



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Acts 10:23-40

Acts

"The Gentle Pentecost"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're in Acts chapter 10 this morning, and if you were here last week, you know that we covered the first part of the chapter. We will conclude the second part with verses 23-48. Last week we studied Peter and the vision he had while staying at Simon's house by the sea. And he had a vision while on the rooftop of that house. A sheet came down from heaven. It was filled with unclean animals and the Lord told him to kill and eat, and then told him not to call anything unclean that he has declared clean.

At that moment the Gentiles arrived. They'd been sent by Cornelius from the town of Caesarea, north of Joppa, where Peter was. And Peter was told by the Holy Spirit to receive them. It's an unusual thing for a Jew to do, to receive Gentiles into his house, but Peter was told by the Spirit to do so. He did so.

We read in verse 23, "So he invited them in and gave them lodging.

"And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, 'Stand up; I too am just a man.' And as he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. And he said to them, 'you yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who

is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me.'

"Cornelius said, 'Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments, and he said, "Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea." So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.'

"Opening his mouth, Peter said:

"I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) - you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, this, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness and through Him everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.'

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, 'Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?' And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days."

May the Lord bless this reading of His word and our time of study together. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do ask You to bless our time and bless the text that we have read to our hearts and our understanding. We consider it a great privilege to be able to read the text of Scripture together. It is Your inherent word and it has a clear message for each and every one of us.

And so I pray that we would learn that message, that we would be given insight and understanding of this great event in which the Holy Spirit was given to the Gentiles, in which the Gentiles are seen to come to faith, seen to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. And we see this great moment in history and we pray that You'd bless us with an understanding of it.

Because we too have been gifted with the Holy Spirit. Everyone of us who have believed in Jesus Christ have the Spirit of God within us. He is the seal upon our heart. He is the guarantee that everyone of us who have put our faith in Christ will never be lost. We have a protector. We have a guide. We have an interpreter. We have a teacher in Him and I pray that You would teach us this morning and You would make the proper applications of this text to each and every one of us. We look to You to do that, Father. We look to You to bless us with that grace. It is a wonderful thing to sing of grace and it is a equally wonderful thing to study it.

We can't read the Bible without studying grace. It is there from cover to cover and we see it again this morning in that text. And so give us an appreciation of that, an understanding of that. Bless us, and bless us in numerous ways, Father.

We pray for spiritual blessing, but also for physical blessing as well. We pray for those who have asked for our prayers, those who are sick, those who have various difficulties in life, those whose names are listed with us, but those whose names aren't. You know all of our needs, whether express them to You or to others. You know where we are in life. You know what is necessary for our greater good, and so we pray that You would bless in that way.

And bless our meeting this evening, we pray, that as we come back together this evening in this place and this room that You would minister to us as we take the Lord's supper and as various people speak, we pray that You would bless them. May it be a meeting that is pleasing to You, and we pray that for our meeting now. And we pray that You'd bless our final hymn, pray that You would prepare our hearts with it, and may we be able to worship and think very clearly together as we study this text. We pray these things in Christ name. Amen.

[Message] In his history, The Decline and Fall of the Romans Empire, Edward Gibbon wrote that history is little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortune of mankind. We find a lot of that in the Bible, but when we turn to Luke's history, the record is very different, because there's not so much a register of what man did to man, as what God did for man. And in Acts 10 Luke gives what He did for the Romans. That's what it's about, not their decline, but their deliverance, at least the deliverance, the salvation of a centurion and a house full of Romans. It is a very important chapter in the book of Acts and in the history of mankind, because it tells how Christianity was transformed from a Jewish faith to a worldwide faith.

Ever since the events of Acts 10, Gentiles have been able to come to God as Gentiles. Before this time, Gentiles entered the fold of

God through the door of Judaism. A believer was required to be circumcised, if a male. A believer was required to adopt the customs of the Jewish religion. He or she was not saved in that way, was not saved by keeping the Law, but a believer did come under the Law and in effect become a Jew.

That changed when Peter went to Caesarea and preached to the Roman centurion Cornelius. Jesus had said, "I have other sheep which are not of this fold. I must bring them also," and Acts 10 tells us how he began to do that when the Gentiles first came to Christ as Gentiles. Peter was prepared for this turning point in history of the church when he was staying in Joppa at the house of Simon, who lived by the sea. He had a strange vision. Around noon, a sheet came down from heaven. It was filled with unclean animals and God declared them to be clean.

