Preparing the Soil for Harvest

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Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0:00] Let's continue our Bible study in the book of Acts. Acts chapter 10 verses 1 through 20 will be the text that we cover tonight.

! So if you're in your Bible, Acts chapter 10 verses 1 through 20 and want to follow along with me as I read. It says,
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.
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.
[2:34] Okay, so many of you, I'm sure you've read Mark Twain's classic novel, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. You know Tom's good friend, Huck Finn.

And I remember a part in that story where Huck Finn realizes that he is not going to be a part of Tom Sawyer's gang.
Remember, and he's upset by that because that's his good buddy. And so he confronts Tom Sawyer and kind of asks him, What's up? Why am I not in your gang? And Tom Sawyer's reply was something like this.
He said to him, Well, what would people think if they saw you in our gang? They'd say something like, Well, look at Tom Sawyer's gang. They're pretty low characters. They have pretty low characters in it.
And then he says to him, And they'd mean you, Huck. They'd be talking about you. They'd think that you were this low character. If they saw you with us. And so he tries to explain to him why he doesn't want him in his gang.
[3:38] And so in that book, in life, especially when you're a child, it seems like we are, we resort to things, mean-spirited things often in order to establish us and them, right?

We don't want you a part of our group. We don't want you a part of our gang. Unfortunately, that happens a lot with children. There's often bullying and people getting picked on.
And really, when we enter into adulthood, that continues to take place, unfortunately. Even into adulthood, we are still prone to exclude whomever we think doesn't fit into the mold of the type of person that we would like to be seen with or associate with.
Those who think differently than us. Those who have a style of life that is different from the style of life that we live. People who don't make us feel better about ourselves and being seen with them or who support our opinions are often people whom we exclude from our lives.
Because the person or the people who claim to be the most tolerant in our culture are really the most intolerant, if you've ever noticed that. They are so convinced that they are right that if you disagree with them, automatically you become the enemy and you are somebody who they want to shut out of their lives and even shut out of culture and society if they can.
[5:05] Because you don't share the same viewpoint as them or have the same worldview as they do. Unfortunately, the church is not immune from this way of thinking. At times, and maybe even still today, those of another skin color or of another social status or who belong to a different educational group or income level often find themselves feeling unwelcome in some of the churches that they have attended or are a part of.

Now, such intolerant exclusivism grieves the Lord. Remember, he prayed to the Father on our behalf in John 17, 21, asking that we all be one.

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He says, Likewise, in Galatians 3, 28, the Apostle Paul said, There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male and female. For you all are one in Christ Jesus. The cultural divisions that exist in our time are really not much different from the ones that existed in ancient times.
The first Christians were of Jewish descent. And if the gospel was going to reach the ends of the world as Jesus had commanded that it should, it means that they would have to bridge divisions. [6:34] It means that they would have to go to people who were not like them in order for the gospel to go into the ends of the earth. And so by this point, we've seen that some of those gaps have been bridged.

The gap between Jews and Samaritans. We've seen that many Samaritans had come to faith in Christ by this point through the ministry of Philip and Peter and John.
As a result of their obedience and faith to the Great Commission, many Samaritans came to faith in Jesus Christ, a group that was once despised very much by the Jews.
And so what the apostles saw, what the disciples of Jesus had seen, was that the Samaritans, whom they once despised, whom they thought were beneath them, had in fact received the Holy Spirit as they had, which meant that they were a part of the church as they were, that they were a part of the body of Jesus Christ.
And so they were seeing that, that God was doing something here to reach all kinds of people. But as great of a divide as there was between Jew and Samaritan, there was a greater division between Jew and Gentile.
[7:47] The Jews despised the Samaritans, even hated the Samaritans, but the Gentiles were far worse. As bad as they didn't like the Samaritans, the Gentiles were that group that was too far out there, maybe too far gone to be saved.

And so we think of the attitude of the Jews, of the Gentiles, being very much like Jonah, remember Jonah the prophet who was called by God to go to Nineveh?
And I think sometimes we get that story wrong, where we think that Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh because he was afraid of the Ninevites. That's not the case if you read the book. He wasn't afraid of the Ninevites.
What was he afraid of? That they would be saved. He thought that he was afraid that God would be gracious and merciful and forgiving towards them, these people whom he hated so much.
He wanted them to be separate from God and God's people forever. And so that attitude has always existed, unfortunately, throughout the history of the world.
[8:49] And so there's a great divide between Jew and Gentile as far as the Jews' hatred of them. But God is going to destroy those dividing walls.

