

No Favorites, Only Forgiven

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[0 : 00] Well, we meet this morning at the crossroads of history and eternity, where the timeless truths of God's Word intersect with our daily lives.

We're going to be looking this morning at the message that the Apostle Peter shares with Cornelius and his family and his close friends that have gathered in his home.

And where this is going to be the entrance of the gospel of Jesus Christ to non-Jews, to the Gentiles.

We've seen the gospel go out to the Jews initially. We've seen the gospel go out to the Samaritans. And then now we're going to be seeing God opening up under his new covenant, the gospel, to all the world with the Gentiles.

[0 : 56] God had been working with Peter. In a vision, God had shown Peter that nothing that he had declared clean was anything that Peter was to consider unclean.

We have to understand that Peter came from a Jewish religion. That was his background. And because of that background, Peter had a lot of prejudices, had a lot of biases that God had to overcome.

And that's what he did in that vision on the roof, on that flat roof while he was waiting for lunch. He was hungry. And God, in a vision, showed Peter all types of animals that Jewish people should not have eaten that were considered unclean, coming down on a sheet held up by the four corners. And God says, get up, Peter, kill them and eat them. And three times God had to do that. Peter says, no, I've never eaten any unclean animals. I've been a good practicing Jew.

What God does is God shifts Peter's mindset to realize that he is no longer living under the old covenant.

[2 : 16] But now Peter is living under the new covenant. The new covenant where Jesus Christ, the Messiah, has come to earth.

And he has fulfilled the old covenant. And he has brought a brand new covenant. And it's a covenant of love. It's not a covenant of law. It's a covenant of love.

And that is the principle by which we follow or we must follow because that's what Jesus did. Jesus came to the earth not to be served, but to serve.

Jesus Christ demonstrated God's love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And salvation is available to all. And that's the message that God had to make that shift in Peter's mind for.

[3 : 14] And this morning, as we get into Acts chapter 10, verses 34 through 43, and you can be turning there this morning. We will be looking at that in just a moment.

And we're going to be seeing that in God's eyes, there are no favorites. There are only forgiven sinners.

Those who've trusted Christ as their Savior. And what we are going to be delving into this morning is the realization that God was bringing into Peter's mind and ultimately showing to Cornelius and his family is that God's program is to reach out to the world through his people, through the church. And the message is that there is peace through Jesus Christ. And our responsibility is to proclaim Jesus as Lord.

Let's pray. Lord the God, we ask this morning that you would use your word today to get through into our minds and to our hearts that you love us above all.

[4 : 36] And you love this world so much that you sent your son, Jesus Christ, to become a human being so that he could walk this earth, understand what it was like to be a human being.

But as a human, go to the cross, suffer and die for all of our sin, for the sins of the world. And on that third day to be raised again, to be the firstborn, to be the one that would make it possible for us to have a relationship with you.

We thank you, Father, this morning. Help us to understand and to receive your love today. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, in Acts chapter 10, we begin with verse number 34.

Peter opened his mouth. We saw last week, for those of you who were here, those of you who watched last week's message, that Peter comes into Cornelius' home and he is accepted by Cornelius and his home.

And he asked them, why did you send me? And Cornelius is overawed and fawns over Peter, who is the messenger of God.

[6 : 01] And he says, and he recounts the vision that he had and that the angel said to go and send for Peter, told him where Peter was staying. And Peter comes and he says, we are here to hear all things that God commanded you to tell us.

And so Peter begins his message by saying, so Peter opens his mouth. Peter proclaims and he says, in truth or truly, I perceive, I understand, I accept that God shows no partiality.

That was a game changer for Peter. See, remember, Peter grew up thinking it was an us and them society. Us were the Jews, the practicing Jews, who were, who had been circumcised, who were following the law, who had not eaten any of these unclean animals that Peter saw in that vision four days before.

And so it was an us versus them society. And Peter now realizes, ah, that's what the prophets in the Old Testament were talking about.

