Elements of Effective Evangelism (Part 1)

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[0:00] Amen. Well, it's good to see everybody. Welcome to Bible study, and we've been going through! So if you have your Bible, turn to Acts chapter 10, where we've been. We'll continue with verse 17 tonight and go through verse 36. And if you remember, we are at the point where Peter has seen a vision, and God has prepared both Peter and Cornelius for this divine appointment where the gospel will go for the first time to the Gentile nations, beginning with Cornelius and his household. And so if you remember, Peter has been prepared by God through this vision. Cornelius has been prepared as well as he was praying. God told him to send for Peter, told him where he could find him, and so Cornelius sends a group to go and to retrieve Peter. And so that's about where we're at in verse 17. And so I'm going to read verses 17 through 36, which we will cover tonight. Acts chapter 10, verses 17 through 36.

Now, 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. 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 is 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. And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, stand up, I too am a man. And as he talked with them, he went in and found many persons gathered. And he said to them, you yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I asked them, why have you sent for me? And Cornelius said, four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour. And behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and ask for
Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner by the sea. So I sent for you at once and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord. So Peter opened 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. So no doubt by this time in your Christian life and your time attending church, you have probably heard and seen and participated in many different kinds of evangelistic strategies. If you remember a year or two ago, we went through the three circles method.
You remember the three circles method? And that was a diagram, a picture, a visual for how we can better communicate the gospel with people. Some still are using that strategy. It seems like every year a new one comes out either from the SBC or somebody else. And again, it's just an encouragement trying to get people to go and share their Christian faith with the world. Some people still go door to door, knocking door to door on people's houses, though as time has changed, you know people are not as receptive as they used to be to strangers knocking on their door, but at times that can still be effective. Lee told me once of a church that had recorded, I think

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it was the pastor, had recorded a message that they then called everybody in their community with this recorded message, kind of like a robocall or a telemarketer. And in that robocall, the gospel was shared. Some strategies also call for a seemingly endless altar call. Maybe you've been a part of a church service where the piano or the organ just kept playing, kept playing as the pastor waited for somebody to come forward and as the church people were probably eager for somebody to come forward so that they could be dismissed.
[5:51] Some of these strategies are more effective than others, but truthfully, in most cases, the point of the strategy, again, is to motivate Christians to share the gospel. That's the point of any of these strategies, any of these methods, is to get Christians to share the gospel. And it's hard to get Christians motivated and excited to share the gospel. All Christians, though, need to understand, must understand that evangelism is something that God has called every Christian to be involved with. If you're a Christian, if you say you're a follower of Christ, then you are commanded by him to share the gospel.

The other day, Jack, my son, asked me while we were in the car if I would invite one of his friends to come to church, if I would share the gospel with him, which I would be willing to do. But then my question was to him, well, why don't you do that? Why don't you invite him? Why don't you talk to him about Jesus? And he replied, well, you're the pastor, right? And everybody kind of has the idea, well, the only evangelist in the church are the people on the church staff. They do all that for us. But if we look at scripture, we see that, yes, pastors, yes, church staff members, like all Christians, all followers of Christ are called to go and make disciples. Matthew 28, 18 through 20, there's no refuting this fact. And Jesus, after he was resurrected and appeared to many of his followers before he ascended into heaven, he said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I'm with you always to the end of the age. Now, there are some people who it just seems like they are more gifted evangelists, but the Bible says that everyone who has been saved should be active and also prepared to share the gospel at any moment. 1 Peter 3, 15. It says, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect. So, despite whatever method you use, the most important aspect of your evangelism is the message that you communicate.
The method is not as important. It's the message that is important. The methods, as I've mentioned, vary, but an effective evangelist's message is always the same. The message never changes.
If it changes, then you're sharing a different gospel. Contained within the gospel, this is why it's so important, the message stays the same. Contained within the gospel is the power of God to overcome mankind's sinful nature and give new life, as the Apostle Paul says very clearly in Romans 1, 16. He said, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. So, what makes an evangelist effective? While it is true that the messenger doesn't save anyone, it's the Holy Spirit working through the message and the person delivering that message into the heart of the unbeliever who hears it that does that. But still, as we've seen, God prepares both the messenger and the recipient for these divine appointments when the message is shared by the messenger, when it's communicated to the one who would hear it and believe it. And so, here's the main idea for this morning or this evening's Bible study.
The Lord desires that his disciples make more disciples. To make more disciples, we must be willing to go, share, and teach those whom God brings to faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is to fill in there. Faith in Jesus Christ. To make more disciples, we must be willing to go, to share, and to teach those who God brings to faith in Jesus Christ. Now, Satan will try to convince you that your evangelism won't be effective. The enemy doesn't want God's people to share God's truth, and so he tries to shut them up.
[10:45] And there are several ways, or at least a few ways that I've mentioned here, in which he tries to do that. First of all, he will seek to convince you that you don't know enough. You don't know enough about the gospel to be able to share it. That's one of his lies that he tells. But truthfully, the gospel is a simple message, and some of our best evangelists are children. It's a message that's so simple that children can share it, and children can understand it. And so, don't buy into the lie that the gospel is something that you don't know enough to share about. Because the fact is, if you've