Again, in order for the gospel to reach the ends of the earth, that division had to be bridged as well. And so again, already we've seen in Acts that the division was being mended.
We saw the beginning stages of that with the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch who Philip ministered to. However, he returned back to his distant homeland and did not remain in the fellowship with the Jewish believers in Israel.
But accepting Gentiles as equals before the Lord was an entirely different matter at that time. Jews, again, would not welcome Gentiles as guests even in their own homes.
They felt like dirt from Gentile countries was considered something to be defiled. And so whenever they had to travel through a Gentile nation, when they would come back towards their hometown, when they come back towards Israel, they would make sure to shake off the dust of that Gentile nation, the dirt off their feet because they didn't want to have anything to do with them.
[10:05] And so now as kids, remember, part of that division was those who have cooties and those who do not have cooties, right? Circle, circle, dot, dot, now you have the cootie shot. Well, that's a joke and a game.

But they really felt this way. They felt like there was something. The Gentiles were contaminated people. They didn't want to touch anything or deal or handle with anything that had been handled by a Gentile, especially with their food and their diet and everything else.
They didn't want any kind of association with Gentiles whatsoever. Truly, when Jesus was crucified, though, he bridged the gap between Jew and Gentile and all people forever.
Ephesians 2, 12 through 22 states that. Verse 14 of that passage says, For he himself is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

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So in Christ, all those dividing walls come crumbling down. Jesus is the Savior of the world, of all people, of all tribes, of all languages, everybody.
[11:18] The only Savior that this world has is Jesus Christ, and he is the Savior of the world. So in this chapter, this is the account of the Gentiles' now introduction into the church of Jesus Christ, as demonstrated by the salvation of Cornelius.

And so as we go through this chapter, we will see six components of salvation. We've been dealing a lot with salvation. How is a person saved? God initiates salvation. We saw we went through Saul's conversion, the Apostle Paul.
And so now we will continue to see how God saves people with the inclusion of the Gentiles into his church through the salvation first of Cornelius. And so here's the main idea for tonight's study. We'll cover one component of the six tonight. And so the main idea is this. God sovereignly prepares both the convert and the preacher in salvation.
In salvation. God sovereignly prepares both the convert and the preacher in salvation. Before the gospel is spread to the Gentiles and prior to Cornelius' salvation, God, we see, is preparing both Peter, the preacher, and Cornelius, the convert, for this pre-planned meeting that he had divinely arranged to take place from eternity past.
[12:42] Luke first writes about God's preparation of Cornelius for this divine appointment. So in your handout, the next fill-in is this. God does not always save people in the same way.

God does not always save people in the same way. And so as we go through looking at how God prepared Cornelius and Peter, we're going to pull out some things about salvation, about that preparation, so that we can continue that today.
Some things that we need to understand as well. And first of all, the thing that we need to understand is that God does not always save people in the same way. Some have been saved. We've seen so far through the hearing of a sermon.
On the day of Pentecost, when Peter got up and preached, some have been saved through a miraculous healing, whether they were the one who was healed or they saw the miraculous healing take place with their own eyes.
Again, I already mentioned the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading through Isaiah when God called Philip to go to him in these truths that the eunuch could not see.
[13:45] Philip was used by God to open his eyes to unlock those truths for him, and he was saved as a result of that. We've seen how Saul was on his way to persecute the church, and it was Jesus.

It was the resurrected Jesus Christ who stood in his path and who called out to him, and he was converted through that meeting with the Lord. And so now we see Peter is divinely sent to Cornelius.
Cornelius. The circumstances and the messengers are different in each case, but the message is always the same. The circumstances, the messenger, are different a lot of times, but the message is always the same.
Cornelius, we're told, lived in Caesarea, which was an important town located on the coast roughly 30 miles north of Joppa. It was the capital of the Roman province of Judea, and so therefore it was the residence of the Roman procurator, and so a procurator was like a governor.
His job was very important. He was there to keep peace and order in that region. And so since he was there and he was so important, he needed to be surrounded by Roman soldiers, and so that's what Cornelius was there for.
[15:04] Probably his primary job was to keep peace and order in that important city for that important individual. And so a large Roman garrison was stationed there as a result of the city's, again, importance to the Roman Empire.

