

Acts 10:3-11:18

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. I think I'm on. I think I'm good. Amen. Well, good morning. Good morning. I know it's cold. Good morning. Good morning. Amen. Amen. It is a joy and a privilege to be in the house of the Lord again on this windy Sunday morning. I don't know what the windshield is outside, but I know I had a tear that fell and froze right on my eye when I was coming in. So it's a little chilly out, but we're thankful for an opportunity to be gathered again. This morning, as Greg already mentioned, we're going to be continuing in our study of the book of Acts. And so I ask that if you have your Bibles, we're going to be looking at Acts chapter 10 and the first 18 verses of chapter 11. If you have your pew Bibles, it's on page 918. That's page 918 of the pew Bibles. What I'm going to do, since this is such a large passage of scripture, I'm going to read for our hearing the section in Acts 11. So I'm going to read for our hearing Acts chapter 11 verses 1 through 18.

And as we're going to come to see, a lot of this, most of this is repetition, right? Acts chapter 10 is recounting the details of a vision that Cornelius and Peter have, and then a coming together, and then an experience. And then in Acts chapter 11, Peter has to recount all of those details to his Jewish brothers who are wondering what in the world he was doing engaging with the Gentile. And so I'm going to read for our hearing Acts chapter 11 verses 1 to 18, and then we'll walk through this passage and see what the Lord would have us to know. Acts chapter 11, when you have it, say amen.

Need a minute? Say wait a minute. Nobody ever says that. Acts chapter 11, beginning at the first verse, and it reads thusly. Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.

But Peter began and explained it to them in order. I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. And I heard a voice saying to me, rise, Peter, kill and eat.

But I said, by no means, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth. But the voice answered a second time from heaven, what God has made clean, do not call common.

[2 : 5 6] This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. And behold, at that very moment, three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.

And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter. He will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household. As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as, just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John baptized with water, but you will baptize with the Holy Spirit. If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us, when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?

When they heard these things, they fell silent and they glorified God saying, then to the Gentiles also, God has granted repentance that leads to life. Such is the reading of the word of God. Let me offer a word of prayer once again. Father, we thank you for the privilege and the opportunity to come before your word. And now, Father, we ask that by the power of your spirit, you would illuminate this passage, enlighten our hearts. Father, that we might understand and know what it is that you would have us to learn about you and about your gospel and about us. We ask that you would do this for your glory and for our temporal and eternal good. In Christ's name, amen. For the time that we have to share, I would like to lift from this text, this thought, a message of reconciliation that actually reconciles.

A message of reconciliation that actually reconciles. There was once this exclusive group of people and they were just blatant about their exclusivity. They were boasting about it. They were proud of it.

They were ferocious about maintaining their exclusivity. It was a sight to see how bold they were and how serious and committed they were to their own exclusive group.

[5 : 06] We were introduced to this particular group of people as the Little Rascals. A 1994 movie based on an early 20th century series, but these little rascals, you know, Alfalfa, Spanky, Buckwheat, these individuals who were a part of this community that was literally called the He-Man Woman Hater Club. That's W-O-M-U-N Hater Club. It was an exclusive group. They know, no females, no women allowed. Girls, yuck, right? But a problem was one of them, namely Alfalfa, actually ended up liking a girl. That he was transgressing the bounds of their exclusive group.

And the whole movie is about Alfalfa coming to terms with the fact that he now likes girls. And the group that is He-Man Woman Haters Club coming to terms with the fact that Alfalfa likes girls.

And this whole story kind of runs on. And at the end of the movie now, you see that their exclusivity has been blown up. Friendships have been rekindled, amended, and that group that was once exclusive, that was once no women allowed, now actually has girls inside. Really good movie.

And we can obviously laugh at something like that, those benign, as it were, things that perhaps would come up in every child's life as they come to understand differences between them and other people. But there are more serious tensions, aren't there? More enduring tensions, tensions that are more deep-rooted. Those that would characterize the history of this country that orient around race and ethnicity.

