a quick point Peter talks about eating and drinking with the Lord. This is important because in his day the idea of a bodily resurrection was crazy talk you can't rise from the dead if Jesus rose from the dead he must have been like a ghost or a spirit and Peter says no not

only did I see him I ate and drank with the man he rose again.

[ 33 : 49 ] So here's a question if we want our evangelism to be informed by scripture do we always do our best to tell people about the resurrection or do we just say that Christ died and leave it at that?

I can say this because so often I have done this myself and in a sense I leave Jesus in the ground but notice the proclamation of the gospel from the apostle Peter Peter talks about the resurrection we cannot fail to overemphasize the resurrection and in verse 42 we see that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus so that he is the judge of everyone now this shows the power and authority of our Lord we often think of him at least I do is that flannel graph Jesus I think you guys know the one I'm talking about he's always wearing white and he has a blue sash on and he stands like this pointing at the heavens and he's smiling we tame him but we shouldn't because he's Lord and judge of all the living and the dead and we must remember and communicate to others that Jesus is the judge of all and that unless people repent and believe in his name they will be destroyed by Jesus but then in verse 43 we see the best news of all after a description of judgment as all of scripture testifies

Jesus forgives the sins of those that put their faith in him notice how Peter does not present Jesus as a God who will just give you purpose in your life or improve your situation he presents Jesus as the savior from sin that we all need this is the gospel this is the good news and it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek and notice also dear friends that God spoke to Cornelius telling him to find Peter but God did not witness to Cornelius through the angel it is pleased God by the foolishness of preaching by people like Peter and people like us that the world would hear the gospel proclaimed no matter what we do we cannot get away from the responsibility that all of us share to spread this message so concluding we see that Peter has done something that we all need to be willing to do if we are going to evangelize effectively this is our fourth point he has stepped over the cultural barriers of his day and witnessed to people who are very different from himself now we need to be like Peter and we need to lean into the challenge of crossing barriers and overcoming obstacles for the sake of witnessing to people especially those people aren't just like us so we've talked about a centurion we've seen a vision we've heard a sermon and finally we're about to witness a miracle in verses 44 to 48 the scripture says while Peter was still saying these things the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word 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 for they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God then Peter declared can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ then they asked him to remain with him for some days so we see here the miraculous culmination of the story we see Gentiles

Gentiles like you and like me respond to Peter's message in faith and the spirit be poured out on them in the exact same way that it was poured out on the first Jewish believers in Acts chapter 2 at Pentecost now we see back in verse 19 that it is the spirit who pushes Peter to go with the men who came to find him now it is the spirit who is poured out on these new believers when their hearts are opened up in faith this is significant because the gift of the Holy Spirit was and is the proof that one has entered into life through faith in Christ that is why the Holy Spirit is called the guarantee of our salvation which we see in Ephesians chapter 1 Paul writing says in him you also when you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation and believed in him were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory the outpoured Holy Spirit is proof that not only are these people saved but they are saved as any Jewish believer ever was because Gentiles like us get just as much of God dwelling in us as any Israelite ever did

God has no second class children and his kingdom has no second class citizens he lives in all of us equally but we move on and we see in verse 46 that the Gentiles speak in tongues oh no you say I'm a Baptist what are we going to do with that stay calm we're okay if we look at chapter 11 Peter will describe this event when he's telling his Jewish brothers in Jerusalem he says that the Holy Spirit fell on these Gentiles exactly as it did on us at Pentecost this is significant because we know that at Pentecost the Jewish people after receiving the Holy Spirit spoke in tongues from the context we can see that they were clearly recognizable languages the people listening understood and that was what was so miraculous so since Peter says in Acts 11 that the Spirit fell on the Gentiles in

Acts 10 the same way that it happened in Acts 2 we can assume then that these tongues are almost certainly languages clearly understandable notice also that the Spirit indwelt these new believers afterwards

[ 39 : 49 ] Peter requested that they be baptized their baptism followed demonstration of their faith it did not precede it this is significant and it's yet one more reason why we as Baptists practice believers baptism we do not affirm the baptism of children without profession of faith in Christ nor do we hold that being baptized saves a person we like these new believers are saved by faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins baptism follows as the first step of obedience and a declaration of participation with Christ and with his people and here we come to the fifth and final point for our evangelism from this passage Cornelius had lived well so that he had a strong testimony and he had gathered his circle of friends and family together while Peter had responded in obedience to the Lord's directive to evangelize and Peter had also crossed the cultural barriers of his day now Peter does what we all can do he preaches

Jesus clearly notice how his presentation is nothing special or unique it's not even long it has very little apologetics in it and it has absolutely no philosophy Peter's message is the life death and resurrection of Jesus the certainty of judgment and the promise of forgiveness through faith in Christ Jesus he clearly tells Cornelius and his families about Christ and the Holy Spirit does the rest now this should be encouraging to you and to me because I don't know about you it's impossible to have all the answers so often when I'm evangelizing I feel inadequate ah if only I knew more but we can look here and we can see we can talk about Jesus and tell people to believe in him and that gospel is mighty to save as mighty now as ever it was so then what does the story mean for all of us all these years later for those who know that they have believed who have put their faith in Jesus and received his forgiveness

I ask how are you brother and sister seeking to spread this good news are you impacting the circle of people that God has put around you how's your testimony are you willing to cross over barriers for the sake of the gospel the way the apostle Peter did it is a hard thing to do but this is what scripture shows us and the results of our obedience can be glorious as God works in and through us to reach people for his name now I also think that there could be someone listening to me who does not know Jesus and who has not received his forgiveness if so then you are like Cornelius before he heard the preaching of the word if you haven't believed in Christ and Pastor Mike and I are going to be standing up at the front after I finish we'd love to talk with you and if not there we'd love to talk with you somewhere else we would and anybody else would we'd love to tell you about who

Jesus is and what he has done so if you open your bulletin you'll see our community group questions we see in this passage that the gospel comes to the unexpected and to the undesirable now how is this still true today where are some other examples in scripture where we see the gospel save unexpected people question two many Jews in the first century found it difficult to overlook their prejudices about food when dealing with Gentiles why are prejudices so hard to give up for most people and why is that word so difficult to pronounce when you have a microphone on it's ridiculous how does the gospel break down these barriers specifically I think Galatians 3 is a great source for us to look at and then finally look again at Peter's sermon from verses 34 to 43 what elements of his sermon stand out to you when you witness to someone does your gospel presentation include the same elements as that of the apostle Peter guys thank you so much for listening with me would you pray with me father we love you so much we thank you so much for today

God we thank you that we can be here and Lord we thank you for your word we thank you so much that it is true and God we thank you so much that you have saved people like us who once were far away but Lord in your grace you have brought us near Lord we pray for courage and boldness God we pray for help to be obedient because we want to honor you in everything that we do we love you father we pray for your blessing upon us as we go out help us to go and reach Bartlesfield for your name sake in Jesus name we pray amen