That's the mystery that we are, that we have been told about, that Paul talks about in the book of Ephesians, that God has no favorites.

[7 : 42] This word here only appears this one time in the New Testament, but there are synonyms throughout the New Testament. This word for partiality means that there are no, he shows no favoritism.

God's got no favorites. God hasn't, and under God's new covenant, he doesn't have a special group of people. He says, God shows no partiality.

God shows no favorites. He is no respecter of persons. That means nobody can come to God and say, God, look at me. Look at how good I am.

I follow the Ten Commandments. And by the way, nobody can follow the Ten Commandments.

Jesus opened up a whole, much wider view of the Ten Commandments. He said, have you ever looked upon a woman and lusted?

Yep, well then you were guilty of adultery. Have you ever hated someone or maybe slain their character by saying something negative about them? Yep, well then you're guilty of murder.

[8 : 50] And so no one has been able to keep the Ten Commandments. So no one can stand before God and say, God, I'm so religious. I go to church every Sunday. You know, I take communion. I've done this.

I've done that. God has not a respecter of persons. God won't respect that because it doesn't matter who we are. We all come to God the same way because at the foot of the cross, as the saying goes, it's level ground.

There's nobody that has a leg up on anyone because we are all the same. So Peter says, I've understood. I understand it now. God shows no favoritism.

So he says in verse 35, but, and he clarifies in verse 35, in every nation who fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him.

Here is the universal call to the world. This is what we call the gospel is universal.

[10 : 03] It doesn't mean universalism that everybody is saved. It just simply means that the gospel, salvation, is available to all, no matter your background, no matter your nationality.

Imagine a world where your nationality or your background or your social status determined your access to God's love.

That wouldn't be fair, would it? That means if you were not born in the right family, then tough luck. Well, if you were born in the wrong part of the world, too bad.

Or, if you were poor and destitute, you didn't have the same ability to come to God.

Well, that would not be fair. Well, the reality is that is not the way we have access to the love of God. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him

should not perish, but have everlasting life.

[11:22] And we're going to see later this morning that the wonderful news that Cornelius and his family and friends receive is that whoever, whosoever believes in Him can have their sins pardoned.

There are some who have taken verse 35 and said that, well, salvation is by works.

And that God looked upon Cornelius, because if we look back a few verses, the Bible says that Cornelius did many things, he prayed to God, he gave offerings to the poor, and he really wanted to please God.

There are those that have said, you see, Cornelius was saved by his works. Well, if we look again at verse number 35, but in every nation, but in every nation, again, there's no boundaries, whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

this has a view of a person being welcomed. And verse 35 is not the prescription for salvation, it's a clarification of what Peter just said in verse 34, that God shows no favorites.

[13:05] So, in effect, God's call is to all the world and whoever does what is right. I would like to read now verse 35 in the New Living Translation, and I believe what it's going to do is it's going to clarify even a little bit more and help us to understand what Peter really said.

In every nation, He accepts those who fear Him and do what is right. If we look at the word works here that Peter used, it does not have so much to do with the object of His works or the works themselves, but more with the manner in which He or she does them.

So, what Peter was saying is that God is willing to welcome anyone who does what's right and who fears God.

Well, what is right? Now, before we go to Micah, which Micah is the parallel passage to verse number 35, go to Ephesians chapter 3 verses 4 through 6.

In Ephesians, what Paul is saying is what Peter's doing is he's clarifying something that the Old Testament prophets talked about, but the early church didn't understand until it was proclaimed to them.

[14:52] Verse 4, Ephesians chapter 3, by which when you read you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, and the mystery was that God wanted to take all the peoples of the world, those who trust Christ as their Savior, make them into one family, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it now has been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets, that the Gentiles, here we are, that the Gentiles should be what?

Fellow heirs of the same body. Newsflash, it's not an us and them anymore. Under the new covenant, it's we're all one family, all those who trust Christ for their salvation and partakers of his promises in Christ through the gospel.

So everyone is able to be partakers. Now we look at Micah 6, 8. What does God command of his people?