In verse 1, it says that among them was Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian cohort. So a Roman legion at full strength consisted of 6,000 men, and in that 6,000, that group of 6,000, they were divided into 600 cohorts.
So a cohort was 600 soldiers. And so a centurion then was commander of 100 of those men in that cohort. Each legion then had 60 centurions who were considered to be the backbone of the Roman army.
That was a very important position. The Roman historian Polybius described centurions in this way. He described them as, not so much venturesome daredevils as natural leaders of a steady and

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sedate spirit, not so much men who will initiate attacks and open the battle as men who will hold their ground when worsted and hard-pressed and be ready to die at their posts.
So Cornelius had an important rank. He was a strong, responsible, dependable man. You cannot raise to the level of centurion unless you are a strong, dependable, consistent, brave, and courageous individual, which he was.
[16:41] In addition to being a good soldier, Luke says that he was a devout man who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people and who prayed continually to God.

So he was a good man from the world's point of view. He was also a man who was seeking after the truth. He had lived up to whatever revelation he had at the time, but he hadn't and wasn't truly saved.
He didn't have enough knowledge to truly save him. Otherwise, if this man in his devotion truly was saved, then why would God send Peter to him if he was already saved?
He wasn't. He needed to hear the gospel, and so God sent Peter to him. So the next thing that we see from this that's important for us in understanding the preparation of the preacher and the convert is that you can be sincere.
You can be sincere. That's the next fill-in. You can be sincere in your religious practices. You can be an upstanding citizen, and you can give generously of your resources, but none of those good things can save anyone.
[17:50] According to the world's judgment, again, Cornelius was a good man. He was a philanthropist. He was an upright citizen, a man who was sincere in his faith, in his beliefs, but again, he hadn't heard the gospel, and so he was not a believer.

He was not authentically and truly saved. Again, the Bible says that a man is dead in sin. Paul, again, speaking to the Ephesian Christians in chapter 2, verses 1 through 5, said this, It's true of them.
It's true of us and of everybody. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.
But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.
So all the good deeds, all the good things that Cornelius had done in life, they weren't enough to save him. He had to hear the gospel.
[19:12] He had to believe. And so the next thing we see here in this story that's in your handout is that the Bible tells us that salvation does not begin with man.

Salvation does not begin with man. Remember again, it was God who initiated Paul's salvation.
It was the Lord who interrupted his plans to put an end to his church, and who met him, and who called out to him. It was God who came to him. It was God who appeared to him.
It was God who spoke to him. There was nothing in Paul's will that desired Jesus Christ in any way whatsoever. In fact, he hated him. His will was to oppose Christ and his church.
That was Paul's will. That was what Paul wanted to do. And it's no different with anybody else who's been saved. That salvation does not begin with us. It begins with God.
[20:11] Some verses that clearly speak that truth are, first of all, John 1, 12 through 13. Let me back up. Let me go to Ephesians 1, 4 through 5 first.

And there it says, even as he, speaking of God, chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.
I don't think any of you were there before the foundation of the world, were you? I know I wasn't, right? But he was there. And during that time, it says that he chose us in him.
Continuing on, it says, Now, John 1, 12 through 13.
It says there, So again, very clearly saying salvation is of God.
[21:18] John 6, 37. Jesus says, And all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never cast out.

Romans 8, 28 through 30. It says there, And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn

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among many brothers, and those whom he predestined, he also called.
Those whom he called, he also justified. Those whom he justified, he also glorified. Each person in each category from beginning to end goes from one to the other to the other to the other.
Nobody is left behind. So the Bible, to me, clearly teaches that God is sovereign in salvation. And I don't think that there's any getting around that. These words are there.
Election, predestination, they're there. We can't act as if they're not. They are there. And it's clearly that they are there for a reason. In order to get around those words, I think that you've got to do some gymnastics.
[22:25] And really, I think what eventually that leads one to do is to deny the inerrancy of Scripture, to try to make it say something else, or to twist it in order to make it fit what you think.

