

The Gentiles Receive the Gospel

Lesson Scope: Acts 9:32-11:18

Lesson Focus

For centuries the Jews were warned to keep themselves from the nations about them. Now God would "[break] down the middle wall of partition" between the Jew and pagan Gentile (Ephesians 2:14). The wall in this New Covenant church, instead of being racial, would be between the saved and the lost, between the ones who received Jesus and followed Him and those who rejected Him.

Jesus had given the Great Commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The Scriptures had also prophesied of the Gentiles being brought in (Isaiah 49:5-6; 60:3).

The knowledge and devotion of Gentiles like Cornelius show the influence of the Greek Scriptures on the Roman world. The Septuagint had been translated from the Hebrew by 180 B.C. God's moral laws appealed to the conscience and made a fertile field for the preaching of the apostles.

God is not willing that any should perish.

In the previous lesson, God dealt with Saul, who was hindering the spread of the Gospel. In this lesson He deals with Peter, who also was a potential obstacle to God's purpose that the Gospel should go into all the world to every creature (Mark 16:15). Saul's influence was from without the church and Peter's from within. The challenge for us is to make sure our own will or opinion of what is important does not stand in the way of the Word of God and the Spirit's leading.

As a Gentile people, we do not often think of being thankful to the Jewish people for bearing the Law and the covenant and the service of God (Romans 9:1-5). Seek to inspire gratefulness in yourself for the privileges we have received through the preaching of Jewish evangelists many years ago. "Their debtors they are.... The Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things" (Romans 15:27).

All who meet the Gospel conditions shall be saved, regardless of race, nationality, or background.

Lesson Aim: To show the basis for inclusion in Gospel privileges.

Theme Verses: Acts 10:34-35. Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Lesson Text:

The Way Prepared

Acts 10:1-5 ¹ There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, ² A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. ³ He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. ⁴ And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. ⁵ And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter:

Acts 10:9-16 ⁹ On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: ¹⁰ And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, ¹¹ And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: ¹² Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. ¹³ And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. ¹⁴ But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. ¹⁵ And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. ¹⁶ This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Acts 10:19-20 ¹⁹ While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. ²⁰ Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

Acts 10:24 ²⁴ And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

The Gospel Declared

Acts 10:34-43 ³⁴ Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: ³⁵ But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. ³⁶ The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus

Christ: (he is Lord of all:) ³⁷ That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; ³⁸ How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: ⁴⁰ Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; ⁴¹ Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. ⁴³ To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

The Gentiles Received

[Acts 10:44](#) ⁴⁴ While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

[Acts 10:48](#) ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Questions for Study

The Way Prepared

1. What evidences of devotion do we see in Cornelius?
2. What were the rewards of Cornelius's devotion?
3. What influence helped Peter cross the hurdles in these steps of God?
4. How can we rightly judge issues and overcome prejudice?

The Gospel Declared

5. What evidences that Jesus is the Messiah do we see in Peter's message?
6. How can we be witnesses of these things?

The Gentiles Received

7. How and why was this revelation of the Holy Spirit different than we experience today?
8. How can we Gentiles show our love for Christ?

Analyzing the Passage

The Italian band (Acts 10:1) was a Gentile occupation force from Rome, stationed in Israel to keep peace.

The ninth hour was the Jewish hour of prayer (Acts 3:1). Cornelius evidently observed some Jewish practices.

An "angel of God" (Acts 10:3) initiated this event. This was God's official call, extending the New Covenant blessings of Israel to the Gentiles.

For Peter, "All manner of ... beasts, and creeping things, and fowls" (Acts 10:12) were a fitting parallel to the Gentiles he was averse to accepting among the brethren. The Law forbade common and unclean things (Leviticus 11:4-8).

God's challenge to Peter was necessary (Acts 10:15). Peter was orthodox and set in his separation from Gentiles.

"Respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34) comes from a Greek word meaning "accepter of faces." We cannot be God's witnesses if different racial appearances stir up adverse feelings in our hearts.

The "quick and dead" (Acts 10:42) are the "living and dead."

We see here that water baptism came after the Spirit's infilling. It was a witness of what had happened, not the means of gaining Spirit power.

Principles and Applications

The Way Prepared

1. Gospel privileges are available to all people regardless of their background (Acts 10:34-35). "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). Just as all have sinned, so also salvation is for all. The only limiting factor is man's choice.

2. God reveals Himself to those who seek Him in sincerity (Acts 10:4-5). We share the Gospel with all men, but spiritual enlightenment comes to those with the fertile soil of a humble, teachable spirit. There are many perplexed, wondering, open-hearted souls today who are willing to hear. Whether or not they are saved depends on what they do with the truth they receive.

3. Spiritual cleansing must precede Gospel privileges (Acts 10:14-15). We see in this cleansing work of God that the Holy Spirit goes ahead of the evangelist, preparing hearts. "We love him, because he first loved us." "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65). We must thank God that, in His sovereign moving, He chose to come to us Gentiles who were strangers, far from the covenant of promise, and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:11-13).

