

## “The Essentials for Sharing the Gospel”

*Acts 10:24-48*

We’ve all been in situations where we had a chance to share the gospel and it didn’t go well. Maybe it came out of the blue and we weren’t ready. Maybe we were with someone we are often with and they finally wanted to discuss spiritual things and we flubbed our way through. Or maybe we froze out of fear and intimidation and kicked ourselves for supposedly failing God as if the salvation of the world (or that person) rested solely on us.

I’m glad if you’ve had those experiences because it shows you want to share the gospel. Yet I also want to assure you God isn’t looking down from heaven pulling out his anthropomorphic hair because we’re doing a lousy job. What are the essentials for sharing the gospel? I think the passage in front of us, Acts 10:24-48, gives us a great framework to help us be a little more prepared and to know the basics of what we need to share. And, to trust God with the results because as Paul said in 1 Cor. 3:6

*<sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.*

We’re in the middle of a narrative about Peter a Jew and an apostle and Cornelius the Roman centurion, a Gentile. Up to this point the gospel has yet to start reaching the ends of the earth. If the apostles and Jewish believers thought the ‘ends of the earth’ meant reaching Jewish people who are scattered over the earth, they were wrong and are in for a culture shock.

Peter has been listening to God and following His leading as he left Jerusalem to go to Lydda and healed a lame man. Be-cause of that miracle many Jewish people were saved. While there, people from Joppa hear that Jesus’ apostle Peter is just down the road. They call for him. He comes to heal a disciple named Tabitha, who has passed away in Peter’s journey. Undaunted, Peter feels led to raise her back to life, just as Jesus brought Jairus’ daughter back to life. Again, news spreads and many more people are saved, we assume predominantly Jewish people. While there he stays with a tanner, whose working with dead animal skins does not bother Peter because Peter is growing spiritually. He has discerned the difference between Jewish laws and biblical truth. The Bible doesn’t condemn people who touch dead animals, it only says they are unclean for the rest of the day and need to wash and are clean/acceptable to God once again.

Meanwhile, another 40-50 km up the road is a God-fearing Gentile who worships Yahweh and tries to keep His Word but not all those Jewish regulations like circumcision and eating prohibitions. So far some Jewish believers still felt access to God came through Moses to Jesus. You had to become Jewish and believe Jesus was the Messiah. Inadvertently, they had made Moses a co-redeemer with Jesus. This needs to be cleared up.

One day Cornelius is praying at 3 in the afternoon and receives an angelic visitor from God who tells him to go get Peter whose in Joppa who will give him a message from God. He sends 3 men to get him. The next day at noon just before Cornelius’ men arrive in Joppa, Peter is and receives a vision from God that the things Peter thought were unclean under the Law are no longer unclean. Unsure what this means Peter hears a knock on the door, is assured by the Spirit these Gentiles are okay, and he listens to them. Growing in his trust in God and broadening his spiritual boundaries, Peter eats with these Gentiles, lets them stay in the same house and travels with them the next morning to Cornelius’ house where he discovers Cornelius loves God but is unaware of his

need for Jesus. Peter will share the gospel. God led him to this gospel opportunity just as He leads us. So its important that we ...

## **Pray for God to Open the door for Gospel Opportunities** **(10:24-33)**

How do we get praying for opportunities from this passage? How did this meeting come about? 10:3 and 10:9, both Peter and Cornelius are praying. What was Peter praying for? Well, he just had two great healings which led to many people getting saved so I think we can assume Peter is praying that more people would get saved and if he can have a part to play in it then he would appreciate that. Meanwhile Cornelius was praying. What was he praying for? Well, if the angel visit is the answer to his prayer then Cornelius was praying that he would know God more somehow. Generally speaking, both men were seeking God, one to serve Him more the other to know Him better. And what do we learn from God's answer to their prayers?

### ***God answers prayer in remarkable ways (v.3, 9)***

How often have we prayed for something and God answered our prayer in ways we didn't perceive? We may not have even noticed our prayer was being answered because it was so unique. Peter was praying for opportunities to serve God while Cornelius is praying to know God. God brings them together in a remarkable way. Who would have the harder time believing the other was God's answer to the prayer? Peter seems to indicate some hesitancy by saying on arrival,

*You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. <sup>29</sup>So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"*

He still doesn't get what's going to happen! And maybe we're praying for opportunities to share Christ and we have specific people in mind or a general idea but God brings about someone we totally never expected. The challenge for Peter as it is for us is,

### ***Don't presume who will want to hear (vv.24-33)***

*May I ask why you sent for me?"* While I can vouch that the word is not there in the Greek, I am tempted to insert 'Duh' here. I'm sure Peter had a few chuckles about this later. 'How clueless was I that God was leading me to share Christ with a Gentile!' Cornelius explains the vision and finishes with

*Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.*

In all fairness to Peter, how would you and I feel if the police chief from Leeds-Grenville called you to come down to visit his house where his family and friends were having a barbeque? The last thing you would think of was 'they want to hear about Jesus!' You would probably be thinking what kind of trouble am I in? But let's face it, we are often guilty of prejudging people who we think would have no interest in Jesus but God's ways are higher than ours and His thoughts are not our thoughts. If we're going to pray for opportunities let's let God decide who we'll share Jesus with and just be ready for anyone.

And when that opportunity comes, what do we say? What does Peter say?

*I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism<sup>35</sup> but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.<sup>36</sup> You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.<sup>37</sup> You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—<sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.*

From vv.36-43 Peter gives 18 references to Jesus. What is the main point Peter makes about the gospel?

