

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE GOSPEL
Acts 10:34-43

Intro: (Before reading the Scripture, giving the background regarding Cornelius—a Roman citizen, evidently born in Italy, and a convert to the Jewish faith. Cf. the devoutness of another centurion in Luke 7:1-10.)

(Read the Scripture.)

This passage marks a new departure in the ministry of the Apostles. In Matt. 10:5 the Lord had told the twelve, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (includes v. 6).

Just prior to His ascension the Lord had spoken of this new phase in their ministry. We find it in such verses as Matt. 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8. BUT HEARING IT SAID IS NOT LIKE ACTUALLY DOING IT. EVERYTHING IN PETER'S JEWISH BACKGROUND OBJECTED TO SUCH AN APPROACH TO THE GENTILES, as Acts 10:28 indicates.

But the Lord had prepared Peter for this in two ways:

- (1) He had been given the vision by God (vv. 9-16).
- (2) The Holy Spirit had expressly told Peter to go with these men who came after him (vv. 19, 20).

Peter went. And after listening to their story, he began to speak. His message gives us a complete statement of the Gospel, and in it we see that the distinctive message of the Gospel never changes.

I. It is now becoming apparent to Peter that THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL NATIONS (vv. 34, 35).

What a testimony to the openheartedness of Peter are his words in v. 28b)! But it was apparent to him that God was working in the hearts of these men, and the very fact that Cornelius was a Jewish convert was proof that he needed more than Jewish legalism.

Peter had been raised to despise Gentiles because they were not Jews. Here was a Gentile who had tried to become a Jew in his religion, but it had not met the needs of his heart. And Peter knew that the preaching he and the other apostles had already done to the Jews proved that being a Jew was not enough.

Cf. Paul's dispute with Peter over this very point in Gal. 2:11-18.

V. 35 in Acts 10 is not a statement of salvation by works, but, instead, a statement of salvation by grace. Fearing God is the equivalent of trusting Him; working righteousness is the fruit of salvation.

But the point is that God does not prefer a Jew because he is a Jew, nor does He prefer a Gentile because he is a Gentile. All men are treated by Him without partiality.

This basic principle never changes--and it goes beyond national boundaries to every other line of distinction you can draw among men.

"God accepteth no man's person" (Gal. 2:6).

II. THE GOSPEL ALWAYS HAS THE SAME MESSAGE.

Peter quite obviously did not have one message to give to Jews, and another for Gentiles. He only had ONE message. And you can see from his comments in vv. 39 and 41 that he understood that he was to bear witness to one particular message. Since God had sent him to these Gentiles, He must intend that they hear the same message.

Primarily the message is this: "peace by Jesus Christ." Cf. v. 36.

Peace is what these Gentiles wanted, and what they did not have--peace with God, peace in their own hearts. They were doing all that any devout Jew would do, but still they had no peace. Can't we imagine how each new step into Judaism brought hopes that this might bring peace, but Cornelius was always disappointed.

Note how gradually Peter approaches his subject. If it is "peace by Jesus Christ" (an excellent title for the Gospel) they what these Gentiles needed to hear was what he had to say about Jesus Christ.

"That word, I say, ye know." The basic facts of the life of Christ were so well known that Peter could begin on this foundation. The meaning of the facts they did not know.

A. The Person.

He begins with the deity of Jesus Christ: "He is Lord of all" (v. 36).

Secondly, as a man, his works (miracles) proved that "God was with him" (v. 38; cf. John 3:2; 9:33, where

the man born blind who had received his sight said,
"If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."

But the fact remains: No one can make a serious study of the work of Jesus Christ on earth without being forced to acknowledge that He is unique among all men who ever walked on the earth. HE IS NOT ONLY AN AMAZING MAN; HE IS GOD!

There can be no Gospel apart from these facts relating to Christ's Person.

B. The Work.

He died, and He was raised from the dead. It is as simple as this.

Deny either of these truths, and you have no Gospel.

How did Peter know these things? Read again vv. 39-41. PETER HAD SEEN IT ALL. HE KNEW IT TO BE TRUE.

Why only to believers? Because "it was not fitting that He should subject Himself, in His risen condition, to a second rejection in Person" (JEB, VI, 71).

Do you remember the story of the rich man and Lazarus, and how the rich man wanted Lazarus to go to his five brethren to warn them not to come to the place of torment, and Abraham is quoted as saying, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

BUT IT WAS NOT ONLY HIS WORK IN THE PAST, BUT HIS WORK IN THE FUTURE WHICH PETER PREACHED TO THESE GENTILES.

Cf. v. 42.

Cf. John 5:22, 23, 27; 17:31. He is the Judge of all--saved and unsaved alike.

This is the Gospel message, and it must be the same regardless of where the message is being preached--always of Christ, His Person and His Work.

But there is more!

III. THE GOSPEL IS ALWAYS OFFERED ON THE SAME BASIS.

Note how Peter expresses it: "that through his name whosoever believeth" (v. 43).

"Through his name" means that the believing takes into account all that Christ did--accepting it as true, and trusting Him for salvation.

"Whosoever" indicates that salvation is not experienced in groups. V. 24 tells us that "Cornelius . . . had called together his kinsmen and near friends." V. 27 says that when Peter got there he "found many that were come together." They could listen together, but they had to believe individually. Salvation comes as a matter of personal faith.

"Believeth," not worketh, not worshipping, not payeth, not even prayeth--but "believeth."

How simple, and yet it could not be any other way. Jesus Christ has done all of the work; we can accept salvation as "the gift of God" (Rom. 6:23).

But, finally

IV. SALVATION ALWAYS BROUGHT THE SAME RESULTS.

What did they want? PEACE.

How could they get it? Only by having their sins forgiven. Cf. v. 43. There can be no peace without forgiveness. Cf. Rom. 5:1.

After enumerating man's sins in Rom. 3, Paul says in v. 17, "And the way of peace have they not known."

Isaiah tells us, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (57:20, 21).

Concl: Peter never got to say another word. This is what these men were waiting to hear. What they needed was not religion, but Christ. He forgives sins; religion never can. He brings peace. It is Christ and Christ alone.

Do you know Him as your Saviour? Do you want peace? Then receive Him as your Saviour. Let Him take away your sins, and His peace will fill your heart.