

Acts 10: 24 - 43 // Jesus is greater than tradition, part 2

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Date: 14 September 2025

[0:00] We're going to be in Acts chapter 10, verses 24 to 43. Well, we'll see how far we get. This is what I'm calling part two of the sermon that gets me fired.

And I have to start out by just saying, So I was at a lesbian wedding once. Or sorry, not a wedding, a birthday party, pardon me. And it was an interesting experience, to say the least.

And I'm actually, I'm not joking. I've been to several birthdays like this. This one was different, though. I was invited to go, and I walked in the door.

And I was the only heterosexual white guy there. And it was just such a funny vibe to walk into, if you can imagine. But I knew that, I knew the person who had invited me.

I cared for them, and I should care for me. And I walked in, found a place to sit down. And for about 15 minutes or so, it was pretty awkward, you know.

[1:07] I'm going to have a big tattoo of Jesus' name on my left arm, and that caught some glares, right? But some of these people were tattoo artists, so I guess they kind of understood. And then all of a sudden, the question came, you've got to tell us about that tattoo.

And then the room went quiet. There was 20 smart people there. And I thought, okay, here we go. So I told them about this time when I had prayed and fasted, and how the Lord had shown me his love for me in a very unique way I had not seen before.

I realized that I had not been a very loving person before. And this is years after marriage, years after being a father. But I was still learning what love is. And at the end of that 20-ish minutes, roughly about that, there was some people that were tearing up.

I don't know what happened to those folks. I really don't. I left soon after. I was actually in Vancouver on business. And so I left, and I'm not too sure what happened. But the woman who invited me said, you know, if you pastored a church, I'd go to it.

And I said, funny you say that. I do pastor a church. And even though I was packing up and leaving to come to the place that would ultimately lead me to here, which praise the Lord for her, I was able to pass her off to a friend who I know would welcome her in his church.

[2:33] And I wanted to share that story to begin with because we're about to read another story where Jesus and tradition come in a bit of a loggerhead.

And that just means into a bit of a place where there's a stalemate, where Jesus wins. I can't tell you how many hateful emails I had when I started telling that story about going to a lesbian's birthday.

I would again, okay? Let me just say that freely. I would again. But it was remarkable how many people took offense to the fact that I did this. And it just reminded me that there was a time where if you were Jewish and you associated with a Gentile, it would be scandalous.

Absolutely scandalous. We talked about that actually in Bible study this morning. John chapter four and the woman at the well, Jacob's well. And Jesus did a scandalous thing by talking to a woman by himself and talking to a Samaritan as he was a Jewish man and a rabbi.

So we get into these places where Jesus and tradition have a bit of a, I don't want to say friction, but where tradition has to come under submission to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which is right side up and ours is upside down.

[3:56] And we're in this place now. Last week we talked about how Cornelius, or sorry, Peter had this vision. Do not call something common that I have made clean, the Lord said to him.

And it wasn't talking about food. Even though through, he spoke through Peter's hunger. He wasn't talking about food. He was talking about people. And so these Gentiles were coming to the Lord. People were meeting Jesus Christ from all over the place, outside of Judaism. And there had to have been this place where tradition had to take a step back and make way for its savior.

Here we are now. Peter answered that call. And he's gone to Cornelius' house. As if it wasn't enough that he allowed them to stay in his house that night.

And if it wasn't enough to feed them, to make sure that they're okay, to welcome them as guests in the fullness of what that means. As if that wasn't enough. Peter was now about to travel to go and meet with them on their terms, in their home.

[4:58] Something no good Jewish man would do. But Jesus is above our religion. And he's above our tradition. So I want to start with verses 24 to 27. And we'll just keep going verse by verse here.

And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. And when Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him.

But Peter lifted him up saying, Stand up! I too am a man! And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. He went in.

I can't emphasize enough how incredible those words are. And if you're the kind of person like me that doesn't mind marking up their Bible, I suggest you underline those words.

He went in. Because it means so much more than what we read. Peter was raised to be a good Jewish boy. He was raised in observances. He was raised to walk in tradition so that other people could see his religiosity.

[6:09] And him entering in, him walking in that doorway, it made all of that a thing of the past. Because now Peter himself would be considered common or unclean by the religious authority.

And yet that was far from the truth. It would have been scandalous. Because according to Jewish ceremonial law, not biblical, but according to ceremonial law, he would be made unclean.

Peter broke with tradition because God told him to do it. I went to my friend's birthday party because I know the Lord was telling me to do it. And I tell you what, when I was Ubering over there, there wasn't a moment where I'm like, what are you doing?

