

The Gospel Is For Everyone

Introduction

Good morning everybody and welcome to Our Sunday School. My name is Josh Landers and I had the privilege of teaching this class once last year while we were in [Romans](#). That lesson was in [Romans 15:8-13](#) and was titled Christ the Hope of Jews and Gentiles. This lesson definitely goes hand in hand with that one.

I also went back and tried to listen to the podcast of the lesson that I taught. I had to stop in the first minute because of how country I sounded. So to our northern listeners, I am so sorry, I had thought that not living in Shelbyville, TN, for the past 20 years would have fixed that problem.

Let's read together.

Read: Acts 10-11

Acts 10

Cornelius Sends a Delegation (10:1-8)

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, 2 a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. 3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" 4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. 5 Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. 6 He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do." 7 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. 8 So when he had explained all *these* things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Peter's Vision (10:9-16)

9 The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. 10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance 11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of

the air. 13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean. 15 And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." 16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

Summoned to Caesarea (10:17-23)

17 Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. 18 And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

19 While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. 20 Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."

21 Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?" 22 And they said, "Cornelius *the* 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 summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." 23 Then he invited them in and lodged *them*. On the next day, Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

Peter Meets Cornelius (10:24-33)

24 And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*. 26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man. 27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. 28 Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29 Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

30 So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.' 33 So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

Preaching to Cornelius' Household (10:34-43)

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. 36 The word which *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ— He is Lord of all— 37 that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by 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 killed by hanging on a tree. 40 Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. 42 And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead. 43 To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles (10:44-48)

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. 45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

Then Peter answered, 47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have*?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Acts 11

Peter Defends God's Grace (11:1-18)

1 Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, 3 saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"

4 But Peter explained *it* to them in order from the beginning, saying: 5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. 6 When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' 8 But I said, 'Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.' 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' 10

Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. **11** At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. **12** Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. **13** And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, **14** who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.' **15** And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. **16** Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' **17** If therefore God gave them the same gift as *He gave us* when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" **18** When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Explain: Acts 10-11

Are there any literary/structural observations?

Review of the Old Testament Framework

Beginning with Adam and Eve in the creation story, the framework that God operated in was that He placed people in a specific place and engaged with them there in that place. The Old Testament is virtually devoid of missionaries (Jonah was one and he hated it). The Old Testament framework was that God was with a particular people in a particular place. The tabernacle and temple were built to house the glory and the presence of God—God in a place. Regularly, prophets were sent out to call back the nation to repentance and to remember the Law (think of them as internal missionaries), but only rarely would prophets be sent out to other nations. The normal construct was God is in Israel and if you want to experience Him, you have to go to Israel.

The impact of this is seen in the way the Israelites viewed other nations in the New Testament—they despised them. From the Romans (which was understandable) to the Samaritans, the Jews viewed God as for them and them alone. Look at how many times Jesus was ridiculed for socializing with those on the 'outside.' To cement further this concept, when Jesus came, He came for Israel first.

The Big Shift

However, when Jesus died, was buried, and rose again, He left us with the Holy Spirit and this forced His followers to see things differently—it changed everything. This 'God *always* with us' framework was a framework that was not present in the Old Testament—this was the permanent indwelling of God in us (as opposed to permanently indwelling a place). A

stationary God was the idea in the Old Testament. A mobile God was the idea after the resurrection of Jesus. This new framework illustrates that God moves with us. This view of God was for wherever we went. This view of God was not just for Israel.

This changed everything—this view helps to illustrate that the gospel is for everyone.

Acts 10-11

The book of [Acts](#) is the historical record of the transition period from the sacrificial system to the church age. God gets out of Israel in [Acts](#). [Acts 10-11](#) illustrates this shift.

After Jesus leaves and the Holy Spirit comes, we see the apostles begin to understand that things are now different and to be honest, it takes them a while to get it. Remember that we are still very early on in the history of the church. Simon Peter (the big-name apostle in today's text) is just now coming to grips with the idea that the gospel is for everyone.

Now, to Simon Peter's credit, once he gets a hold of this idea, he really understood that everything has to change. Everyone is now a possible convert. Jesus came for everyone. We continue to see this in the writings of the apostles and the authors of the New Testament and it radically shifts the mindset of all followers of the one true God.

A meeting takes place in [Acts 10-11](#) between Peter and Cornelius and God uses this story to teach Peter a fundamental truth about God's Good News: salvation through Jesus Christ is for everyone, not just a select group of insiders. The Kingdom of Heaven is open to all who believe in Jesus Christ ([Acts 10:43](#)). This has powerful ramifications for the church.

Key thought: The gospel is for everyone

What do the words mean?

Acts 10

We didn't use a PowerPoint today because I want you to visualize in your mind the human element in the following text. Put yourself in these people's shoes. We tend to read the text robotically. This wasn't robot Cornelius and robot Peter, but real people who are getting their worlds shaken by the truth that the gospel is for everyone.