Almost at that exact moment three men appeared at the house at the gate. They were Gentiles. The Holy Spirit told Peter to welcome them and go with them without reservation, and that's what he did. The next day, Peter took along some Jewish believers and together they went with the men from Cornelius and set out for Caesarea.

The passage that follows divides into three parts, first with the meeting of Peter and Cornelius; the second with the sermon that Peter preached in Cornelius' house; and then thirdly, with the gift of the Holy Spirit that was poured out on all of those in that house who believed in Christ. It has been called the Gentile Pentecost.

When Peter arrived, Cornelius greeted him with spiritual humility and adoration. He fell at his feet and worshipped him, Luke says, which is quite a scene when you consider that this man is a Roman centurion. He's a conqueror of the Jews, a man of great authority, a man of power. And yet he falls at the feet of a Galilean peasant, a Galilean fisherman.

Peter wasn't used to that kind of reception and he wasn't comfortable with it either, and so he stood Cornelius up and he said to him, "I too am just a man." I think that would be a good verse to place

on that statue of Peter that's in the Vatican in Saint Peter's Cathedral. Pilgrims come in to that place and they kiss the foot of it. I've seen that happen. In fact, it has happened so often over the centuries that the foot of the statue has been worn down to a nub.

Well, the real Peter had nothing to do with such adoration. He was just a man, as he assures Cornelius, and a man just as every servant of Christ is, and made of the same stuff as Cornelius was made of: dust. He wouldn't receive any kind of worship, wouldn't receive any kind of honor, which is particularly significant in light of the fact that Christ's response to those who fell down to Him was very different. He was greeted in that way, but He didn't say, when men fell down before Him and worshipped him, "Stand up; I too am just a man." He received the honor. He received the worship, because He is more than a man. He is the God-man, deserving of worship. And He is the one whom Peter venerates. In his sermon, he calls Him Lord of All, and He is the one to be venerated in the church, not man.

So Cornelius got up and the two walked into the house together. When Peter entered, he found the place packed out. Cornelius' family was there. He had invited friends, fellow soldiers, servants. Many people, Luke writes, and they were eager to hear what Peter had to say. And so for the first time in his life Peter had before him a Gentile audience. And in verse 28, he reminded them of how unusual that was, that it was considered unlawful for a Jew to associate with foreigners, to come under their roof. And if this had been a few days prior, Peter would not have come under the roof of this Gentile. But he said God had showed him that he should not call any man unholy or unclean.

Now, if you remember from the vision, the Lord did not say that about man. He said that about the animals. But Peter had interpreted the vision correctly and he made the proper application to the Gentiles. That's what that vision was ultimately about, and so he had come at their request. Then Cornelius explained the reason they had called for him. He recounted in verses 30-33 the vision that he had had four days earlier, how an angel in shining garments had appeared

to him and told him to send for Peter in Joppa. He thanked Peter for coming and he said, "We are all here present before God to hear a little that you have been commanded by the Lord."

No preacher could have asked for a better audience than that - attentive, expecting a word from the Lord. Should be true of all of us when we come to church. We should come together on Sunday morning to hear what has been commanded by the Lord. Sunday morning is a time to pray and sing hymns, a time to praise God. It gives us a good opportunity to see friends. Those are all good and necessary.

But above all, it is an occasion to be instructed in the word of God, to learn what He has commanded, what He has revealed. That was the only reason these Romans had come to hear Peter. They had not gathered in that house to see a Jewish man; they'd seen plenty of Jewish men and women. They were there to hear what God had to say through him. They had come for the right reason. They had come with the right attitude. They had assembled, Cornelius said, before God. And that is what we do whenever we open our Bibles. It is no trivial matter. When we do, we are before God. He speaks to us out of His word. By it, by the scriptures, He searches our hearts. He lays bare our souls. He shows our need and the remedy.

That's why it's so important for the preacher to provide the clear and full exposition of Scripture. It is his obligation to teach the whole counsel of God. That's what the apostles did. They did not pick and choose the verses that they wanted to teach. They did not edit the text. They went through the word of God. They proclaimed the whole counsel of God. That's what God expects of the man who stands in the pulpit, and you should be satisfied with nothing else. That's what you need. It's what we all need. And that's what Peter did and that's what he gave the men and the women gathered in Cornelius' house. He gave a simple but full account of the life and ministry of Christ.