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been saved, you've been saved because you've heard the gospel. You have a testimony. You've heard it. The Holy Spirit has enabled you to understand it. And so, that's more than enough right there to be able to share the gospel in an effective and clear way. Secondly, Satan will try and convince you that some people are either beyond saving or are uninterested in anything to do with the Christian faith.

In my experience, maybe in yours, more unbelievers than not are interested in talking about the Christian faith. When I've had these conversations with people, I find that, again, more often than not, they are actually interested to hear what Christians believe. And they want to hear about Jesus. They are curious to ask their questions and have somebody to be able to have that dialogue with. In fact, I've also seen that some are just waiting for the invitation. They're waiting for the believer they know to either begin that conversation or even to invite them to church. Now, Lifeway did a study not too long ago, at least I think within the past five years, where they determined that it was something like eight out of ten people, if you invite them to church, are willing to come. Eight out of ten.

And so, I don't know, that number may have changed, but still, it's a lot more than you would have thought, isn't it? That more people are responsive and interested than you might think. Again, for those who act uninterested, their disinterest should not matter to you because the only hope that they have for salvation is in Jesus Christ. And so, it's a message that they must hear, whether they're interested in hearing it or not. And there is no limitations that the Lord put on our going and sharing. He didn't say, go to the ones who seem interested, but leave the ones who don't seem interested alone. No, he said to go to everyone, everywhere, and share the good news of who he is and what he's done.

Third, Satan will try and convince you that you don't have the time or that, like my son thought, evangelism is the job of the pastor or some other staff member. But again, as we've seen, you as a Christian, you have been called to do this. And so, if you don't have time for it, then what you probably should do, really what you need to do, is make time for it. And really, in all your relationships, in the people that you work with, in the people that you live in community with, with your relatives who may be unbelievers, I think in all your conversations, you should always try to sprinkle them with the gospel. You should always try to seek to use them in some way to bring them back to the truth about Jesus Christ. And so, it's something that I feel like we should be trying to do all the time. And again, if you feel like you don't know where to start or where to begin, the best place to start, I believe, is in prayer. And just praying for that person that you would like to share the gospel with. Lord, give me the opportunity to be able to share with them.

[14:42] And it can be simple things, like you know somebody at work is going through a hard time, has lost a loved one, and it can be so simple as going to them, praying for them, continuing to check up on them. And those little touches can be used by God to go a long way to the point where you're able to eventually share the whole gospel with them. After all, Romans 10, 14 through 15 says, How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. And so you can think for yourself of the person whom God used to send into your life to share this good news with. And they are probably somebody who you see as having beautiful feet.