Cornelius Sends a Delegation (10:1-8)

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea [kahee-sar'-i-a] called Cornelius, a centurion [of the Roman Army] of what was called the Italian Regiment, **2** a devout [pious, God-fearing] man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms [charity] generously to the people, and prayed to God always. **3** About the ninth hour of the day [3:00 pm of day one] he saw clearly in a vision an angel [messenger] of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" [the exclamation point seems to make you think it was shouted or spoken forcefully]

4 And when he observed him, he was afraid [*emphobos* – terrified! Don't lose the meaning of this word. When have you been truly terrified? A few summers ago Katie, Ike, and I were sitting on our back deck watching a summer storm roll in when CRACK! Lightning struck a tree no less than 15 feet from us. Blue and white light was everywhere. Bark flew off the tree and hit us. We were terrified and dumbfounded. It takes a while to even gain your senses back. We were left shaking and crying. So while Cornelius was terrified he said], **and said, "What is it, lord?"** [*kyrios*; notice the lower-case, 'l,' indicating that this is someone Cornelius is subject to, but this is not God, so now picture Cornelius saying "What is it lord?" while terrified, probably shaking and staying low]

So he [the angel] **said to him** [Cornelius], **"Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial** [reminder, remembrance offering] **before God.** **5 Now send men to Joppa** [30+ miles south], **and send for Simon whose surname is Peter.** **6 He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."** **7 And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout** [same Greek word used to describe Cornelius] **soldier from among those who waited on him continually.** **8 So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.**

Peter's Vision (10:9-16)

9 The next day [day two], **as they** [Cornelius's people] **went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter** [note the scene shift—we were with Cornelius' men, now we are with Peter] **went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour** [noon]. **10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat** [my family gets hangry . . . I personally get light-headed and feel as if I am looking through a monocular. I get singularly focused on that feeling of hunger and block everything else out. God's timing and use of one of our most basic instincts is fantastic. Why not get Peter's attention this way?]; **but while they made ready, he fell into a trance** **11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.** **12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.** **13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."** [I was reading this story to my son and afterwards I asked him why he thought God showed Peter the animals in his vision. I was fully prepared for him to say "I dunno" and I would school him in the truth. He said "because Peter was hungry." I stood there mouth agape and said "that's exactly right well done." Then he went on to say that if he was there "he would shoot a donkey and eat it". Nice.]

14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." [This means ceremonially impure. Peter was an obedient Jew who held to the dietary constraints of the Old Testament, but when Jesus came, His sacrifice overcame the bonds of the Law and set the Jews free from it, but Peter is obviously still struggling with it.]

15 **And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."** 16 **This was done three times** [Which almost implies that Peter said no a second and possibly a third time, would this denying God's wishes three times or being told something three times held some special significance to Peter? Can you hear the rooster crowing?]. **And the object was taken up into heaven again.**

Summoned to Caesarea (10:17-23)

17 **Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant** [The KJV says that he "doubted in himself" what this meant, which leans more toward he knew what it meant but didn't want to accept it], **behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate** [still day two]. 18 **And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.**

19 **While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. 20 Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing** [the Spirit is saying here, "Peter you doubt what you saw, but do not doubt this," doesn't He know our thoughts and our minds.]; **for I have sent them."** [CRACK! now Peter dumbfounded and confused from being in trance completely oblivious to this world, has been told to go with three men and he hears them calling for him! On top of that one of them is a Roman soldier. Even though I have nothing to hide (anymore), I still feel nervous around police officers. So can you imagine who is probably shaking and terrified now?]

21 **Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"**

22 **And they said, "Cornelius the 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 summon you to his house, and to hear words from you."** [This appears to be told to Peter in a way to set him at ease, I am sure that Peter was visibly shaken at this point.] 23 **Then he invited them in and lodged them.**

On the next day [day three] **Peter went away with them, and some brethren** [these are others] **from Joppa accompanied him.**

Peter Meets Cornelius (10:24-33)

24 **And the following day** [day four] **they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 As Peter was coming in** [Peter who had seen Christ crucified by Roman soldiers, now enters a Roman soldier's house], **Cornelius** [the Roman soldier] **met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man."** [translated human being; Can you imagine the wonder and relief that Peter must have felt after feeling doubts

and confusion concerning the vision and the trepidation of dealing with the Roman soldiers?]

27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. 28 Then he said to them, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean [“Common and unclean” are the exact same words used for the animals in Acts 10:14. Peter has had over a day to process and pray about what all has transpired. Now Peter has already gleaned understanding from the vision and sees value in those that are not like him.]. 29 Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?”

30 So Cornelius said, “Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright [*lampros*; radiant, magnificent] clothing, 31 and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.’ [This is an almost word-for-word retelling of Acts 10:4-6.] 33 So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.” [So now for sure Peter has thought about the Spirit saying in verse 20 “Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.” These Gentiles want to know the truth and Peter is supposed to tell them!]