It is his third sermon in the book of Acts, and the first sermon preached to a Gentile audience. He begins with a solemn statement of

what he had learned over the past three days. "I certainly understand now," he said, "that God is not one to show partiality." Now that was a big lesson for him to learn, because the Jew believed that the Gentile was beyond the pale. Now that's a prejudice that all of us can acquire to some degree. We begin to think that God is more pleased with our fellowship than He is with others. We do the right things, others don't, so we might think.

But that was particularly strong among the Jews, and with some reason. God had chosen Israel. He had made a covenant with the Jews, an unconditional promises of the kingdom to come. He had given them many blessings. But He had also promised to bless the nations. He told Abraham in Genesis 12:13, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed." God cares as much for the Gentile as He does for the Jew. And that truth had now dawned on Peter. God doesn't show favoritism according to race or culture, talent, education, wealth, all of the external things that we value so much. God receives everyone who comes to Him. The gospel is for everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior, regardless of your fraternity or your sorority, or whatever it might be.

God does not show partiality, and Peter now understood, as he says in verse 35, that "in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him." Cornelius and his friends were welcome. Now, they weren't saved, not yet, but they were welcome to salvation, because they were doing what is right. They were seeking God and were open to the truth. The man or the woman who is not open to the truth will not come and will not be received by God. Those who seek God find Him and are saved. And so Peter now tells them how they should do that, and obtain salvation, in the sermon that he preaches to them.

It is an outline of the Lord's ministry. They were already familiar with some of the details. Peter tells us that in verse 37. "You yourselves know the things which took place throughout all Judea." So they had some familiarity with the events that had taken place and

what our Lord had done. So Peter now reviews for them what took place, and he interprets the significance of those events.

It's a sermon that can be outlined in seven points. The first point he makes in verses 36 and 37 is that the Lord's ministry began after the preaching of John the Baptist. He gives us something of a chronicle sequence of events, and the first event is that John the Baptist came preaching, came baptizing, and our Lord's ministry followed that. So John's ministry was not a fulfillment. It was an introduction. It prepared the nation for its King and for the message of peace, which God sent to sons of Israel.

Now that gives us something of a title for Peter's sermon. This is what it's about. It's about peace. The word which He sent to the sons of Israel preaching peace through Jesus Christ, and that's what Peter was going to do with these Gentiles. That's the gospel. The gospel is the good news, that through Jesus Christ God has established peace Himself and man.

Now, the fact that peace has been established, and those who proclaim the truth proclaim that peace, tells us something about the condition of the world and the condition of mankind, because the need of peace implies a state of war. And war is what exists between God and man. Mankind is in rebellion against its maker.

Paul develops this in the book of Romans. We see it all the way through the word of God, from Genesis 3 on, but Paul does so very clearly in the book of Romans in chapters 1-3. He describes man's rebellion. In chapter 8 he writes that the natural man, that is, the unbelieving person, is hostile toward God. He's at war with God. Not hostile with gods, not hostile toward religion. Man is very religious. Look at every nation, every culture. You find religion of various kinds. You find shrines and temples and cathedrals and priests and robes and incense and liturgies and all kinds of ceremonies. Man loves religion. He's not opposed to gods. He is opposed to the God of the Bible who has judged man as sinful and judged man as being without any personal righteousness.

We may have a goodness toward one another, but before God there is no good thing in man, and that's His declaration. And man hates that verdict and opposes God who made it. The world is at war with God. But Christ came to change that. Christ came to make peace, and the good news is that He did that. And He could do that. He is big enough to make peace, because He is God. And Peter calls Him Lord of All, verse 36. That is a way of ascribing deity to Christ. He is not simply a great rabbi. He is not simply a prophet or a healer. He was certainly all of those things, but He's infinitely more than that. The man who came out of Nazareth and was baptized by John and ministered in Galilee and Judea is God's Son, very God, a very God. He is Lord of All.

He's Lord over both the Jews and the Gentiles, and that's the point that Peter's making in that description of Him as Lord of All. And because He is, because He's Lord of the Jew as well as the Gentile, He's not simply the Christ of the Jews, but of all men because of that. His peace is for both groups. The gospel is worldwide in its scope.

That leads to Peter's second point in verse 38, that Jesus' lordship was demonstrated in His life and ministry. God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power. The force of those words, "God anointed Him," is God made Him Messiah. That's what Messiah means, or Christ means. It means "anointed" or "one who has been anointed." And so to say that God anointed Him means that God made Him the Messiah. It happened at His baptism in the Jordan. The Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove and the Father made that declaration that this is His Son and whom He is well pleased.

That was when He was officially installed in His office as Messiah, when He was equipped to carry out His ministry as Messiah. And we read that "He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."