And this is something that I know personally, for me, I wrestled with for a long time. I recently saw a t-shirt that I think summarized my conclusion then, and still, I hope, is true today.
And it was a t-shirt, a pastor, a young guy, and it said, Faith over feelings. Faith over feelings. I like that. Because to me, it's a reminder that, you know, it doesn't matter what I think or what I feel if my thoughts and my feelings don't line up with what God's Word says.
If my thoughts or my feelings don't line up with what God's Word says, then I'm wrong, not the Bible. I'm wrong. I'm the one who needs to change. I'm the one who needs to think differently or feel differently because God's Word is authoritative.
It's His Word. And He stands in authority over us. Now, just as God's Word says that He is sovereign in salvation, so it says that man has a responsibility still to respond to the gospel and that God does not respond, or that, or excuse me, that God does respond to those who seek Him.
[23:49] Isaiah 55, 6 through 7. There it says, Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake His way and the unrighteous man his thoughts.

Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. So the teaching of Scripture is that salvation is both accomplished by God and it's also something that God commands of sinners.
To me, these two truths act as guardrails, God's sovereignty in salvation and man's responsibility. The Bible says that both are true. And so I say, as long as I stay between those guardrails, right, like when you're traveling on the highway or somewhere or an overpass, as long as you stay between the guardrails, you're safe.
If you venture too far one way or another, then maybe your thoughts and your feelings are making you think differently from what God's Word says. And your thoughts and your feelings do not come before or trump the Word of God.
And so really it comes down to this. God gets the credit in salvation. He gets all of the credit. How many of you, I know Tom has said, when you get to heaven, how many of you will take credit for your salvation? Any of it? None of you.
[25:02] You say, well, I'm saved. I'm here because I saved myself. I don't think anybody who's genuinely saved would say that. But again, man does have a responsibility to hear and to respond to the gospel.

They are commanded by God in Scripture to hear and believe. Now, I've been in conversations with those who, again, I think have ventured outside of the guardrails.
And while I believe that they are Christians, they've tried to harmonize these two principles that the Bible teaches in their minds. But they don't understand that our minds are finite.
Our minds are also fallen. And so I understand, as hopefully we all should understand, that God is a lot smarter than we are. God is a lot smarter than we are.
God is a lot smarter than me. And so even though they may not harmonize in my mind, I believe that they do harmonize in the mind of God. And I have determined that I will let the Word of God guide me in everything that I do and everything that I believe.
[26:13] So again, that means that I don't stand over God's Word in judgment, but that it is over me and it tells me the truth. It is the truth of God.

And so whatever is in it, I believe it. No matter how strong my thoughts or feelings might be at the time, we must all humbly acknowledge that we are not fit to stand in judgment of God or His Word. Because again, doing so means to make the assumption that you know more than God, which none of us does. We share the Gospel and the results of our sharing the Gospel are up to God.

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And however it works out, as we share the Gospel, we trust the results up to the Lord. And I think of it, we're like the farmer. In Jesus' parable, if you remember, He goes out.
His job is to do what? To scatter seed. He scatters seed, and then what does He do? He goes home, and He goes to sleep. And it's God who does all the work, causing that seed, whether it takes root and it grows or not, that's God's doing.
[27:22] And we go to bed, and we wake up the next morning, and we see what the results are. Maybe I know seed doesn't grow that fast, but you know what I'm saying. We pray for the results, and we see that eventually, there are results when we go and share the Gospel, when we go on mission to make disciples.

So again, Cornelius was a religious man. He was very sincere in his religious convictions, but as we've seen, he wasn't truly saved. He was a God-fearer.
He was a man who respected God, but still he was lost. I've also been a part of a conversation where a Christian person that I knew had spent time living in the Middle East and had a lot of interactions with Muslims over there, and in this person's experience, these people were kind to her.
They treated this person very well, and this person admired the devotion that they had to their faith, talking about how often they pray, how they are just so devoted to what they believe, and then this person comparing it to Christianity and thinking, I don't see the same devotion.
Tragically, that can tragically be true, but in her mind, they were so devout. They were so kind. They were so loving towards her.
[28:47] How could they not be saved? But again, Cornelius, and I showed her Cornelius, Cornelius shows us how you can be devout. You can be sincere in whatever it is that, whatever religion you have or whatever faith you hold, but if it's not right, it doesn't matter how sincere or devout you are in it, it's still wrong.