Preaching to Cornelius’ Household (10:34-43)

34 Then Peter opened his mouth [You can almost see this happening in slow motion as it all comes together inside of Peter: the Gentiles are about to hear the salvation story. This is the beginning for us as Gentiles.] and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality [There are serious ramifications from this statement: Peter sees that all men are loved by God.]. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him [National boundaries are irrelevant in God’s kingdom. As Jim just quoted two weeks ago John Piper: One day America and all its presidents will be a footnote in history, but the kingdom of Jesus will never end.]. 36 The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— 37 that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by 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 killed by hanging on a tree. 40 Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. 42 And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge

of the living and the dead. **43** To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.” [The truth—the gospel—the good news has just been told to these Gentiles.]

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles (10:44-48)

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. **45** And those of the circumcision [Jews] who believed were astonished [existem; to put out of wits, insane, to be beside one’s self], as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also [the Holy Spirit is for all believers]. **46** For they heard them speak with tongues [languages] and magnify God [The Jews just saw visible evidence that the gospel is for everyone, another CRACK! moment perhaps, they were simply amazed and astonished, this was truly something new for them.].

Then Peter [most likely smiling and shaking with excitement] answered, **47** “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” [The Gentile believers are seen as the same as the Jewish believers in the eyes of God and they are all blown away by it.] **48** And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord [Baptism is for all believers.]. Then they asked him to stay a few days. [They probably had some things to discuss! Maybe a firsthand account of Jesus’s life and death!]

Acts 11

Peter Defends God’s Grace (11:1-18)

1 Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. **2** And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision [Jews] contended [oppose, doubt, judge] with him, **3** saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men [Gentiles] and ate with them!” [i.e., you broke the rules of the modern-day religious leaders]

4 But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning [I am sure that Peter was an excellent speaker, but I imagine that he was just a little exited to the story and couldn’t wait to get it all out.], saying: **5** “I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. **6** When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. **7** And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ **8** But I said, ‘Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.’ **9** But the voice answered me again from heaven, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’ **10** Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. **11** At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. **12** Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren [These guys saw all of this too!] accompanied

me, and we entered the man's house. **13** And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, **14** who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.' **15** And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning [So all of this probably happens in slow motion too, as Peter helps them remember what they experienced at Pentecost and that wonderful experience rushes back to them (they are like us—'us' is **redefined** here)]. **16** Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit [Peter is beginning to connect the theological dots between his Rabbi and the work of the Holy Spirit.]' **17** If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" [i.e., God is doing something new here and I had better not get in the way—the gospel is for everyone.]

18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life." [Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life. YES! We get life, too! Don't you see? This changed everything! **All** the apostles understand that the gospel is for everyone—now they understood why Jesus ate with sinners and hung out with outcasts—because Jesus came for the sinners and the outcasts too. Jesus came for us! The gospel is for everyone!]

Since the gospel is for everyone, our challenge is to be as **liberal** as we can with it:

- Skin color does not matter to the gospel
- Nationality does not matter to the gospel
- Religions and denominations do not matter to the gospel
- Language and accents do not matter to the gospel
- Physical disability does not matter to the gospel
- Ethnicity does not matter to the gospel
- Social class does not matter to the gospel
- Employment status does not matter to the gospel
- Age does not matter to the gospel
- Gender and gender identity do not matter to the gospel

Are there any repeated words?

You (25), God (24), Peter (20), them (16), they (11), Cornelius (10), Spirit (8) went (7), us (5), we (5), angel (4), three (4), Gentile (3), Jesus (3)

Apply (What is the point?)

1. Everyone except Jesus had/has theological deficiencies
2. God's wisdom and plan are amazing
3. **The gospel is for everyone** (let me break that down for you)
 - a. The – there is only one gospel (and if you monkey with it, it is no longer *the* gospel)
 - b. Gospel – the gospel is the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus
 - c. Is – we need the gospel before we are saved, at the moment of salvation, and every moment thereafter—the gospel will always be important
 - d. For – the gospel has a purpose and it is not to remain wrapped up in a tract—it is to be shared directly, explicitly, and verbally with everyone on the planet
 - e. Everyone – you, me, everyone alive now, everyone that ever has been alive, and everyone that will live after us—it is for everyone—because everyone will live in heaven or in hell for all of eternity—the stakes are too high to put boundaries on the gospel's reach

Personalize (What do we do with that?)

1. Be open to have your theology **tweaked** by God (none of us have it all 100% correct)
2. Be amazed and stand in awe
3. See everyone as savable (rich, old, young, poor, talented, straight, gay, unsure, intelligent, annoying, and mean) and **share** with everyone because the gospel is for everyone

Homework

1. Ask the Holy Spirit for help
2. Read next week's text (multiple times in multiple ways) ([2 Thessalonians 1:1-2](#))
3. Talk to someone about the text (fb.com/OurSundaySchool or in person)
4. Share (fb.com/OurSundaySchool) insights and questions by Thursday
5. Invite a member or non-member