You think highly of them and you appreciate them because they were willing and they cared enough to share that good message with you. So now let's turn back to our text and see the elements present, at least in these verses, in Peter's sharing the gospel with Cornelius in Acts chapter 10. And hopefully as we look at these, there's only two from this part, but we'll be back here next Wednesday, Lord willing. I hope that you will see them and that you will choose, if you haven't already, to apply them to your own life as you seek to be used by the Lord to obey his command to go and make disciples. And so the first element here that we see is a submissive will, a submissive will in verses 19 through 33. Peter and Cornelius demonstrated the obedience that they had to whatever God commanded them to do, both at the point of salvation and then also throughout their Christian life.

In James 2, we see here, among many other places, that obedience is a mark of those who have been truly saved. If you've been truly saved, you want to be obedient to what the Lord has called you to do. And so again, in James 2, 14 through 26, there he reveals that a submissive will should

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characterize all those who have been truly saved. True saving faith leads to one to live a life of obedience to God. It leads them to act. I want to read James 2, 14 through 26 to you. There James says, What good is it, my brothers? If someone says he has faith but does not have works, can that faith save him?
If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food and one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warmed and filled, without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works and I will show you my faith by my works. [17:50] You believe that God is one. You do well. Even the demons believe and shudder. Do you want to be shown you foolish person that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works and faith was completed by his works. And the scripture was fulfilled that says Abraham believed God and it was credited to him or counted to him as righteousness and he was called a friend of God.

Verse 24, he says, You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way, was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. And so you see, true, genuine, genuine, saving faith produces these kinds of works of obedience because you realize what Christ has done for you. And so you want to act in obedience to what he has commanded you to do because you know that in doing so, you are being like him. You are being humble. You are being giving.
You are being gracious as he has been and he's called you to do this. And if you've done these things, you know that there is blessing in being obedient, isn't there? Obedience is life-giving.
It feels good to be used by the Lord to be a blessing to somebody else without looking to receive any kind of gain from it materially for yourself. It's good to be obedient to what God has called you to do.
But here again, Peter is perplexed about this vision that he's seen of this sheet containing unclean animals and the instruction of the voice that he heard in that vision from God to kill and to eat these unclean animals, which went against his traditional thinking that God's people, the Jews, should take no part in eating anything that was so unclean. As Peter was digesting this confusing vision, at that same moment, Cornelius' men arrive to meet him and to take him back to Cornelius.
[20:20] And so again, though Peter is confused by this day, by this vision that he's had, and now this new arrival of strangers who he's never met before, he still displays a submissive will by agreeing to go with them. In verses 19 through 21, it says again, as Peter was pondering this vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise, go down, and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them. And Peter went down to the men and said, I'm the one you are looking for, what is the reason for your coming? So we see that he is submissive to the Lord's will.

He's perplexed, he has some questions, but he puts those in the back of his mind for now because he knows that God has called him to do something, and he's called him to do it without hesitation, and so he does it without hesitation. Again, Peter knows that God is issuing a command to him, and despite whatever plans he might have had for that day, it was very clear that God had other plans for him, and his plan was for him to meet these men and to go with them. And so again, in obedience, and though still perplexed by what had happened, he went immediately down to meet these men who were sent by Cornelius.
In verse 22, the men sent from Cornelius explained the reason for why they had come. They told him about Cornelius, they told him about the character that he had, the important job that he had as a centurion, that he was a devout, God-fearing man, and that he had been asked, they had been asked to come to get Peter to bring him back to meet him, and so that Peter could preach to him, so that Peter could share the gospel with him. Though Peter was starting to see these things unfolding, he was still perplexed. Peter was now doubly perplexed because he realized that this man who he was going to meet was a Gentile. And again, the Gentiles were a part of that out group. They were that group outside of Israel. They were members of that unclean group, and so he would have been doubly perplexed now because he thinks, well, what dealing would God have with these unclean people, and what exactly maybe is he sending me into? But still, in submission, he was obedient to God's will.

