

Breaking Down Walls: Taking the Gospel to the World

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Date: 03 December 2023

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[0 : 0 0] Well, this morning we turn a pivotal chapter in the book of Acts, and it's a story that transformed not just one person's life, but I believe transformed the entire history of Christianity.

We find ourselves in Acts chapter 10 this morning in verses 1 through verse 23, and it's a passage that's beckoning us, that is calling for us to confront a challenge that is just as relevant today as it was 2,000 years ago, and that is the challenge of overcoming our deepest held religious and cultural prejudices.

We're going to see how God works in the heart of someone who was an outcast, someone who was considered almost untouchable by a group of religious people, and how God is going to change the mind of a very orthodox, now Christian, and how God is going to teach them that he is going to be going to someone that otherwise he would have never even considered crossing crossing.

Crossing a cultural boundary, crossing a boundary that religiously, that traditionally he would have never even considered crossing. Imagine with me of a world where the barriers that we erect, whether they be race or creed or culture, that simply dissolve under the powerful light of the gospel, and we begin to see people the way God sees them, and seeing them as a soul, not as a symptom, or see them not as a sin, but see them as a soul that needs to trust Christ as their Savior, that is in need of forgiveness, and that is in need of a brand new life. And think about the people that you might pass by every single day, those that you might never consider reaching out to. Think about, maybe God is calling us to reach out to someone that we would have never considered reaching out to before. What if our next step of faith is to cross a boundary that we would have never ever considered crossing before? In Acts chapter 10, we see a divine orchestration that brings together two unlikely individuals. Cornelius, a Roman centurion, a Gentile, and Peter, a fisherman turned apostle. But I don't see this as just a meeting of two individuals, but rather a collision of two separate worlds. And in that, we find a profound truth that I believe God is wanting to teach us today. And as we unpack verses 1 through verse 23, we're not going to finish this account of Peter and Cornelius and his household and what God works in their lives as he places these two unlikely characters together. But we're going to get to the point where we see God preparing Peter to share the gospel, and we see God preparing Cornelius' heart to receive the gospel.

And so we're going to be asking ourselves this morning some pretty challenging questions. Are there walls that we have built in our own lives that prevent us from seeing others the way God sees them? Are we willing to allow God to call us and bring us into some uncomfortable places for the sake of the gospel? Just like he is challenging Peter here to go where Peter would have considered to be a religious impossibility. But God says, no, I want you to go because we are in a brand new program. So this morning, let's be ready to hear, not only hear God's truth, but to act upon the truth of God that we see in his word. And also, I believe what he's trying to work in our hearts.

[4 : 22] Let's prepare ourselves to be surprised by the boundaries of reaching others through the love of God and reaching a world that desperately needs to know and hear about Jesus Christ. And we're going to be looking in chapter 10, beginning in verse number 1 this morning. So the question is, how can we overcome our religious and our cultural prejudices and be willing to take the gospel to all the world, even to those we might consider unclean and to those who are, we consider beyond hope?

Let's take a look. Acts chapter 10, beginning with verse number 1. We're going to read the entire long passage, and then we're going to come back to verse number 1. Verse 1 says, there was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what we call the Italian regiment, a devout man, and one who feared God with all his household, and gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. We're going to see his spiritual condition is not necessarily what it seems in verse number 1 and verse 2. About the ninth hour of the day, or about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, Cornelius. And when he observed him, he was afraid and said, what is it, Lord? So he said to him, your prayers and your alms, or your offerings, have come up for a memorial before God. Now send men to

Joppa and send for Simon, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do. And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. So when he had explained all of these things to them, he sent them to Joppa. We see the scene shift in verse number 9. And the next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the roof. He went up on the flat roof, the housetop, to pray. It was about the sixth hour. It was about noon. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat. But while they made ready, they were downstairs getting lunch ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened, and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners descended to him and let down to the earth.

In it, in that sheet that was let down to the earth by the four corners, imagine, you know, maybe some ropes tied to each corner of the sheet. It's coming down. And in it, we see all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, saying, or came to him, rise, Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common or unclean. I'm a good orthodox Jewish boy. I don't eat stuff like that. I don't even touch the stuff that's on the sheet. I might be hungry, but I'm not that hungry. And a voice spoke to him again the second time, what God has cleansed, you must not call common. This was done three times, and the object was taken up into heaven again. Then we see the scene begin to shift. Peter starts thinking. Peter's wondering within himself what this vision which he had seen meant. And at the same time, while Peter is wondering, what in the world does this mean? Knock on the door. The men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. While Peter thought about the vision, the spirit said to him, behold, three men are seeking you. Arise, therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing. Doubting nothing. We're going to see what those words mean there in a moment.