No matter how morally good it may make you as a person, we've seen that our goodness does not measure up to what God's standard requires.
So all people, no matter how good they may appear to us, must hear the gospel in order to be saved. And so continuing on there in verse three, it says about the ninth hour of the day, he saw clearly in a vision, Cornelius, an angel of God, come in and say to him, Cornelius.
The ninth hour was the most important time of prayer in the Jewish day. If you go back to Acts 3, verse one, there you see that Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour to pray. And so Cornelius again, showing his devotion to what he believed was praying. And during that time, again, God initiated his salvation by sending an angel to him, a messenger to him, with a word from him.
[30:06] In some areas of the world, especially where hostility to the gospel is fierce, we've heard reports, again, going back to the Middle East, of Muslims who have been praying or who have been sleeping and they've seen visions of someone in white who is calling out to them.

And in those hostile environments where it's hard to get the gospel in, God cannot be stopped. If he wants to call and to save a person. And so that happened for Cornelius, it continues to happen to this day.
And I've heard, personally, testimonies of those who have said that that was the case for them, Muslims who grew up in the Middle East.
Now, I've also encountered people who have told me that they were sure that they had a dream or heard a word from God. But on further investigation, whatever they dreamed didn't seem to line up at all with what God had to say.
I remember one instance where a person told me that they heard a voice from God telling them to go into this store because there was a sale on purses.
[31:23] You know, and I, great, I'm glad there was a sale on purses, but I don't know that that is something that I can see from Scripture either. You know what I'm saying? So we've got to be careful whenever people talk about having visions or hearing a word from God because, unfortunately, we've seen a lot of times people today who are charlatans and they are not telling the truth.

When Cornelius sees the angel, he reacts in a way that is identical to all the other instances that are recorded in Scripture of those who have encountered heavenly beings. He was terrified.

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He was terrified just as all the rest of them were. And so, again, whenever people claim to be seeing angels or talking to angels, if in that story they don't talk about being terrified or afraid, then automatically you know, well, that doesn't match up with Scripture either.
When Cornelius sees the angel, he reacts in a way, again, that is identical to all the others in Scripture who encounter angelic beings. He was afraid. Again, Cornelius was a soldier.
He was a warrior. He probably spent a lot of time on the battlefield. He had seen many things that would strike fear in the hearts of many of us.
[32:37] But when he saw this angelic being, as bad as those things were, as terrifying as those things might have been, he was terrified, this strong, courageous warrior. But the angel, as in other occurrences in Scripture, was quick to calm his fears, saying in verse 4 that his prayers and his alms had ascended as a memorial before God.

And so God knew that Cornelius had been worshiping him to the best of his knowledge and gave him further instruction that he was to send men to Joppa to bring Simon, who is Peter, who is lodging with another Simon, a tanner, to go to him and to bring him back to Cornelius.
And so Cornelius responded immediately. In verses 7 and 8 we see the angel departs and Cornelius immediately goes into action, gathering together a servant and a soldier that he trusted to go and to find Peter and bring him back.
Next Luke tells us how God sovereignly prepared Peter, the preacher. As the men sent from Cornelius were on their way, God prepared Peter with a divine vision.
In verse 10, it said Peter went up to the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. It was noon about lunchtime and Peter became hungry and wanted something to eat. So while his hosts were preparing lunch for Peter and for the rest of them, Peter fell into a trance and he saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth.
[34:16] In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. So Peter's vision involved eating and that sheet contained, according to the Old Testament, both clean animals and unclean animals.

Clean animals that could be eaten and unclean animals that according to the Old Testament dietary restrictions were unclean, could not be eaten.
So, the first thing we need to understand is why were these dietary restrictions in place? Why did they exist? Well, Leviticus 20, 25 through 26 tells us why.
There it says, you shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls which I have set apart for you to hold unclean.
You shall be holy to me for I, the Lord, am holy and have separated you from the people that you should be mine. So, it was imperative that Israel be kept separate from their idolatrous neighbors and such restrictions would hinder social intercourse with them and so they needed to be separate.
[35:36] They needed to set the standard, right? God still wanted to use them as a light to the nations and this is how he was going to do that then. Since coming, since the coming of the new covenant and the calling of a new people, the church, the day of those restrictions is now over as Peter would soon discover and to the rest of us, especially those of us who like barbecue, we say, Amen!