And significantly, you'll notice, Peter's summary of the Lord's ministry gives what He did, but not what He said. And there was much

that he could have recalled in terms of our Lord's teaching, the Lord's parables. He spoke many of those. He could have referred to His teaching of the sermon on the Mount or the Olivet discourse, or the upper room discourse - all very important teachings. And the apostles develop all of that in the New Testament.

But the central issue of the Lord's ministry is not what He said; it is what He did. And that was die. That's Peter's third point in verse 39, Jesus' death. All that He did in His public ministry, His doing good in healing, confirm that God was with Him and that He is Lord of all. Still, Peter says, they "put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross." Now, that statement that He was hung on a cross would have had particular relevance to this audience, these Romans, because that was their form of execution. They were the ones who made that happen. They nailed Him to the cross.

And that form of execution was particularly distasteful to them. It was a disgraceful death. Except in extreme cases of treason, Roman citizens were exempt from crucifixion. Cicero condemned it as a most cruel and disgusting punishment. But Peter said that Jesus, who is Lord of all, was hanged on a cross. He died painfully, shamefully, disgracefully. He died as a cursed man. And that is what the cross was designed to impress on men, that the one who died on that cross was cursed.

This same word for cross is the word for tree, and Paul uses it in that way, as a tree, in Galatians 3:13, where he quotes Deuteronomy 21, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." And that is what Christ became. He became a cursed man, not because He was guilty. If you examine His life, no fault can be found in Him. He went about doing good, Peter said. He lived a sinless life. He lived a completely obedient life. There were no sins of omission or commission. He was a perfect man. he became a curse for us as our substitute. He died for us. He bore the curse of death for us. That's why the Lord's death and not His teachings is the central issue of the gospel, because by His

death He satisfied His Father's justice against the sinner and made peace between God and man.

That's the gospel. That's also disputed. Men don't like the cross today anymore than they did in Peter's day. They think that salvation by blood atonement is unworthy of God. That's an old objection. Earlier part of the 20th century, James Denney, who taught theology at Glasgow University, wrote a classic work on this subject entitled *The Death of Christ*. And in it he comments on the modern view that the gospel is that God forgives unconditionally out of His pure fatherly love. His forgiveness is not dependent upon a sacrificial propitiatory death. That is a death that turns away His wrath by satisfying His righteousness and His justice. God is bigger than that. He bestows forgiveness freely on the penitent. It is the gospel of the free love of God, as Denney puts it.

Well, that's the modern view, a view at the turn of the century. Denney's book was published in 1903, and yet it's a view that's still current today. In fact, many would probably say penitence, regret, is not even necessary for forgiveness. God forgives everyone. He's just that kind of God. But as Professor Denney points out, the love of God, free as it is to sinful men, unconditionally free, is never conceived in the New Testament as having reality or as taking effect apart from Christ.

What men think is one thing. What the Bible teaches very clearly is quite another. And in it we find that God's forgiveness is always conditioned on the shedding of blood and ultimately on the cross of Christ. God is holy and He cannot forgive sin unless His justice is first fully satisfied. And that could only happen through the death of His Son.

Now, that is the interpretation of the cross by all of the apostles. Peter gives a clear definition, an explanation of the cross later on in 1 Peter 2:24, where he writes, "And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." Quoting Isaiah

53. That's the testimony of the Old Testament and the New Testament alike. We are healed spiritually, we are cleansed spiritually, by the wounds of Christ, by the death of Christ, by the blood of Christ. That's the interpretation of the cross by the apostles.

In Colossians 2:14, Paul wrote that Christ "canceled out our certificate of death having nailed it to the cross." Our sin is a debt too great for any man or woman or child to pay. It's beyond us. Sin separates man from God with a gulf, a chasm between the two that no man can bridge. Only Christ can do that. Only Christ could pay our debt and bridge that gulf. And He could do that because He is God. He is infinite. His death has unlimited value and is sufficient to remove all of the sins of a multitude of people and make peace with God.

That's what He did. That's the good news. But we might ask how can we know that that's true? How can we know that He actually accomplished that? What's the proof? Well, the proof of that is the resurrection, and that is Peter's fourth point. Verse 40, "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible." God raised Him as the proof that He had accepted His sacrifice for sin. And by raising Him, prove that He is His Son, or as Paul puts in Romans 1:4, "The Son of God with power."