And then even the more complicated fact of Christianity's own complicity in a lot of that tension. What this text is tailored to teach us this morning is that the nature of God and the gospel reality that he has brought in and through the person of his son, Jesus Christ, by means of the Holy Spirit, has no room for the inequitable regarding of people groups. As such, this God and his gospel are to be commended to anybody, everybody. It was always his plan to extend salvation to the nations.

[7 : 43] Several Old Testament passages that we could turn to. But interestingly and ironically, Israel was not chosen instead of the other nations, but rather for the sake of the other nations.

In other words, God is an equal opportunity redeemer. No one, no people group is to be considered more qualified, more fit for the kingdom message. And here is why.

The Bible teaches that we are all as jacked up as everybody else. But ironically, at the same time, it also teaches that we are all as precious as everybody else. Simultaneously jacked up and simultaneously precious. Luther said it another way, simultaneously justified and simultaneously sinners. So something, something indeed, if you're a Christian in here today, if you're not a Christian in here today, the truth that we all profess and understand that something indeed terrible has gone wrong with all of us. And yet something is terribly wonderful about each of us as well. So let's look at this particular passage from the vantage point of Cornelius first, who is the Gentile, and then from the vantage point of Peter. And then we'll see what happens when these two are brought together.

Coming off of the sermon that Greg preached last week, talking about obscure individuals who are in least or less recognizable places. Now we are brought before Cornelius, who is an important individual.

He's at a particularly important city. And certain things are said about Cornelius. I'm going to be jumping between chapters 10 and 11. So if you would flip back to chapter 10, picking up there in those first few verses, we are told that Cornelius is at Caesarea. We're told that he is a centurion. We're told that this particular cohort that he is over is known by or known as the Italian cohort, probably several hundred men under his authority. But certain particular things are told about his character, particularly his spiritual character. The Bible tells us that Cornelius is devout man. Tells us that Cornelius fears God. Tells us that he even gives alms. And tells us that he prays continually. His prayers and his alms giving has been highly regarded. Look at chapter 10, verse 4. After this voice and this vision comes to Cornelius, this angel rather, says that your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. His prayers and his alms giving has been highly regarded. And now this angel tells him that he is to send men to go retrieve

[10 : 46] Peter from Joppa. It's interesting to think about perhaps what the content of Cornelius's prayers. It seems as if the text makes the connection between Cornelius's prayers and then that instruction to go and send for Peter, doesn't it? That and now can almost be translated as and so. In other words, God has heard your prayers, Cornelius. God has seen your faithfulness. He has heard your prayers. And now, and so, send men to go and get Peter. Why? What perhaps could Cornelius have been praying? He is a God-fearer. He is devout. But as we'll come to understand, there is something lacking, something significant that is lacking. If you turn, flip for a second to chapter 11, look at verse 14 of chapter 11, look at what Peter says. He gives us more information about what Cornelius has learned in his particular visitation with the angel. He will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and your household. Cornelius is devout. He fears God. He gives alms. He prays continually. But Cornelius is not saved.

Isn't that interesting? The text is clear that this is future tense. As Peter is recounting from Cornelius what Cornelius experienced with the angel, the angel told Cornelius to go and get Peter. Peter would tell you a message by which you will be saved. He fears God. He's devout. He gives alms. He prays continually. But he has not yet been sealed by the Holy Spirit because he has not yet heard, believed, repented this gospel message about Jesus Christ. He has not had that experience. And we know from Ephesians 1 verses 13 to 14 that the Holy Spirit is the official seal. It is the guarantor, the down payment of our inheritance. Cornelius doesn't have a down payment. If he goes to the Salvation Bank, he has nothing in the account but debts. And so God, who has heard Cornelius' prayers, who has responded to his psalm giving, responded to his devoutness, says, I see that, I respect that, I honor that. I hear you,

Cornelius, you want more of me. You want to honor me. There's something that you are missing. You need Jesus. Tell your man to go get Simon Peter. He will come and tell you a message by which you will be saved. Let's look at Peter for a second. Now, Peter is obviously the Jew in this particular tale. And Peter has just been blowing it up all throughout the book of Acts. I mean, he's got it going on. Peter is that boy. You know, Peter's healing people. He's rebuking people. I mean, Peter's just, he's grown up. But if you think back, Peter's, Peter's record is less than stellar, isn't it?