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And so now, it's Peter's turn to do something astonishing. Though he wasn't, again, totally sure what God was up to, what God was doing, he understood that God was still doing something. And so he needed to set aside whatever confusion, whatever uncertainty he had, and trust in God's will, and just fall into faith into God's hands and trust that God knew exactly what he was doing. [23:11] And so in verse 23, it says that Peter invited them in to be his guests. And so by this point in the day, it was too late for them to make the trip back to Caesarea. So Peter invited these Gentiles, these strangers, into the place where he was staying to spend the night with him. And in so doing, we see a deepening crack in the wall that existed in his mind that divided Jew from Gentile. Because we know at this time, no self-respecting Jew would ever have given lodging to Gentiles, especially to Roman soldiers. As we talked about last time, the Jews hated the Romans. The Romans were in their land. They were occupying their homeland. And so here was one of them, a Roman soldier, a Gentile and a Roman soldier. And yet Peter allows them or welcomes them to come and to stay the night with him.

The invitation that Peter extended to them in the Greek is the same word used in Hebrews 13.2, where the term there is used in reference to our entertaining angels. And so Peter gave his unexpected guests, these outsiders, the red carpet treatment. He treated them well. He accepted them into the place where he was staying. Again, revealing that God was at work in his heart to remove whatever prejudice he had that he had stored up and built up towards those who were non-Jews. He understood the difference between the Old Testament law, which was binding, and human tradition, which was not. He would continue to struggle with this, letting his traditions go. But at least here he begins to show signs that his animosity toward the Gentiles was beginning to erode. And then we come to verses 23 through 24, where it says, the next day they went together and they were accompanied by some other Jews from Joppa. And on the following day they entered Caesarea and Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. So while Cornelius's group went out to meet Peter, and while Peter was being fetched, and as they were journeying back, Cornelius was busy. He wasn't sitting idle. What was he doing? Well, he was inviting all of his relatives and all of his friends to gather together with him so that they could hear Peter when he arrived. He wanted them to hear what this man had to say. Though he had not yet heard the gospel, though he was not yet a believer, he knew also that God was at work and he wanted those whom he cared most about to be there with him as Peter came to hear whatever God had for them to hear. And so we come to verses 25 and 26. Peter is now there. He enters Cornelius's house, meets him, and Cornelius meets him, and we see that he falls down on his face and worshiped him.

But Peter lifted him up, saying, stand up, I too am a man. And so this is a good couple of verses to tuck away whenever you're talking to maybe somebody who is Catholic, and they worship the saints, right?

And so we say, well, here, you know, Peter, who is one of their highly esteemed and venerated saints, was having a man to bow down before him and was worshiping him, and Peter wanted none of it.

And he was quick to grab him and to lift him up and to let him know, I am like you, just a man, right? Do not worship me. There is nothing special about me. Whatever is special about me is only because of God's grace and the fact that he saved me, right? And so he doesn't want that kind of praise.

[27:06] He doesn't want that kind of worship. And we'll see later on with Paul and Barnabas in Acts chapter 14, when they have a similar response that people are wanting to worship them, they would have nothing of it, and they put an end to it very quickly. When Peter entered the house, he found that many were assembled. Again, God never instructed Cornelius. This was never part of God's instruction to Cornelius to do this. However, he took it upon himself to invite all these guests because, again, he wanted them desperately to hear Peter. And in order for the Jews also to fully accept that salvation had come to the Gentiles, they needed to see, I think, salvation take place in more than just one man. Because there could have been the thought, well, you know, Cornelius, that was just an exception to the rule.