Lord, what are you doing? Why, right? Why? When am I ever going to tell this story to anybody? And here I am. Years later, I'm still telling it.

Why? No, Peter obeyed. Because God's kingdom is far, far above our religious tradition. Far above.

[7:20] And that is something that we all have to reconcile with. That God's kingdom is right side up. Our traditions can be upside down. It's not that tradition is bad, but when we make them an idol, it is.

He went in. Verses 27 and 29. And as he talked with them, he went in and found many persons gathered. And he said to them, you yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation.

But God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I asked them, why you sent for me?

I find this very humble of Peter. Because he didn't walk in and say, the apostle is here, everybody, you know, celebrate now, my books are at the back table, you know, he didn't do any of that because none of that matters.

He walked in in humility and said, why am I here? I can't help but think that the fact that it took him a couple of days to get there, he would have known and there would have been times where it's like, why God?

[8:33] Why are you sending me? Do you know what this means? This is fighting every ounce that I've been trained with as a boy. This is fighting everything in my head.

And now in my heart, Lord, what are you doing? I can't help but think that even though he obeyed, there might have been moments where Peter was wondering and asking these questions. Good questions.

Why am I here? Verses 30 to 32, and Cornelius said, four days ago about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.

So therefore, to Joppa, send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon Tanner by the sea. Cornelius was praying.

He was seeking after God. He was seeking the Lord and his guidance. And there had to have been some form of intensity there. What happens?

[9:40] Well, God sends him to vision. And his prayer is heard. This is a little weirder than you may think. Was Cornelius a born-again Christian at this point?

No. Was he a good man? Sure. Yes. He was. Cornelius. God knew him by name. He was a good man. But he was not yet born again.

And yet God still heard his prayers. I know that's going to upset some people. I know that that's going to challenge our sense of tradition and religiosity.

But, Jesus has promised to hear the prayers of anyone who calls out to him. And I was not born and raised a Christian and I am so grateful that is true.

Because when I called for his salvation, he answered, and it's not because I'm worth anything. It's because he is so good and merciful. To pray in the name of Jesus doesn't mean to tack on in Jesus' name at the end of a prayer.

[10:49] There was a time where if someone just said, oh man, I'm not, oh you didn't really pray. Got to pray in Jesus' name. You know? There was a time where I thought that and it's so far from the truth.

Praying in Jesus' name means with the heart of Jesus, with the mind of Jesus, with the will of Jesus. Praying in Jesus' name means not praying in our name or the name of anyone else on earth. It is praying with him in our heart. That is a something else. And as we know now, the answer isn't always yes. Sometimes when we pray in Jesus' name and we may fast and pray, sometimes the answer is no.

And we look back on those no's and if you're old enough like I am, you're grateful for some of them. You know? Remember in high school, oh Lord, this is the girl I want to marry.

You know? Just make it happen. Right? I didn't. I'm so glad she was a nutcase. Anyways, aside from that, aside from all that, do you see what I mean?

[12:01] Sometimes the answer is no and we can be grateful for that. Sorry. Anyway, I love you, Maria, if you're going to listen to this.

She's not the girl. Just, you know. Now, God has promised to hear prayer offered in Jesus' name. John 14, 13. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. And in his mercy and in his grace, he will often hear the prayers of people who do not yet know him. Lord, I don't know who you are. I'm desperate.

You know how many people in war have come to God without a pastor or priest or minister around? You know? There's that old saying that there is no such thing as an atheist in the trenches.

Right? No, we come to God and sometimes our prayers are lifted up and sometimes they're from people, from men and women who do not yet know him. We cannot look down on that.

[13:10] In fact, if anything, if we get to hear that, we should say, hey, let's pray together because you know, I found Jesus to be the answer to my life. We can do that.

And maybe in a circumstance never guessed in a million years that you would be. Maybe tradition would have kept you from that place but God has brought you to that place in order for his name to be glorified.

Don't get in the way of him because of tradition. Follow him. God has promised that if you're seeking him, you will find him.

Jeremiah 29, 13, you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. So that's not just a, yeah, it's a Monday, I'm kind of feeling it, I'm going to go to Bible study.

You know? Not the same thing. When you seek him with all your heart, it's in every aspect of our lives, our work, our school, our church, our marriages, our friendships.

[14:15] It goes on and on and on and on. You seek the Lord with all of your heart. Okay? And I wish I could, you know, find some kind of translation loophole where all means something else but it doesn't.

I don't care how you study it. I don't care how learned you are. All means all. Not partial. Not some. Cornelius was seeking for God.

And if you're here this morning right now and you're trying to find God or maybe you're trying to go a little deeper with him, he will meet you. You don't need to come up here.