For I have sent them. Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to see him from Cornelius and said, yes, I am he whom you seek. What reason or for what reason have you come? And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to come to summon you to his house and to hear words from you. Then he invited them in and lodged with them. On the next day, Peter went away with them and some of his brethren from Joppa accompanied him. What do we see here? Let's break this down.

[10 : 04] Let's take a look at this unlikely worshippers. Go back to verse number one. There was a certain man said in Caesarea called Cornelius. He was a centurion. A centurion was a soldier in the Roman army who had ascended to the rank of centurion typically was responsible for at least a hundred soldiers.

But it says here that he was one, a centurion of what is called the Italian regiment or the Italian cohort. And so he was pretty high up in the Roman army. So God appears to him through an angel.

He was a devout man who feared God with all his household who gave alms or offerings. He gave generously to the poor, generously to the Jews because the Jews were in an occupied area. And so he says, it says about three o'clock in the afternoon, he saw clearly in a vision an angel coming in and saying to him, Cornelius. So Cornelius sees the angel. He's afraid. The angel says, he says, what is it, Lord? And he says to him, God has heard you. Your prayers and your offerings have come up to God. We see that in the book of Psalms. It says that our prayers and what we offer up as sacrifices comes up to the nostrils of God as a sweet smelling aroma. And he says, now he says, send men to Joppa or what's modern day Joppa. And he says, send for a certain man. Send for Simon.

He's surnamed Peter and he's staying with Simon who is a tanner and his house is by the sea. And then Peter is going to tell you what to do. He's going to give you the message for which you have been praying. He is going to tell you what the truth is. He's going to tell you how to be right with God. So Cornelius called his household servants. He calls a soldier to go with them.

Before God could save the Gentiles, he had to prepare Peter to bring the gospel and he had to prepare Cornelius to hear the message of the gospel. You see, salvation is a divine work of grace.

[12 : 35] God could use angels or God has used angels to bring messages to lost people. But God has to use you and me to present the gospel to a lost and a dying world because we are the only ones who have experienced grace. The angels have not experienced grace. And so when we come to someone and we tap them on the shoulder and say, I've got, I've got good news for you. You know, you can have peace.

You can have peace with God that you really, you may not really think that that's what you need, but all the things that you've been trying to satisfy your life with, the stuff that you've tried, but really hasn't helped, hasn't worked. And you get bummed out all over again and you get feeling like, what's the point? Well, it's all about Jesus and what he can do for you.

This is what, this is what I found, how I found my life being. And this is what I found that Jesus did for me and he can do the same for you. So God uses us as saved individuals to bring the gospel to others. So God's preparing Cornelius, God's preparing Peter as well. Now Caesarea was about 65 miles northwest of Jerusalem and it was about 30 miles north of Joppa. And what we see here is at this, about this time, Caesarea was a pretty, pretty established city. They boasted some really nice buildings. Caesarea was the center of the empire there. And Cornelius, it seems, had grown tired of the pagan myths, had grown tired of worshiping all of these gods. And probably Cornelius is thinking, there's got to be more than just these stone statues. There's got to be more to it. And, you know, we read in the Old Testament that God has placed eternity in our hearts. Well, that's simply saying is that there's something about us that yearns for the divine, yearns for something that is beyond us.

And so that, I believe, is where Cornelius finds himself. And so he turns to Judaism in hopes of finding what he hadn't been able to find in his pagan rituals. And Cornelius is about as close to being a Jew as he could get without being a Jewish proselyte or someone who had gone through the rite of circumcision, someone who had gone through all of the, jumped through all of the hoops and had become a Jewish convert or a convert to Judaism. And it's interesting, I find, I think it's interesting to see how close a person can come or how a religious a person can be and still not be right with God. Because if you look at the definition of religious in the dictionary, you would probably see Cornelius. He did everything by the rules. He worshipped God. He prayed to God. He gave offerings to the poor, to those who needed it. He was fasting. He was probably following God's law as closely as he could, even though he wasn't permitted to offer sacrifices in the temple because he was still, in their minds, an unclean Gentile. He had to worship from without. He wasn't allowed in their inner sanctum. So in every way, he was the model of religious respectability, but yet he was still an outsider. See, the difference between Cornelius and so many religious people today is that Cornelius knew that as a religious, all of the religious devotion wasn't enough for him to be right with God.