4. Doors open to those who respond readily to the Spirit of God (Acts 10:19-20, 24). When we believe a Scriptural truth, many more open up.

When we put to practice a principle, we understand much more. The Scriptures must always qualify visions and dreams. Some claim "the Spirit" told them to do things contrary to sound Bible doctrine. However, the Holy Spirit "shall not speak of himself" but what He hears of the Father (John 16:13).

The Gospel Declared

5. The Gospel communicates the knowledge of God's provision (Acts 10:36-37). The purpose of our evangelism is to spread the Good News. Deliverance from sin and bondage can be found in Jesus Christ. Freedom from guilt and a joy that passes understanding is for whosoever will. We must first experience the joy of finding the new life for ourselves.

6. Salvation is possible only because Jesus died and rose again (Acts 10:39-40). Only He could provide sinless blood and that only by His death. But the Prince of Life could not remain in the grave. Because He is life, He is able to impart life.

7. Faith in Christ is required for remission of sins (Acts 10:43). "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). This faith includes a belief that we must obey the commands of Christ as well as believe in His person and work. Here is where nominal Christianity fails. Here is where our faith is put to the acid test.

The Gentiles Received

8. Gospel privileges follow regeneration through the indwelling Holy Spirit (10:44). The necessity of a Spirit-filled life is taught in many Scriptures. "He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13) and deliver "no condemnation to them ... who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). Enough laws cannot be made to keep men going right. This is the great difference between law and grace—"I will put my law ... in their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33).

9. Gospel privileges include baptism into Christ's body, the church (Acts 10:48). We are not saved to serve God alone, but we are made a part of God's family. We find inspiration and strength as we relate to fellow believers. We also find spiritual safety as we surrender our wills and commit ourselves to the counsels of a Scriptural church.

Important Teachings

1. Gospel privileges are available to all people regardless of their background (Acts 10:34-35).

2. God reveals Himself to those who seek Him in sincerity (Acts 10:4-5).

3. Spiritual cleansing must precede Gospel privileges (Acts 10:14-15).
4. Doors open to those who respond readily to the Spirit of God (Acts 10:19-20, 24).
5. The Gospel communicates the knowledge of God's provision (Acts 10:36-37).
6. Salvation is possible only because Jesus died and rose again (Acts 10:39-40).
7. Faith in Christ is required for remission of sins (Acts 10:43).
8. Gospel privileges follow regeneration through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44).
9. Gospel privileges include baptism into Christ's body, the church (Acts 10:48).

Answers to Questions

1. What evidences of devotion do we see in Cornelius?

Cornelius feared God and had faithful servants and family. He was generous in sharing his material goods and had a regular prayer life.

2. What were the rewards of Cornelius's devotion?

Cornelius was a man with whom God could communicate in a vision. God could lead him to deeper spiritual blessings. In this case Cornelius, a Gentile, would share in the New Covenant blessings of Israel.

3. What influence helped Peter cross the hurdles in these steps of God? Peter had a sense of the Holy Spirit's direction (Acts 10:19). He could not ignore, much less resist, the obvious meaning of the vision.

4. How can we rightly judge issues and overcome prejudice?

With the power of the Holy Spirit, we, like Peter, follow truth rather than our feelings. We act according to the Scriptures and the "necessary things" that the church gives direction to concerning the issues of our day (Acts 15:24-29). The disciples were doing what the prophets foretold (Acts 10:43).

5. What evidences that Jesus is the Messiah do we see in Peter's message?

Jesus came preaching peace. His Holy Spirit baptism was confirmed by a dove from heaven. Jesus went about doing good, performing miracles of healing, and casting out devils. Finally He was crucified as God's sacrificial Lamb and then rose from the dead.

6. How can we be witnesses of these things? We first of all receive knowledge about God's work of salvation through Jesus Christ. Then we experience the power of the resurrection in the new birth. We can tell people that

we have been delivered from sin and Christ's power is real in our life.

7. How and why was this revelation of the Holy Spirit different than we experience today?

This Holy Spirit baptism was accompanied with a miraculous sign like the one the Jewish believers received at Pentecost. These signs were given in the beginning to authenticate the experience (Mark 16:20). Today the promise continues. "Repent, and be baptized ... and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

8. How can we Gentiles show our love for Christ?

We first of all avail ourselves of God's provision as the psalmist David said, "I will take the cup of salvation" (Psalm 116:13). We then share the Gospel with others, considering no one to be beyond God's offer of salvation.

Summarizing the Lesson

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:14-15).

Research Guide

1. Study Scriptures on how we were "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:11, 12; John 10:16; Ephesians 4:17-24; 1 Corinthians 12:2; Romans 11).

But through Christ we are made nigh (Ephesians 2:13-22; Galatians 3:28, 29; Colossians 1:21-22).

2. A Bible dictionary will tell how the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek (the Septuagint).