What did God command his people in the Old Testament? Verse number 8, Micah 6, verse 8, He has shown you, O man, what is good?

What is right? What does God expect of us? And what does the Lord require of you? But to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

[16:42] That's what he wants. He doesn't want us, and I realize the Old Testament, it was a sacrificial system. But what God wants most is not your religiosity.

What God wants most is not anything of that nature, but he says to do what's right, to do justly, to love mercy, and just walk humbly with your God.

So verse 35, is Peter clarifying what he said in verse 34? God shows no favorites, because he is ready to welcome anyone who fears him and does what's right.

Otherwise, if this were the prescription for salvation, then Peter would be contradicting himself in verse 43, because in verse 43, he says, whoever believes in him will have their sins pardoned.

So in verse 43, what Peter does is, now Peter gives the prescription. Salvation is based on faith, not on work.

[18:04] So God's program is reaching out to the world through his people. No favorites, no us, them, no Jew, Gentile, one body who trusts Christ as their Savior.

No favoritism, and then there's the universal call. So by way of application, what's our responsibility? Our responsibility is to tell the world.

God will accept anyone. God will accept anyone. And if you're sitting here today or you're watching by way of the internet, don't for a moment think that God would not accept you.

Because I've heard people say, literally tell me, you just don't know what I've done. You just don't know about my past. I don't think God would accept someone like me.

You know, the awesome capability that we have is to tell someone like that. It doesn't matter.

[19 : 18] All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. God doesn't show favorites. I've heard people say, well, you know, let me go ahead and I need to clean up my life.

I need to stop drinking or I need to stop this or I need to stop that. to not. You know, when I get my stuff together, then I'm going to go. That's the cart before the horse because all we can do before we have God's Holy Spirit within us, all we can do before we trust Christ as our Savior and we're given a new life, all we can do is touch up.

All we can do is make touch ups here and there. But through Jesus Christ, in Christ, we are a new creature, a new creation.

All things are passed away. Behold, all things are becoming new. What God wants to do is God wants to totally revamp, change, give you a new life and then with that new life and the power of the Holy Spirit, then He can begin cleaning up your life.

It doesn't work the other way around. And so that's our responsibility to simply tell the world God doesn't have any favorites. You don't have to clean up your life in order to come.

[20 : 45] Come, God is willing to welcome you and then His Holy Spirit that's when I've heard people say, you know what, now that I've trusted Christ, now I'm miserable.

Well, that's not a bad thing because when He makes you realize that there are some things in your life that ought not to be there, then you start to feel guilty.

But what matters is what you do with that Holy Spirit produced guilt in your life. Now, let me clarify this.

We should never have guilt to the degree that we wonder if God still loves us. Because on the cross, Jesus Christ paid for all of our sin. But if our conscience tells us that something we're doing is wrong, that's when we can say, God, thank you for showing me that this is something that doesn't belong in my life.

This is something that doesn't please you. Give me the power to say no, and please clean up my life. See, that's when the cleanup process takes place.

[22 : 00] So, God's program, sharing the truth, God's program is reaching out to the world through Jesus Christ. But what's the message?

The message we see is in verses 36 to 41. Verse 36, back in Acts chapter 10, the word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching, or the word that we get, the English word, evangelize, sent to the children of Israel, preaching, peace, evangelizing, sharing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ.

He is Lord of all. Jesus is the center of God's plan.

We have to understand that from Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 all the way through the end of the book of the Revelation, God's word is about Jesus.

Jesus. We see that Jesus is the center of God's plan when Adam and Eve sinned, they disobeyed God, and he killed an animal in order to cover their nakedness, and he shed blood.

[23 : 28] That shedding of blood in the Garden of Eden was the prototype, if you will. that was the beginning, and that showed that one day blood would have to be shed to completely, as we see in verse 43, to completely pardon sin.

Sin no longer being covered, but with the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, our sins could truly be totally remitted, totally pardoned. So Jesus is Lord of all.