Cornelius knew that there's God, that I'm just not right with God. I want to know how to be right with God. Many religious people today, they are satisfied with their character and their good works and that it will get them to heaven. They think that that's all they need. They're ignorant, if you will, of their own sin, God's righteousness. And in his prayers, Cornelius is asking them to, God to show him the right way. So God sends an angel. He instructs Cornelius in what to do. And he calls for Peter.

[17 : 30] I find it interesting because Philip the evangelist was already there in Caesarea. We see that in Acts chapter number 8. But who did God or to whom did Jesus give the keys to the kingdom? To Peter. Now, Peter was not the first pope. The keys to the kingdom doesn't mean he can tell someone they're not saved or pray them into heaven. All it means is he had the ability and he had the choice, am I going to unlock the gospel or am I going to bring the gospel to all the world? So we see earlier in the book of Acts, the gospel is unlocked for the Jews. The Jews get their chance to accept Christ. Then we see that the gospel goes out to the Samaritans. And then Peter comes along and he prays for them, lays hands on them. And the Samaritans receive God's Holy Spirit. And now we see Peter is going to come to a Gentile. And Peter, if you will, is going to unlock the gospel and so that it can spread throughout the Gentile world. And this is what we see in the Great Commission, starting in Jerusalem,

Judea, Samaria, and then ultimately to the uttermost parts of the earth. Had God not changed Peter's prejudices and religious and cultural biases, the gospel would have never come to you and it would have never come to me. So it took God changing the heart and the mind of an Orthodox Jew who was stuck in his religious rituals, if you will. Even though he was a Christian, he was still stuck with these cultural differences. And so God has to open his mind to say, don't call unclean or don't call common or unclean what I have opened up and said, this is what I want you to do. So what's the first step? First step is to recognize our own prejudice. We see that in verses 1 through 6.

Cornelius, who was a Roman centurion, was a man of great faith. He was a man of great devotion and he wanted in his heart to know what was right. Do you realize that we can't always look at a person on the outside and see what's going on in their heart, see what's going on in their mind? They may not, they may look like the least likely character to trust Jesus, but we don't know that they might lay awake at night wondering, there's something wrong with me. There's something missing.

There's got to be something more. But God didn't overlook Cornelius. God saw his heart where Peter initially, or before what happens here, would have looked at the outside and said, you're not worthy. I'm not going to bring the gospel to you because I don't think there's any hope.

I don't want to become unclean. I don't want to get affected by you. And so, because we're supposed to stay separate. And so I'm not going to go to you. I won't even go. I want, Peter wouldn't have walked through his door, much less sat at his table and eaten with him until God changed and God got rid of Peter's prejudice and Peter's biases. So how many times have we looked at someone with an alternative lifestyle and reacted with revulsion instead of compassion? The same compassion that Jesus showed when he saw people that were in need of forgiveness and in need of peace with God? Others said, oh no.

[21 : 16] Jesus said, come on. They need life. They need me. And so Jesus broke all types of cultural and religious barriers because he was the one who they needed. And who are we to say that we will lock the door to some because we don't want to be tainted by them? And so, Peter, God is changing Peter's mind and the first step towards genuine spiritual growth and discipleship is acknowledging, you know what, maybe there's things that are keeping me from bringing the gospel to all the world. Often these things are so ingrained within us that they're invisible. They're subconscious. We don't realize we have them, but they're still there. They might manifest in subtle ways who we choose to associate with the assumptions we make about others, even to the priorities in our ministries, that we have to be careful that we see people the way God sees them. And it takes humility to confront these hidden corners of our hearts and to say, God, shine your light in this corner and help me to see what your will is for me.

So as we reflect on these, let's remind ourselves that Christ knows no boundaries. There are people, their history is full of stories of people that people would have never thought would have trusted Christ. Think of people groups today. Think of those who are so opposed to Jesus, who worship a totally different God, if you will. And we would consider them militant.