He is sort of that outlier over there. No, God wanted to make it clear that salvation had come to the Gentiles, to these people whom the Jews once thought outside of the camp, who they once thought were beyond saving. So even in that, God was sovereignly at work. And so now that he's there, Peter says to them in verses 28 and 29, you yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to

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associate with or to visit anyone of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I asked them, why have you sent for me? Between the time of Peter's vision and now his journey to Caesarea, he had realized that it was not right for him to continue to uphold his tradition as treating and seeing Gentiles as common and unclean people. But he still wanted to know why exactly they asked for him to come. And so
Cornelius replies in verses 30 through 33, he retells what has happened, that God has spoken to him and that he has told him to go and to get Peter. Cornelius again was a soldier. And as he retells Peter what this encounter that he had with God was, he uses military language of commands. And so Cornelius understood this.
Whenever you're commanded as a soldier by somebody who outranks you, many of you know this because you're in the military, you obey that command. And so who outranks you more than God, right? And so if God issues a command, he understood that the only reaction that you can have to such a command is that you act in obedience. And so he was ready to hear and to carry out the Lord's orders and to hear what Peter had to say. Again, another display of a submissive will. So Peter and Cornelius have both been sovereignly prepared by God and had responded obediently to his direction. All was ready now for the next element in effective evangelism, which would result with the salvation of both Cornelius and the rest of his household. But before we get on to that next point, I want us to think for a second, what groups or types of people do Christians today consider to be outside the church or beyond God's ability to save? Does anybody want to, I'm going to have a little interaction part now instead of just me lecturing to you. What do you think? I'm not saying, you're not speaking just for our church, don't worry about that, but what do you think? Are there, is there people or a certain group of people that sometimes as believers, we, if we're being honest, feel like maybe they're outside and too far gone for God to save?
Okay, LGBTQ, yeah. So a lot of times we won't go to them because we feel like they are so opposed to what God's word has to say. And so a lot of times people are intimidated again because this would be a group that we would feel maybe like is disinterested in whatever Christians believe. [31:24] And so a lot of times, unfortunately, you're right. We look at them as being a group that is maybe too far gone or that is an outside group. Anything else?

Yeah. Yeah. Rioters, those who are, yeah, busy and have been busy doing a lot of destruction in a lot of places. And I think in both cases we can kind of, you know, that or in that case and in other cases we see people who behave in ways that are distasteful to us. And, you know, they're distasteful to us because we see that they're going against what God's word says. But sometimes we view them as being, in our distaste, we view them as being, well, you're too far gone. Or maybe in anger, we feel like, I don't know that I could go talk to them because I'm so upset with their actions that we can't get down to the root problem, which we all have, which is the problem that we have with sin. Any others?
Muslims, a person of another religion. Good. Yeah. And for a lot of Christians, that can be intimidating. Sometimes we see people of another faith as the enemy. Or we feel like, and I've talked to some believers who they think, well, they're so devout in their faith, right? And they seem to know something of God. Why don't we just leave them to it? Or I don't want to come in and challenge them and maybe make things more uncomfortable for them. But we see, if we read Scripture and as we are going through Acts, there was no issue with any of that, was there? Paul and Barnabas and Silas and the other apostles and disciples, they had no fear of going and sharing the gospel despite whatever the person's sexuality might have been, despite whatever the person's religious beliefs might have been, despite whatever heinous deeds that they were doing. They knew that the gospel must go to the ends of the earth. And so they went to all people and they shared that good news.
And, you know, one of the people I think is the Gerasene demoniac, right? That Jesus encounter. That's one of my favorite Scriptures. And I, now we're kind of going off a little bit, but I love that Scripture because everybody was so afraid of him. And reasonably so, okay? If somebody was running around without any clothes on and cutting themselves with rocks and not acting like it hurt them or they tried to bind them with chains and he was breaking them and they couldn't bind him and he was sleeping in a graveyard, I would be intimidated by somebody like that. How many of you would be really eager if God said, I want you to go share the gospel with that person? But yet what I love about it is this man who was so afraid or who people were so afraid of when he sees