Now that's unique. That marks Him out from all founders of religion. They are still in their graves. If we knew where those graves were and we had access to them, we could exhume the bones of every founder of every religion, because they have not been raised. The Lord's grave is empty. And that's a necessary part of the gospel. In fact, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the book of Acts, the cross of Christ is attached to the resurrection of Christ. The cross and the empty tomb go together, because we have a living Savior. And Peter knew that to be true, because he personally saw Him. God made Him visible to the disciples.

That's the fifth point that Peter makes. He develops that in verse 41. The Lord's resurrection was a bodily resurrection. He wasn't a phantom. The disciples did not have a hallucination. They saw the

Lord Jesus Christ physically, bodily, raised from the death. In fact, not only did they see Him, but Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that over 500 witnesses were able to see Him. So it's a well-established fact. He was bodily resurrected from the dead.

The grave is not the end for God's people. Death can't hold us, because Christ has triumphed over it, and every believer in Jesus Christ is attached to Him, joined to Him, in Him, and therefore our resurrection is assured because of the resurrection that He has experienced.

But since Christ lives to save, He also lives to judge. And that's Peter's sixth point, given in verse 42. "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead." There's a day of reckoning for all men, all without exception, will see Christ someday. Everyone in this room, everyone in this world, past, present, and future, will see, physically, Jesus Christ.

The question is how will people meet Him? As Judge or as Savior? That brings Peter to the seventh point of the sermon. It is one of application. These things being so, Jesus being Lord and alive and triumphant, there's only one thing for a person to do: believe. Of Him, all the prophets bear witness that through His name, everyone who believes in Him, receives forgiveness of sins. That's the gospel. It is salvation through faith alone in Jesus Christ as the one whom God sent into the world to establish peace with men. He is Lord of all. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit. He went about doing good and defeating the devil. He was crucified, He was raised on the third day, and He will return to judge the world.

Now that's the Jesus who people must believe in. There are many Jesuses in this world. Every cult has a view of Jesus and exalts a Jesus. But in order to receive the forgiveness of sins, this is the Jesus that must be believed in. There's no other gospel. There's no other Christ than the one of Scripture, and there is no other way into eternal

life except through faith in this one, the God-man who died in the place of sinners, was raised from dead, and is coming again.

Well, Peter has preached that and he has the support of all the prophets in the Old Testament in this point. And I suspect that Peter was about to develop that and show his audience how the prophet spoke of Christ as the suffering servant, from Isaiah 53 and the slain shepherd of Zechariah 13:7. Maybe he was going to go on and demonstrate that salvation is through faith alone, and the Old Testament teaches that. Perhaps he was going to turn to Genesis 15:6 with the example of Abraham who believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. He was saved through his faith only. Or maybe cite Habakkuk 2:4, "The righteous will live by faith."

He had more to say. He was just getting warmed up, when God interrupted Him. As he opened his mouth to say the next word, God opened the heavens and the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. The Gentiles had already believed. They had accepted everything that Peter had said. They were evidently following very carefully everything that he had spoken to them. So when he said every who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins, they did that. They believed. So nothing more needed to be said.

Now, people didn't need to urge them. He didn't need to plead with them. He didn't need to have an alter call, singing Just as I am. There was no need of any of that, because the word of God is sufficient. And they responded to the word of God, and when they responded in faith, the Spirit of God fell on them and the wall between the Jew and the Gentile fell as well.

Well, it was an amazing event and those Jewish believers who had accompanied peter from Joppa, they were amazed, Luke tells us. They had thought that the Gentiles would have to become Jews first. But the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit just as they had on the day of Pentecost. Cornelius and his family and friends were speaking with tongues and they were exalting God. In other words, these men were speaking different languages. Perhaps these men who spoke Latin or

some of them spoke Greek were not speaking in Aramaic, were speaking the language of these Jews. And in their speaking they were praising God. They were exalting. They were full of joy. It was the Gentiles' Pentecost - not strictly, of course.

Pentecost happened historically only once. It happened in Jerusalem. That was when the Holy Spirit was sent forth, just as the Lord had promised He would send Him forth. But the experience of Pentecost, the experience of the Jews, was duplicated for the Gentiles and duplicated apart from circumcision, apart from the apostles laying hands on them, to show that the Gentiles entered the family of God the same way as the Jews - through faith alone. That's how all people, regardless of culture, regardless of race, regardless of any distinctions between us. That's how all people enter into the family of God. It is through faith alone.