You need just in your heart right now saying yes. he will meet with you. He will meet with you. Verse 33, So I sent for you at once and you've been kind enough to come.

Now therefore we are all here in your presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord. They were ready. They were ready.

[15:20] This is a preacher's dream to walk into a room with people that are ready to hear the word of God. I can't tell you how exciting it is when you're able to be in a room full of people that are

waiting to hear the word of God.

It's important for the teacher to be prepared and as a teacher you better and I mean this you had better know the text and be free to admit that you don't know everything because you can't. But you better come prepared and be willing to say I don't know sometimes. When I met the Lord it was actually through a Christmas Eve service. I've always loved Christmas Eve services as a result.

It was during God rescue merry gentlemen. You know there was something about that just like tidings of comfort and the man who was the pastor of that church I had been skipping out of high school to go and ask him questions and he never bothered me about that which I was so grateful for and as a pastor now I know what it's like to be interrupted.

Sometimes you're in the middle of something and it's like you know and you're interrupted you've got to just go with the flow and I remember how many times I interrupted him by not even knocking on his door just walking in and saying religion is nothing more than crowd control.

[16:35] Prove me wrong. Right? Just like this brazen teenager going in there and never once did he tell me can you wait a minute? He was just like okay let's get into it and the one thing that I remember that I was always grateful for he was free to say I don't know but let's go to the scripture and find it out together.

Yeah we come ready we come hungry and we come prepared. It's also important that the congregation is prepared to hear the word of God bring your Bible with you okay the reason why I don't have them up here I've been ministering for 26 years I've never had slides on the back bring your Bible look up the chapter read it with me take it home rinse and repeat and do it there I'm not going to supply something to make it easy I want you to bring your Bible make your notes read it and take it home be a student of his word okay be a student of his word and I think that's very very important and you may say well I am good awesome then come prepared to learn as much as you can because you may be thinking I can't listen to this guy I don't like his face I don't like his shirt I don't like Canadians whatever it doesn't matter okay the point is that even if you're listening the Holy Spirit will speak through you it doesn't matter which clown is up here okay so come prepared and seek after the Lord and let the Holy Spirit guide you through it have an expectancy of faith come expecting that God will speak with you on Sunday mornings or whenever we meet verses 34 to 43 so Peter opened his mouth and said truly I understand that God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him as for the word that he sent to Israel preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ he is Lord of all you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea beginning from Galilee after the baptism of John proclaimed how God anointed

Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with the power he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil for God was with him and we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem they put him to death by hanging him on a tree but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear not to all people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses!

who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead and he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to judge the living and the dead to him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name verse 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him so it doesn't mean that guys like Cornelius were already right with God even though he was a good man even though he was trying to be a religious man he was a God fear he still needs Jesus in his heart and this is again where tradition and Jesus come to a place where there's a bit of a collision because we can go to church we may have gone to church our whole lives who's on the throne of your heart today?

is it Jesus? it should be is it tradition? is it religion? is it the well we've always done it this way? that guy's a nuisance you know that guy we've always done it this way well great I'm going to do it the Jesus way and if it lines up wonderful if not well I like my way better but he never excluded people because of economic status or nationality never he didn't exclude people Jesus is Lord of all and there's that word again all I can't make it mean anything else it is what it is there was no partiality all may come to God even a lesbian tattoo artist all may come to God all we live and we have the same creator we live with him we have him the same creator and we have the same savior there is one savior for all not the elect not just the Jesus people for all there is one savior and we need him

how would this resonate with us as modern Christians what would this look like when we're going through tough times trying to be faithful to God when there's all of this noise around us when a real here or a new story there is trying to pull us one way or the other how do we choose the Jesus way we have to accept a couple of things not all religions agree and they're not going to the same place [21:55] I don't care what the coexist movement tries to tell you not all religions go to the same place there is one savior one lord of all and you may say well that's a bit exclusive yeah it is I wish it worked through you know how many family dinners I would have loved to have said yeah everybody can go to heaven there's no problem you don't have to believe in Jesus that would have been so much more of a relief but it's not the truth and I can't love people and lie to them I have to tell them the truth that is love and the truth is there is one savior one lord of all and that's it and the religions don't agree you may say well this is a religion of peace no they're not some people who are actually actively protesting on behalf of Islam right now don't realize that if they stepped foot in an Islamic country they'd be killed but we get so messed up in the head thinking well this way is right this way is right Jesus way is right I wish it was another way in the sense that I wish we could just kind of say oh all roads lead heaven but they don't there's one way