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Jesus, he runs to him and he bows down to him.
He's afraid of Jesus because he knows that Jesus is God's son, that he is the Lord of all, that he is the King of Kings, that he is no match for him. And so Jesus saves him, right? Jesus casts the demons out and he's back in his right mind. And so we've got to understand that, you know, despite whatever feelings that we might have, fears that we might have, concerns that we have, that yes, now I want you to understand as a church, we have doctrine, we have established what we believe, and to be a member of this church, you must agree with what we believe. More than that, you must be saved, you must be born again, right? Or else what reason would you have for joining a church? And so we want to reach out, we want to share, I think we even want them to come so that they can hear the gospel.
[35:16] So we've got to be careful that we understand that we as believers, you know, we're not just trying to make peace on earth, we're trying to make peace between God and men, and how do we do that? By sharing the gospel, and so we go and we share that good news. But that's something that I want you to consider to think about. Who are the people that may be in your mind, like Peter, you've created those barriers and you think that they're beyond saving. Now, in each and every one of those cases, we have plenty of testimony of people who have come from another religion, who have come to faith in Jesus Christ, somebody who was behaving criminally or had a past record. That person's life was transformed.

People from LGBTQ society, that those people, we have plenty, plenty of testimonies of those who have come from all of these different walks. And remember, when the Apostle Paul is talking to the Corinthians, he mentions just about every one of those, and he talks to those Christians, and he says, and such were some of you, you who have been saved. You came from those same outside groups, but the gospel has saved you. Okay, number two, second element, a salvation presentation. This is pretty important. You have to have a submissive will, that's important, but you're not effectively sharing the gospel if you're not talking about the gospel, and you're not presenting God's plan for salvation. So, a salvation presentation. By this point, Peter had become an experienced preacher.
He had preached on the day of Pentecost. He had preached boldly before the Sanhedrin. Here, though, he is encountering a different environment. He's preaching to people who are prepared for him to preach, and who are eager to hear what he has to say. But again, though this is a different audience, a different situation, the message still is the same, and Peter gives a simple presentation of the gospel. Some situations might mean we get deeper into apologetics than others. In some situations, we might have to delve deeper into history. In other situations like this, we find hearts that are already deeply plowed and are ready to hear the simple truths of the gospel. The phrasing there, opening his mouth in verse 34, again, is another Greek expression, and it's used to indicate that whoever has opened their mouth, what they're about to say is crucial. It's very important. And so,
Peter begins to speak. And as he does so, the final remnants of that segregation in his mind between Jew and Gentile is shattered. Verse 34, it says, truly, Peter speaking, I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to them. And so, with those words, Peter reveals that he finally understands that the church was to include people from every nation. The truth of what Jesus said in John 10, 16, where he said, I have other sheep which are not of this fold, that truth had finally dawned upon him. He now understood the meaning of the vision that he had received on the top of Simon the Tanner's house. And so, he was ready to share the rest of the good news of Jesus Christ with these people. And truthfully, it was always true that God showed no partiality. Going back to the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 10, 17, there it says, for the Lord your God is
God of gods and Lord of hosts, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who is not partial and takes no bribe. And Paul elaborated on that truth in Romans 3, 29 through 30, where there he wrote, or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. So, then Peter turns to the main theme of the gospel, namely, that salvation comes through Jesus Christ only, and that he is the true and the only Savior of the world. In verse 36, he says, as for the word that was sent to Israel preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all. And so, in order for the gospel to be seen for how truly good it is, we understand that a lot of times we've got to present the bad news first. The bad news being that fallen mankind is in opposition to

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God because of their sin and because of their rebellion against them. They need to understand the division that exists between them and God before they see the need that they have to be saved from their sin and before they can see
[40:28] Christ as being the solution and the only hope that they have to be able to have peace with God now and forevermore. Because again, the Bible in many places describes fallen mankind as being at war with God and therefore enemies of God. In one place, Romans 5.10, there it says, for if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled, excuse me, shall we be saved by his life. And so, in order for unbelievers to see how good the gospel is, we first got to present the bad news. And the bad news is that apart from Christ, you are not saved. We've got to talk to them about sin. We've got to talk to them about the reality of God's wrath towards sin. We've got to talk to them about the reality of eternity apart from God in hell and what that means so that they will see the necessity that they have for a savior and their inability to save themselves and that Christ is the only hope that they have. And so, there's a lot more now as Peter will begin to unfold the gospel to them that I want to wait to cover next time. But I do have four points of application for us to consider as we close.