And we would consider them enemies of America. And I've heard people say, you know, we should just kill them all. But what do the missionaries who God has called to those people groups say? You know, we've lived among them and they're just regular people. Now, yes, there are going to be some, those on the fringes that are so radical that, that they, they don't even, they don't even believe what the common person believes.

And they've said, you know, they're just regular people with families. They have the same emotions that you and I have. And we've eaten with them. They've eaten with us.

And before we knew it, they began asking questions about our faith. And, you know, we had the privilege of baptizing them because they trusted Jesus.

[24 : 22] They gave up that their prophet and they began to follow Jesus. And there are so many who would write them off and say, there's no hope.

Jesus or God is going, is telling Peter don't write the Gentiles off because they're not without hope. Acknowledging our biases, acknowledging our prejudices, don't wake us, don't make us weak.

And they don't make us liberal. They make us prepared to be used by God because we see people the way God sees them. And we see them as a soul. Yes, they may be sinners, but what were we before we came to know Jesus Christ?

We were sinners as well. Maybe not the same sin, maybe a more socially acceptable sin, but a sin nonetheless. It doesn't mean we change our beliefs about right or wrong.

Wrong is still wrong. Sin is still sin. It simply changes the way we see others. We see them as an eternal soul who needs to hear the gospel and who need to have a relationship with God just like you and I need to have that relationship with God.

[25 : 34] And that we do not label them by their sin. We see them as a sinner in need of a Savior. Just like us.

So it prepares our hearts to be fertile ground to allow the Holy Spirit to be using us, to allow us to truly embrace the breadth and the depth of the mission that God has called us to.

So let's take a moment to look at ourselves today. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to reveal those areas in our lives. Who am I missing out on? Who am I not going to? Because even though you've called me to that person, as we do this, we open ourselves up to a deeper relationship with Jesus.

And we open ourselves up to the miracles that God can perform as we see the miracle of people coming to know Jesus Christ as their Savior. and become a heart that sees people beyond the external and sees that the transforming work of the gospel can make a profound impact on people, even if they are different from us.

And Peter is going to see this. We're going to see this in the next few verses next week as Peter goes to the house of Cornelius. So we've seen that in Cornelius people aren't always what they seem on the outside.

[26 : 57] This might have been a macho Roman soldier, but on the inside, his heart yearned for the God of the universe.

And so this is what we're seeing here is that with Christ, there is no Jew, there is no Gentile, there's only the beautiful tapestry of human souls who God, who the gospel can reach if we, how will they hear?

Unless we bring them the word of God. So now, what we're going to see in verses 9 through 16, what we are going to see here is that God is going to begin tearing down the walls in Peter's life.

and God is going to prepare him to be willing to go to someone he would have never, ever considered before. Look at verse 9. The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter goes up to the housetop to pray about the sixth hour.

Excuse me. Then he becomes very hungry, wanted to eat. While he was making, while they were making ready, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven open, object, great sheet, bound to the four corners like they were held by ropes and it's lower down, full of animals, probably, you know, full of camels, full of, I don't know, squirrels, I don't know, whatever was, whatever was indigenous, that area, that Peter would have recognized, those are unclean animals.

[28 : 33] Religious dietary laws that I know very well, I shouldn't touch. And so I'm not going to eat that. Peter said, not so, Lord, verse 14, for I have never, I have never eaten anything common or unclean.

And what does the voice say in verse 15? What God has cleansed, he says, you must not call common.

You see, Peter also had to be prepared for this event since he had lived as an Orthodox Jew all of his life. He had followed the dietary laws, he had followed the festivals, he had followed the feast days, and he had been all part of that.

The law of Moses was a, the law of Moses was a wall between the Jews and the Gentiles. Now there was a purpose in the Old Testament for that.

God wanted to keep his people, the Jews, under the Old Covenant as a separate group of people for a reason.

[29 : 45] It was through the lineage of his people that Jesus Christ would one day be born. and so he could have a clear Jewish lineage.

But yet, even though there was this wall, God wanted his people, the Jews, to still tell the world about who God was. But the Jews hid their light under the bushel, or as the Old Testament calls it, the oracles of God, and they kept it to themselves because they thought they were superior.