Amen! Bring on the pork, right? Praise the Lord. In his vision, God commanded Peter to rise, to kill, and to eat but still Peter was confused.
He had zealously done all that he could to try to keep these dietary laws a part of his life. Believing such kosher commitment was required by the Lord.
His strict adherence reflected, again, his devotion to pleasing God but now, God was telling him to throw all that old way of thinking away and so that was something that Peter was very much confused by and so he asks for clarification and God tells him that he didn't make a mistake.
In fact, three times he repeats to him that what he has made clean do not call common any longer.
But still Peter had been so used to his traditions that despite God's clear instruction, he was perplexed by what God was asking him to do but even though he was perplexed, as we'll see, he was still obedient to do what the Lord called him to do and so next time we come together we'll talk about what that obedience led him to do and the results of that.
[37:20] But before I before I conclude I almost forgot one of your last fill-ins and that is based upon what I just said that traditions can hinder our witness. Traditions can hinder our witness and

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so Peter though he had these traditions didn't allow them to hinder his witness during this time but if we're not careful our traditions can still hinder our witness.

So now let's move on to application. The first application point that we can take from this scripture is that God uses different methods. God uses different methods to bring people to salvation but the message must always be the same.
God uses different methods to bring people to salvation but the message must always be the same. And so some things that we can sometimes we can be guilty of focusing too much on the method more than the message.
Right? And so we've got to be clear about the message about the need for the unbeliever to repent of their sin. They need to see that Jesus Christ is the only hope that they have for salvation. They need to understand that they've got to put their faith and their trust on him that he died on the cross in their place for their sins that he rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven.
We've got to be clear with the gospel message. Now the method that we communicate that may be different. We've done the three circles thing here before. I know some people still do that. Knocking on people's doors, whatever.
[38:47] But we've got to be careful that we don't fall into a trap where we think it's the method that saves the person where, you know, we say repeat this prayer after me, come forward down the aisle to the front and those actions save you.

It's the message and they're believing it that saves them. So we can't let our method cloud the importance of the message. Second, it is imperative that we share the gospel with all people.
It is imperative that we share the gospel with all people. So again, this means regardless of a person's race, their gender, their social status, their economic situation or how strongly or sincerely they practice their beliefs of another religion.
We must share the gospel with all people. go therefore to the ends of the world. And so we've got to go to everybody and again, we're not doing something mean when we challenge somebody's religious beliefs if they don't believe in Jesus Christ.
In fact, we're doing a gracious and loving thing by telling them, by warning them, by sharing the gospel with them. It's imperative that we do that. Third, God gets the glory for all those who have been saved and are being saved.
[40:06] God gets the glory for all those who have been saved and are being saved. So we never should hear anyone say, yeah, I witnessed to Steve and I saved him.

Right? That's not the case. If Steve was saved, it was because God saved him. And so, we are the messengers, we share the message, we do it clearly, but we understand that God gets all the glory in salvation.
And then fourth, traditions and sacred cows must be sacrificed if they impair our gospel effectiveness. Traditions and sacred cows must be sacrificed if they impair our gospel effectiveness.
So, how do we know if we have a sacred cow? Well, there's many ways to identify them, but it's those things that we feel like they are so important, that they are essential for us to be a church or essential for us to be able to witness to people, but there's no biblical basis to support that.
So we've got to be careful that we don't allow our traditions to get in the way of our effectiveness. Case in point, if Peter would have said, you know what, Lord, I've never eaten anything unclean, I've always believed this and I'm not going to change because I just can't accept it.
[41:26] He had to sacrifice that sacred cow, that tradition that he had that day so that he could go to Cornelius and he was willing to be obedient to that. So, sacred cows are hard to sacrifice, but those are some times where you've just got to pray, you know, God as a church, what is keeping us from having the effectiveness that we need to have for the church?

And a lot of times it's contained in the phrase, we've never done it that way before. And you know that the ways that you've done it before can often be the sacred cows and so it's time at times to sacrifice those things.

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