First of all, obey. Obey the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Obey the prompting of the Holy Spirit. I don't know how to put this into words exactly, but I feel like if you're a believer, you've probably felt the Holy Spirit prompt you at some point in time. And it could be something where, I see some heads nodding where a brother and sister in Christ is sharing something with you and instead of saying to them, I'll be praying for you, you say, you know, it could be a prompting of, you know, pray for them right now. Just, you know, pray for them where they're at. Or it could be that somebody puts, I know a lot of people, this happens to me a lot in the middle of the night. Have you ever had that happen where you wake up and there'll be somebody on your mind? And so you pray for that person. Or it could be that, you know, you're thinking of somebody that may be, for whatever reason, again, you know, God brings them into your mind. Maybe it's worth a phone call or to visit with them and somehow just to reach out to them. But there's many ways in which the Holy Spirit prompts us. Maybe it's to minister in the church in some way. Teach a Sunday school class, lead a Bible study or anything. Pick weeds outside in the garden, right, of the church or whatever. There are many ways in which the Holy Spirit prompts you. And when he prompts you, the best thing that you can do, the thing that you should do, is be obedient to that without hesitation, as we saw with Peter. So obey the prompting of the Holy Spirit.
To share the gospel. That should be clear. I think we've hit on that one enough that this is a command from the Lord for everybody whom he has saved, that they are to share the gospel. So look to share it as much as you can. And again, it might be little by little where you begin with that co-worker I talked about who you know is going through a hard time and you ask to pray for him. And as you continue to check on them, you have more and more opportunity to share the gospel with them. So whatever you're doing, look for opportunities to share the gospel. Third, the method is not as important as the message. So none of us should ever get to the point where we say, you know, the only way to share the gospel is the three circles. We went on in a church and if we're going to save anybody, it's three circles all the way or anything else isn't going to work, right? That should never be the case. There's different methods. They could be effective, but really what matters most is the message.
So while the method may change, what's most important is the message. And then fourth, God saves people, not you. So remember that as you share the gospel, the results are up to God. And I think about Jesus's parable of the farmer who takes his bag of seed out in the morning and he just scatters seed and he just scatters seed. And wherever it falls, that's up to God. Whether or not it takes root or not, that's up to God. He goes home at night and he sleeps peacefully because he knows what God has called him to do. And so we as Christians are called to be like that farmer. We go out, wherever we go, we scatter seed and the results are up to God. And so if you've shared the gospel with somebody and you've done it clearly, you should know that you've been successful in whatever God has called you to do. The results are his. I'm going to pray and then James will come forward and we'll go over announcements and have another time of prayer.
[45:18] Let's pray. Lord, we pray that we would be effective evangelists for you. We know that that is something that you haven't merely asked for us to do, but you've commanded all of us to go and to share the good news and to make disciples. Lord, forgive us that at times we are guilty of creating divisions, that we are guilty of seeing people who belong to certain groups that we believe

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are beyond saving or disinterested in the gospel. And yet, Lord, we see countless, numerous examples of scripture where that was never anything that hindered you. It was never anything that hindered your discipleship.

disciples as they went and they fulfilled your command to go to the ends of the world, to all people everywhere, and to share the good news. And so, Lord, we know that their work continues with us today. And God, we pray that you would help us to see the importance of our going and our sharing, and that we would do so as you've called us to do with gentleness, with love, but clearly and boldly declaring that Jesus Christ and only Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. And we pray, Lord, that as we go and as we share, we'd realize the results are yours and that you'd be pleased with our work for you, that you would be glorified by it. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.
Amen.

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