## **Show from the Word How Jesus Forgives our Sin** **(10:34-43)**

No matter how we share the gospel – using our testimony, answering questions, discussing ethical issues or the reality of God – eventually we have to get to this basic fact: Jesus came to offer forgiveness of sins. And Peter begins he first gives us a reason why we need forgiveness of our sins and then explains how we can get it. Why do people need forgiveness for their sins?

### ***People are searching for truth and peace (vv.34-36)***

.. because their sins blind them from the truth and disables them from finding true peace in life. He states in vv.35 and 36 “You know ...” That word means it is a known fact based on a literal past event. Jesus’ life, death and resurrection were a historical reality that people everywhere knew of. And its spoken in such a way that this past even has continuing ongoing ramifications – and always will have. So he affirms the truth of the reality of Jesus’ life and that He healed people and cast out demons. The Holy Spirit power from God was evident in his life; everyone is aware of these facts.

Before Peter affirms the reality of Jesus’ life he calls Him ‘Lord of all’, already pointing out Jesus’ deity and our accountability to Him. Only He can bring us peace through forgiveness of sins. So true peace comes from forgiveness of sins through Jesus who lived here but continues to live now because He is Lord of all.

He begins talking about Jesus from the beginning of His ministry. And He starts with God.

*<sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.*

Why does Peter want his hearers to know Jesus’ coming to bring us peace through forgiveness of sins starts with God? So people understand,

### ***God initiates the path to peace through Jesus (vv.37-43)***

We can’t forgive our own sins. We can’t skip going through Jesus for forgiveness of sins because then we will always fail at finding peace and the truth. People can’t save ourselves so God stepped in and made a plan to save us. A plan that would show the extend of His love for us. Now Peter hits some of the main points about Jesus:

- Fully **human** and **divine** (vv.37-39a)

Jesus of Nazareth. Nazareth was not far from Caesarea. It

was a real place. Jesus grew up there. He and his earthly father Joseph were carpenters. Many people would have benefitted from their craftsmanship. But Peter also says Jesus was anointed by God with power and the Holy Spirit doing good and overcoming the power of the devil. Only God can do that. 'Anointed' refers to Jesus as the Messiah, the prophesied One. God was with Him and Peter was an eyewitness of these things.

But Jesus was

- **Killed for doing good (vv.39b)**

They killed Him by hanging Him on a tree. He was killed because the religious leaders were jealous that more people were following Him than them and believing He was the Messiah. And He was, proved by His being

- **Resurrected by God; witnessed by many (vv.40-43a)**

*but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. <sup>41</sup> He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.*

Jesus rose from the dead proving He was the son of God. Again Peter gives eyewitness testimony to all this. And then that Jesus ...

*<sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.*

Jesus has all authority to act as judge of all. He is Lord. He is judge because He sets the standard by which we are declared right before God. How? By faith, believing that Jesus' sinless death paid the price for each person's sin and each person is now responsible to decide for themselves whether they will accept Jesus' sacrifice for their sins.

- **Only faith in Jesus results in forgiveness (v.43b)**

*<sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."*

No one can come to God on their own. Even the Old Testament prophets like Isaiah and Zechariah stated that forgiveness of sins comes not through Moses and the Law but through the Messiah, who is Jesus.

So Peter gives a very clear gospel presentation to a good man – Cornelius – who wasn't saved yet. He was open to God, he was searching for God by doing good works but he now realizes that's not what makes one right with God. You're good deeds can't cancel out your sin. You simply need to confess you are a sinner who needs forgiveness and believe by faith that Jesus alone has the power to take away and forgive our sin. And when we share the gospel we pray because we can't make them believe. We have to ...

## **Trust the Spirit to Seal Some for Salvation** **(10:44-48)**

These Gentiles get a Pentecost experience. That's why these Jewish believers who were with Peter were amazed. The unique experience of speaking in other languages is graciously given to

them to verify that this is God's doing. Gentiles can now be saved also. The visible and audible experience of the Spirit's coming on them and sealing them for salvation assures Peter and the others that they have been

**Joined them to us as the body of believers (vv.44-46)**

And Peter sees the need that they be

**Followed up by baptism (vv.47-48)**

Because at the great commission Jesus said make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to obey all he commands us. Baptism is one of the first steps in discipleship. It's a visible witness by the one being baptized to give to those around them that they have indeed accepted Jesus as their Lord, believing He alone can forgive their sins.

*Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." 48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

This incident is one of the most important turning points in the history of the gospel. When the first non-Jews are reached with the gospel. It will need repeating in Ch. 11 also. But for us today this account of Peter sharing the gospel to Cornelius is a good reminder of the essentials about sharing the gospel.

We need to pray that people get saved but we need to pray that God would open the doors so we can share Christ with our unsaved family, friends, co-workers, fellow students and neighbours. I'm a list guy and I find it helpful to have names of individuals I am praying for that God would open the door for myself or others to share the gospel with them. If we're not praying for them, we won't think about them or be ready to share.

And how do we stay ready? Keep growing spiritually. Read God's Word daily. Confess your own sins and have healthy relationships. Worship regularly. Stay connected with other believers. Obey when God when He speaks to You to change and grow. If we're loving God more each day we're ready to talk about God each day.

Review the essentials of the gospel. Jesus is the Son of God, who became one of us, demonstrated through the power of the Spirit He was divine and sinless. And He was killed because people were jealous and afraid of Him. But you can't kill God. So He rose from the dead, walked the earth for 40 days more. Finally ascended visibly to God, promising He's coming back as God's Word says, to judge and to rule.

People are searching for truth and peace. They're not finding it in their human relationships, in achievements, in possessions, in their sexuality or in culture. Why? Because sin has damaged all these things including our own hearts. Only through faith in Jesus can our sins be forgiven. He is the truth. He is peace, now and after we die.

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