They thought because of all these dietary laws, because of all of these rituals that we're supposed to keep, we're the only good people. Everybody else are bad people. We're the good people. Everybody else is bad people.

Now God did give parameters, but we're going to see that in the New Testament God changes all of that, and Peter's going to finally get what Jesus was trying to teach them while they were walking with him those three or three and a half years.

So why did God use a vision of animals or food to change his heart and change his mind?

[31 : 00] Well, for one thing, he was hungry. So, and it would certainly speak to his condition as the Quakers would say.

So he was hungry, and God uses something that would speak to his condition. Because he was hungry, it was almost as if God said, okay, I'm going to meet you where you are, and I'm going to use a vision of something that's going to hit you, that's going to hit home.

And so God uses these animals. Secondly, it was the idea between clean and unclean foods. That was a major problem, as I said, between Jews and Gentiles.

In fact, Peter's friends in chapter 11 criticized him for eating with Gentiles. They said, Peter, you shouldn't do that. You've made yourself unclean.

And then Peter goes on and tells them, no, God's changed the entire program. It's not about food anymore, and it's not about clean or unclean, and we're going to see in a moment that you guys think you're clean?

[32 : 03] No, you're not. And so, God uses the food here to show Peter a very important spiritual lesson.

And the third reason that I believe God did this is something that Peter and the rest of the disciples didn't get while they were following Jesus, while Jesus was ministering on earth, and it was something that Jesus was trying to teach them was that God wasn't just trying to change their diet, it.

God was changing the entire program. So, in effect, he said, forget almost everything that you learned from the Old Testament.

Keep the principles, but the laws of dietary, the laws of clean, unclean, you see, the New Covenant, it's not about food anymore, and it's not about rituals anymore, it's about people.

And so, Jesus was trying to teach his disciples those three years. He said, it's about people. It's about people. It's not about rituals. It's not about those things, those traditions that you think are important.

[33 : 19] It's about people. And so, that is what God is trying to teach Peter here, and he was changing the program. As a matter of fact, we see in Romans chapter 11, verse 32, that God had considered everyone unclean.

And so, the Jews weren't clean and the Gentiles unclean. Jew and Gentiles alike were unclean before God apart from Jesus Christ. So, that's what Jesus was trying to teach his disciples.

So, this meant that the Gentiles did not have to culturally become a Jew in order to be right with God, in order to be a Christian. So, that's why Paul and Peter deal so strongly, especially Paul, deal so strongly with circumcision and the feast days.

He said, guys, Gentiles don't have to become like us culturally to be a Christian. They don't have to look like us.

They don't have to eat like us. They don't have to be like us culturally. They just have to be like Jesus and to be right with God. And so, God is changing this entire program.

[34 : 34] What was Peter's refusal? He said, no, Lord. I've heard it said that we can say no and we can say Lord, but we can't say no, Lord. Why?

Because if he really is your Lord, the only answer you can give is yes to him and his commands. So, when you say not so, Lord, it's either he's not your Lord.

So, Peter is going to be learning. So, in order to overcome our deepest held religious and cultural prejudices and biases, we need to be open to God's guidance.

That's what we're seeing here in verses 9 through 16. God's changing Peter's mind. God's changing Peter's heart. God's changing the program.

He's saying, don't consider unclean. Or common. What I've called clean. In the same way, don't consider people beyond hope. Don't consider people unclean just because of what they're doing.

[35 : 38] He says, because they are a soul just like you who needs to hear the transforming truth of the gospel. So, we find ourselves standing alongside Peter.

He's on that roof and he's confronted by a vision that would forever change his understanding about the will of God. Here, God challenges Peter's deeply held religious beliefs.

Here, God challenges Peter's deeply held cultural beliefs, and he's calling him to embrace a broader view of the kingdom of God.

And I think this moment serves as a powerful reminder for us as well, especially when it calls us to break our own cultural and religious barriers in order to bring the gospel to people.

What about people who decide to live in an inner city, within a totally different culture, so they can bring the gospel to them, considering themselves to be missionaries to a foreign culture, even though it's across town?

[36 : 48] Maybe because someone needs to hear the gospel. Or what if it's to cross an ocean, leave family, leave mother, leave father, and go and bring the gospel to a group of people that might be dangerous?