The word Lord of all would have been something that idol worshipers would have understood. This was a phrase that they had used in their own religions, but when Jesus said, or when Peter said, Jesus is Lord of all, that was a profound message to Cornelius and his family and close friends, because they would have heard Peter say, this is what they would have heard.

The gospel isn't just for the Jews. Jesus isn't just Lord of the Jews. They would have heard Jesus is Lord of the Gentiles too.

Jesus wants to be my Lord. Jesus is Lord of a subsection of people, Lord of the Jews, Lord of, no, he is Lord of all.

[25 : 10] That word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea and began from Galilee after the baptism, which John preached. And what Peter begins to do is he begins to talk about the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus.

What he's doing here is he's kind of giving a history lesson to them. This would have been about 10 to 15 years after the resurrection of Jesus.

and he is letting them know, reminding them what happened. So he's that word you know, it was proclaimed throughout all Judea, began from Galilee after the baptism of John, which John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good, healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

So he says that Jesus was anointed by God. We know in Jesus' baptism, God, the Holy Spirit came down, this is my son in whom I am well pleased.

The word Messiah, by the way, means anointed one. So when Peter is saying that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, what he was saying is that God anointed Jesus as the Messiah, that Old Testament prophesied Messiah that would come and would be the one who would be the ruler of all.

[27 : 06] For God was with him. Verse 39, we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem in whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

Him God raised up on the third day and showed him openly 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.

So in this history lesson we see that Peter is saying there is peace through Jesus Christ.

There are a lot of people in the world who are searching for peace. There are people who are searching through peace through all sources. The woman at the well that Jesus came and spoke to, she was looking for peace, she was looking for fulfillment in relationships.

Jesus told her that's not the way for peace and fulfillment. He says you have to drink of the water that I'm going to give you. Once you drink of it you'll never thirst again.

[28 : 16] He was talking about himself. There are people who are looking for peace in job, looking for peace in a large bank account.

There are those who are looking for peace in a bottle. There are those who are looking for peace in all types of places. But there is only one peace that is so deep, so everlasting, and is so pervasive that it's able to be all that we need.

And that's peace that is only supplied through Jesus Christ. Peace with God, God's God's program was for us to reach out to the world.

His message is there's peace through Jesus Christ, and Jesus is Lord of all.

Now, what does that mean? What does that mean to you? Jesus is Lord of all. If Jesus is Lord of your life, it's where you are willing to say, Jesus, you take the wheel, and I'll just ride along.

[29 : 44] you decide where we're going, you decide how fast we get there, and you decide what obstacles we have to go through, because you are Lord.

You are in control of my life. Humbly, I will simply allow you to be Lord of all.

now, when we allow Jesus to be Lord of our life, he gives us a brand new sense of purpose. He gives us a brand new direction.

He gives us the ability to, no matter what you and I go through, Jesus gives us the ability to see the end, because Jesus said, I'm going through this with you, and he said, that he who has begun a good work in you will continue to work it until the end of time, until we meet our Heavenly Father.

So, since God began a good work in you, the moment you trusted Christ as your Savior, and because we are sealed to the day of redemption, and because we know where our eternity is going to be, no matter what you and I go through, no matter the depths into which we have to go through, no matter what pain we have to suffer, no matter what obstacles we have to go over or beyond, or around, Jesus is with us, and he will see, he will make sure that he makes the way.

[31 : 36] so Jesus is Lord of all. The question is, is he Lord of your life? So, we know that God's program is for us to reach out to the world.

We know that the message is there is peace through Jesus. So, what's our job? Look at verse 42 and 43.

Verse 42, and he commanded us. Jesus commanded us. We know that when he arose from the dead, before he left this earth, Jesus gave his disciples a responsibility and by extension, all disciples who would come thereafter, meaning us.

And he gave the commission of, as you go out into the world, start where you are, start in Jerusalem for them, start where you are, go out from there, ultimately to the ends of the earth, making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them whatever I have commanded you. So, really, it's all about Jesus. Everything that we do should be about Jesus. Everything, every decision we make should be, what did Jesus do?