Well, Peter's response to this is very significant. He understood precisely what had happened and he called for water baptism. Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized, to have received the Holy Spirit, can't he? And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus. Now, that's significant, for a number of reasons. One reason is because the baptismal formula in the name of Jesus is different from the one that our Lord gave at the end of Matthew. The disciples were to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Here it's just Jesus, which indicates in Peter's mind, that Jesus is equal with the Father and equal with the Spirit. That name is sufficient. He is divine. He is deity. He is the second person of the Trinity. He's already indicated in the statement that He is Lord or all.

So it's significant from that standpoint, but it's also very significant because Peter, in making this statement, recognized that the Gentiles were already saved. They didn't need to be circumcised for their salvation. They didn't need to be baptized to be saved. Now, I mention that because there are those who claim that baptism is necessary for salvation. And they support that or find support for that

from Acts 2:38, where on the day of Pentecost Peter said, "Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." So it seems to be a blessing, the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is conditioned upon repenting and being baptized. But the key word there is repent, not be baptized, or believe, because repentance is included in true faith. One who truly believes repents in the believing.

But clearly Peter didn't mean in that statement that a person must be baptized in order to be saved. A person must be baptized in order to receive the Holy Spirit, because in Cornelius' house the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized. They were saved before they were baptized.

In his sermon, Peter didn't mention the need for baptism. He said, in verse 43, "And the prophets agree with him that everyone who believes in Him," everyone who believes in Christ, "receives forgiveness of sins." There's no mention of baptism. It's faith; it's believing, that's all. No works, no ceremonies. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Anything other than that, any addition to that, even a minor addition, like baptism or circumcision, is another gospel, a different gospel, a false gospel. Read Galatians 1:6-8. Paul makes it very clear. Anyone who preaches a gospel that adds anything to faith alone should be accursed. Damned is what he means, whether it be an apostle or an angel from God.

Now the gospel is just what Peter preached - salvation through faith in Christ. It's all of grace. Now, having said that, that doesn't mean that baptism is unimportant. It is not, and it is not an option. It doesn't add anything to our salvation, but it is a public testimony to a person's salvation, and that is very important to make. It's a command of the word of God. We are commanded to be baptized. So we cannot escape that and we should not avoid that.

What all of this proves though, everything that we have seen in this chapter from the beginning to the end, is that religion and works or insufficient. They cannot save. Cornelius was a good man.

Cornelius was a religious man, a devout man, Luke said in verse 2, and one who feared God with all his household and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually - all good things. But Cornelius wasn't a saved man.

A person can go through life attending church regularly, giving generously whenever the plate is passed, and being a model citizen, a loving husband or wife, a loyal friend, but it won't have. It might give a false assurance, a false sense of security. Or it might lead a person unsatisfied, uneasy, without any real peace.

It did Cornelius, but by God's grace he was truly seeking God. He was searching. And I say by God's grace, because no one searches, no one seeks for God apart from that grace. But he was seeking and God sent him Peter, who came with the message of peace, sent first to the sons of Israel. It is the gospel for the Jew first, but also for the Gentile, also for the Greek, and now it's going to the Gentiles, to a centurion and Roman soldiers, and preaching the message of peace in an age known in history as the Pax Romana, the Peace of Rome. It extended over the vast Roman empire, and giving much of the known world political peace and economic stability.

But those soldiers gathered in Caesarea, who were the peacekeepers of the day. They knew that external peace, political peace, material prosperity doesn't give personal peace, not when a person is at war with God. Man is separated from God. Man is alienated from God. He or she, by nature, is alone in this world, and we can have no peace in that condition. Augustine said it in his prayer. "You have made us for Yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in You." It's without peace until it finds its peace in the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Cornelius learned that real peace is not what Rome gave or what the world promises, but what Christ alone gives. Peace with God and the peace of God. The objective peace that he establishes between the sinner and God, through justification, through salvation, and the personal peace that results from that. It's all of God, and he and all

those with him received that peace, received salvation through faith in Christ. Have you? If not, look to Him. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is Lord of all, who died for sinners. And all who look to Him, all who trust in Him receive at that moment the forgiveness of sins, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and life everlasting. May God help you to do that, and help each of us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ, to rejoice in what we have and the salvation that's ours in Him. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your goodness and Your grace. Come to this text and we see the Gentiles being saved, not by becoming Jewish men and women, not by undergoing any rites of circumcision, or being placed under the duties of the Law. All of that's finished.

We learn from this that everyone who is saved is saved in the same way, and that is through faith alone, by Your grace. We thank You for that. Make us appreciative of that. We pray these things in Christ name. Amen.