We talked a few weeks ago about Jim Elliott, and his four other men who went to Ecuador to the Alca Indians, and they ended up all getting killed on the banks of that river, and their spouses coming back, and eventually almost the entire tribe turns their lives over to Jesus, and their life is transformed.

Or what about the missionaries that are in foreign countries today where it's not safe for a Christian to be, but yet they're there, because they feel God called them in spite of the danger to go where people need to hear about Jesus Christ.

And this is the transforming work God's doing in Peter's heart and Peter's mind here. So this call to openness is not just a call to be receptive in thought, but it's a call to be receptive in action as well.

See, we can believe something without doing something, but it's still just as bad without believing as of not believing it. So we have to believe it and do it.

[38 : 11] When God challenged Peter to eat what he considered unclean, it wasn't merely about food, it was about Peter. Peter's willingness to follow God's direction ultimately led to the Gentile salvation and ultimately to yours and mine as non-Jews.

So God may be calling us to reach out to the overlooked. God may be calling you to reach out to the marginalized, to those that maybe others aren't reaching, others aren't considering worthy to hear the gospel, to extend his love to those who are often overlooked.

Think about the story of Jonah. What happened in the life of Jonah? Why did Jonah run from God? Because Jonah had a prejudice. Jonah had a prejudice against the people of Nineveh.

But what did God do when Jonah ultimately ended up going to the people he thought were too wicked to come to Jesus?

God transformed and they all turned to God or most of the city turned to God. We think of Jesus. What happened when he went to the Samaritan woman at the well?

[39 : 28] He crossed a cultural boundary that no typical Jew would have considered crossing. But yet he did it because he knew she needed to hear the truth.

She was looking for something. She was looking for relationships to fill the void. And he says, you know what? You haven't found it. But I can give you water that if you drink of it, you'll never thirst again.

And then what does she do? She goes around and tells everybody around town, I found the Messiah. And then the gospel spreads because of this cross-cultural boundary.

The biblical examples show us that when we're open to God's guidance, He very often leads us beyond our comfort zones. He will very often lead us beyond our religious and cultural barriers that have been put up by tradition or sometimes even belief to reach people that God wants us to reach.

So as a church, let's ask God to guide us to those He wants us to reach. It might be one street over. It might be across the neighborhood.

[40 : 39] Who does God want us to reach? So let's be open to new perspectives, new relationships that God may want you to build with another person that would reflect the all-encompassing love of Jesus Christ.

And lastly, let's look at verse 17 and following. And what we're going to see here is God's timing is always perfect. While Peter, now what we see here is probably a couple of days before at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, or at least at 2, 2 1/2 days before, the angel appears to Cornelius.

And the way God works in His timing, while Peter, while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, that was when the men sent from Cornelius come to the gate and asks for a guy named Peter.

Isn't God's timing awesome? Here's Peter, he just sees this vision of the sheep coming down, all the unclean animals, God says, get up Peter, kill and eat. And then he's thinking about what does this mean?

And then Gentiles come to the gate and ask for him. Inquiry for Simon's house, stood before the gate, verse 18, they called, asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

[42 : 08] While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, behold, three men are seeking you. Get up, arise, therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing.

This phrase doubting nothing means make no distinctions. He says, go down, meet them, and don't make a distinction. Don't think Jew, Gentile.

Make no distinction. We see this, we find this word again in chapter 11, verse 12. We see another form of it in chapter 11 and verse number two that mean that something made a difference.

And so he says, make no distinction. Don't think clean, unclean. Don't think Jew, Gentile. Don't think foreigner.

Don't think local. So Peter was no longer to make any distinctions between the Jews and the Gentiles. And also the fact that, what do we see? Continuing here, Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius and said, yep, I'm you whom you seek.

[43 : 20] What reason have you come? They said in verse 22, Cornelius the centurion, he's a just man. So he was a good guy, one who fears God. He's got a good reputation among all the nations.

He wasn't a flogger. He wasn't one who was just mean-spirited. around all the Jews. He treated the Jews respectfully, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house and to hear words from you.

And then in verse 23, what Peter did and what I find interesting is that Peter got the message. Remember, he was pondering, what does this mean?

Yeah, come on in guys, let's eat. And so he gets the message that there was no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile.

God has broken down the walls that separated Peter from Gentiles. And so Peter no longer made any distinction.