[33 : 17] Well, this is what I think I should do, or this is what my tradition tells me I should do. No, what did Jesus do? What did Jesus say?

Who did Jesus welcome? And how did He welcome them? So, our job is to proclaim this good news to the world.

He commands us to preach to the people. That word preach is not just for preachers or missionaries. That word preach is the word that means to herald or to proclaim as a herald to go out, just like a town crier, and proclaim Jesus, testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead.

So, we're commissioned to proclaim the good news of the gospel, to testify what Jesus Christ has done in our life, how our life has changed, and who Jesus is.

And Peter made it clear here in verse 42 that Christ's ministry results in one of two things.

[34 : 39] He says that Jesus was ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead.

So, Christ's ministry results in either one of two things. It either results in judgment or verse 43, to Him all the prophets witnessed that through His name, through the name of Jesus, whoever believes in Him will receive the remission of sins.

So, the ministry of Jesus results in one of two things. If you choose to not trust Jesus as your Savior, if you choose to trust in your works, it will result in judgment one day.

Depart from me, you worker of iniquity, I never knew you. And that person is going to be sent to the lake of fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels.

Or, if we, as Peter says here, that through the name of Jesus, our faith is in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone, he says, he will or she will receive remission of sin.

[35 : 56] So, here's the promise of forgiveness. This word remission here means a formal release from an obligation or a debt.

We had a sin debt because from Adam, you and I, every one of us, inherited a sin nature. We inherited a nature to sin.

We couldn't help it. Just like, just like it's in that pig's nature to wallow in the mud to cool himself off, that's in their nature, that's what, that's the way they were designed, he says, just like that is, excuse me, in their nature, we have inherited a sinful nature and we have a sin debt.

That sin debt is, for the wages of sin is death. That's eternal separation from God. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of life is what?

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. But the gift of salvation is by grace through faith, that through his name, whoever believes in him will receive remission of sin, will have that sin debt canceled.

[37 : 26] They will be pardoned, they will be released from that debt of sin. It's not earned by being good enough. It's not earned by going to church every week.

It's not earned by giving offerings to the poor. It's earned only through trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Savior. So this morning, is Jesus your Lord? Have you placed your faith and your trust in Jesus Christ alone and what he did on the cross of Calvary or is it in any works that you have done?

We are to humbly come before him and say, Lord, I'm lost. I realize that I can't do a single thing to be right with God because I'm a sinner and I deserve an eternal punishment.

That's my sin debt. But through Jesus Christ who died on the cross in my place, I'm trusting what Jesus did alone and it's by my faith in you, by grace through faith, not of ourselves, not of works, lest any man should boast.

[38 : 53] Salvation is by grace through faith alone. You see, there are no favorites in God's eyes, only forgiven sinners who place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

This morning, it matters not your past. It matters not what you've done, no matter how bad you think it is. God's grace is sufficient for you.

And Jesus is Lord of all. This morning, God is welcoming everyone, whosoever will may come.

God's promised God's name will be saved and by grace through faith will receive pardon of their sin.

So let's embrace God's grace and let's share it with a lost and a broken hurting world.

[40 : 09] Just like Peter, be willing to tear down the walls and to go to people. It could be a neighbor who's from a different background and be willing to share the gospel in a way that makes sense to them and share with them how much God loves them, what Jesus did for them, and that a brand new life is available through faith.

Let's pray. Lord, this morning we thank you. We're so thankful that you love us and that you provided a way for us to be made right with you and that's through Jesus alone.

Father, may we live our lives like Jesus did, reaching to the outcast, reaching out to those who were marginalized by religion and by society, reach out to all people, no matter their nationality, their race, their background, their social status, no matter where they are, be willing to see others through the eyes of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to be messengers of grace showing the unconditional love of Jesus Christ.

He died for all and he wants all to come to know him as their Savior. Father, we pray this morning that you would have your will and your way in our lives and that we may be pleasing to you.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.