Cornelius was a God fearing man but he was not yet saved and apart from hearing the message of the gospel and trusting Christ Cornelius wouldn't have any hope outside of Jesus the other thing we have to accept is that the seeking savior will find the seeking sinner of which we are all sinners he will find us are you seeking him now because like it was last week sometimes the greatest miracle is not somebody like a lesbian tattoo artist friend of mine coming to Jesus sometimes it's an old crusty Christian like me having a change of heart and realizing that Jesus is lord of all and savior of all herself myself as well I loved that she was willing to come to church I loved that and you know I will just say this I don't know how to say this without going on a rabbit trail so I'll probably be careful but there was a series of interviews that I had to go to be brought to you wonderful folks and it was the best hiring experience

I've been a part of because the recruiting company really knew what they were doing you know like they really they did not mince words they were friendly and loving man they went for the throat for the heart issues you know so the first thing that they asked in my third interview was so what's your stance on the LGBTQ community and I was like here we go it's pass fail this is 50 50 zero sum you know this is it right and I know that that was an important question to ask and the only thing I said was that I hope when they come to church that they'll sit with me because there's a difference between accepting and affirming I can't in scripture affirm my friend crystal I can't I had another guy named john who you know a gay guy that went to our church and he was like he came up to me one day and says well you marry me if I find the right partner I said no I can't and I'll show you in scripture why but you know what john I'm gonna love you and I'm gonna be your brother as long as you'll let me you know john was one of the greatest inviters to our church he didn't come with less than two or three people every week sometimes it was five okay seekers seeking the lord will find him and that may have been uncomfortable to hear a couple of those stories but think of that when you're desperate and you know you need a savior and you find people that will love you and show you the way to that savior that's a beautiful thing but tradition can sometimes have us keep those people that are seeking for jesus out because it's uncomfortable jesus made a habit of making people uncomfortable not because he was uncomfortable and awkward but because god's kingdom is right side up and ours is upside down and it's not comfortable to see that sometimes i hope this church gets filled and you know i'm gonna even go so far as to say that i want it filled with people that are sinners just like you and me and there was a time where i said to jamie i was like we're gonna fill it for tommy you know and i still believe that i still believe that but there's also it's like this this big part of me it's like no no we're gonna fill it for jesus right and that means we're gonna have to fill it with people that jesus would hang out with think about that for a second fill it with people that jesus would hang out with that may be a rough crowd it may challenge our tradition good because like i said i want to choose the jesus way every day and it's gonna be uncomfortable and there's gonna be moments where it's gonna be weird good there's that old saying of you know afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted okay i've heard it in pastor circles for years i don't know who originally said it but i needed to be afflicted by crystal i needed to be afflicted by her lifestyle because i was too comfortable in being a religious man and i realized my tradition means nothing i can be a god-fearing man but if jesus is not in my heart that doesn't mean anything now to fill this place we're gonna have to get uncomfortable just gonna let that hang there for a second because

this offer that jesus makes is offer to all people regardless of where you're from regardless of who you are who you've been what your past has been like this offer to come to jesus is open to all please do yourself a favor and don't get in his way i have to look at myself in the mirror on a constant basis and say don't get in god's way it's something i pray all the time lord help me not to be in your way today i did this morning so don't get in god's way the call to believe is a call to repent it's not to affirm sinful lifestyle and celebrate it it is a call to repent and i like to look at like this you can't live in two towns at once i shouldn't have to say when i'm telling you to drive to guyman you have to leave texoma first obviously if you're going to arrive in guyman you have to leave texoma that doesn't even need to be part of the instructions so if you're trying to live in texoma and go to guyman at the same time that's being ripped in two that is the very definition of anxiety okay so when i'm saying that the doors should be open for all people that this offer for salvation is for all people yes and amen but it's not to leave them in texoma it's to move them to heaven okay and you can't stay rooted on earth and moving towards heaven because you're being ripped apart so when i say these things please understand the welcome is open to all but the path to heaven is only through the one jesus he was unafraid to speak to the people who were difficult to speak to he was unafraid to ditch tradition as a rabbi and as a jewish man in order to reach the people that needed to hear his voice he was unafraid of all of the mockery and the scorn that he would receive by the religious people the pharisees and sadducees the scribes he was unafraid of all of that because he knew who he is he knew what his mission was and he knew that he was going in his father's name and here's the kicker so do you and i we know who Jesus is we know the father we know the son we know the holy spirit we know where we're going but if you're sitting here today and you don't then my challenge is again who's on the throne of your heart today who sits there who sits on the throne of your heart is it tradition is it this building right is it the way we do things that guy right or is it Jesus let's pray