[44 : 32] So the fact that Peter, see, remember Peter was God was opening up Peter some more because last week we talked about him staying at the house of a tanner. A tanner, he was a Jew, but he had an occupation that meant he had to touch, he had to come into contact with things that were unclean.

So Peter staying with him showed that God was beginning to open up his mind. But then we see here where he asks Gentiles. I mean it's one thing for a Jew to become unclean, it was a totally different thing for a Gentile to come in.

So he says come on in, spend the night, eat with us, and we're going to leave tomorrow. The fact that Peter allowed the Gentiles to spend the night is another indication that the walls were coming down.

And then what does Peter do? The next day Peter went away with them and some brethren from Joppa went with them. Verse 12 Acts 11 says there were six people that he took with him.

Three times the number of people that he needed as a witness because the Old Testament said you needed at least two people to testify of something. And so he brings six people with him and it would take at least two days to cover the thirty miles from Joppa to Caesarea.

[45 : 55] And when Peter comes we're going to see in the next paragraph when we get to this next week we see that God was already preparing Cornelius to be an evangelist.

What does he do? He's going to gather everyone around the next few verses and then Peter has an audience to share the gospel with. So lastly to break down our barriers, break down our or to overcome those, break down those walls, overcome our prejudices, we need to step out in faith.

And that's exactly what we see Peter doing. The next day, verse 23, Peter went away with them. What we see here is a decisive moment in Peter's life.

We see the moment where Peter had the choice. He had the choice to stay here. Peter had to resist his religious biases and he had to be willing to step out of his comfort zone and to go with these Gentiles, knowing that he was going to go to the house of a Gentile and most likely spend some time with these Gentiles.

So he goes, he had to choose whether to stay within the safe, familiar comfort zone of his cultural norms of what would have been comfortable for him versus going out, stepping out into the unknown and embracing the radical reach of the gospel, that God wants to reach everyone with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[47 : 48] He had a choice. He chose to cross the boundary and to bring the gospel to a group of people that the Jews would have never crossed the boundary for.

But God said they need to hear the gospel. They're not unclean. So he sets the example of being action oriented. He sets the example of, Peter could have said, okay God, I believe you.

I believe you, send somebody else. But God changes Peter's heart, he changes Peter's mind, and Peter says, okay, and then he takes the first step on that 30 mile journey to go to the house of a Gentile.

This step of faith is not merely a suggestion, it's what Jesus called us to in the Great Commission. He says, as you go, go and make disciples of all nations, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ultimately to the ends of the earth, to every tribe, every nation, every language.

He says, that's to whom you are supposed to go. See, our obedience shows a measure of our faith. Remember, faith without action is what?

[49 : 03] It's incomplete. Because what did James tell us in James chapter 2, verse 17? He's reminding us that if faith doesn't have works, it's dead by itself.

Faith without works is dead faith. He says, you might believe it with all your heart, but until you make that step of faith and cross that boundary, cross that comfort zone, and just do what we're told to do, he said, it's just dead faith.

So, encourage us, let's not be content with just sharing the gospel with those who look like us, those who sound like us, there may be somebody at work, there may be somebody in your community that may be different, that you may think, you know what, I don't think so, they're Buddhists, they're Muslim, I don't think they'll ever think about Jesus.

Get to know them. Get to the point where hopefully they trust you as a good person and share Jesus, share Jesus with them, share Christ's love with someone that you wouldn't think that there's any hope, because who knows, they may be a Cornelius that God has, God's Holy Spirit has already begun to work, and all that God wants you to do is go just like Peter did, and share the truth of God's word, and I am sure, and we're going to see what happens, I am sure in the mind of Cornelius, it clicks.

That's what I've been waiting for, that is so true, that's what's been missing in my life. And people may have that same aha moment when you share the gospel with them.

[51 : 07] Let our actions speak for our faith in God. For it's through these actions that we live out the gospel. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your goodness, we thank you for your mercy and your grace, we thank you that you've loved us so much that you sent Jesus to die on the cross in our place, that however undeserving we might be, you called someone, you led someone to share the gospel with us.

You led someone to reach out to us, just show that they cared, till we came to know Jesus as our Savior, trusted Christ.

So Father, I thank you for what you are doing in our hearts, in our lives, our minds, and I ask Father that you would use us as you did Peter to bring the gospel to a lost and a dying world in need of a Savior.

And Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.