I mean, you have that moment in Matthew chapter 6 where Jesus calls his disciples to himself and Jesus asks them, you know, who do men say that I am? In Matthew chapter 16 and in verse 16 of chapter 16 of Matthew, Peter gives that crucial response. You are the Christ, the son of the living God. And Jesus says, that's right answer. You didn't get that from yourself. My father revealed that to you.

And in verse 21 of Matthew 16, Jesus starts to tell his disciples about what it means to be the Messiah. That you've got the answer, right, Peter? But now let me tell you what the role is, the function is. I'm going to go and I'm going to be rejected by the chief priests and scribes. I'm going to be killed. I'm going to be buried. I'm going to be resurrected after three days. And Peter, in Peter fashion, says, far be it from you, Lord. This will never happen to you.

[14 : 56] No, Peter. No. Just no. Just stop talking. Jesus says what? Get behind me, Satan. That regard for my person and my work is actually satanic. It is against the will of God for my life. That was Peter's, right? That's in his memory. And then six days later, just six days later in Matthew 17, when Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus is transfigured before him, face shining, Moses and Elijah. Peter pulls a Peter moment again.

This is fantastic. I'm going to go build three tents and we can just hang out up here. Peter. No, Peter. No. Just stop. Stop talking. God says no. The voice from heaven says, no, this is my beloved son. Listen to him, Peter. And then, of course, that moment in the garden where Jesus is actually going to be taken. Peter says, surely this is my moment to step up. He pulls out the sword.

He slices the man in. No, no, Peter. No, Peter. No, put the sword away. Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword. And then if that wasn't enough, the three denials are still coming up, right? Peter is, he has all of that background and he is in Joppa at Simon the Tanner's house.

Interesting. He's at Joppa, which is the same place that Jonah will flee to, to catch the boat away from Nineveh. Peter is at Joppa, also going to be given a challenge, a charge rather to preach to Gentiles. He's up on the rooftop praying and he falls into a trance.

What does it say? I mean, back in chapter 10, look at verse 9. He's on the rooftop. He's praying. He's in a trance. He becomes hungry. They are preparing something for him to eat inside the house.

[16 : 58] He's up on the roof. The heavens open up and something like a great sheet descend and all of these animals are laying out on it. And the voice says, rise up and eat. Peter's like, okay, I've already been called Satan. I wanted to build three tents. That was wrong.

So, slice somebody's ear off. I said I was sorry. Surely I'm going to get this one right. I will never eat such a thing like, no, Peter, no.

What does the voice say? Verse 14 of chapter 10. Or rather, verse 15 of chapter 10. The voice came to him again a second time. What God has made clean, do not call common.

This happened three times and the thing was taken up at once to him. So, now Peter is brought before this new reality that his positioning before the Old Testament law, the food laws are to be changing and the social implications that were attached to those food laws are going to change because of what Christ has done. And now Peter is going to be given a charge, going to be given instructions. No, I do not think that the fact that there were three people who showed up from Cornelius' house was a coincidence. I think that this helped Peter process through.

If you look at verse 17, Peter is inwardly perplexed. He's wondering what this is. And then three individuals are waiting on him. This voice told him three times, do not regard, do not regard as unclean or common what I've made clean.

[18 : 49] Three times he's told that and then he has these three Gentiles show up at the door. Imagine the difficulty here. I want us to feel the weight. Feel the weight of the difficulty. Look at what the Spirit says. Verse 19, behold, three men are looking for you. Rise, go down, accompany them without hesitation. The text literally says they're without distinction. I want you to feel that. This is this is someone who's had a history of regarding a particular group of people a certain way.

And then at the drop of a dime, the Spirit says, okay, go with them. Now, I don't want you to hesitate. Like, don't do like the little stutter step. And I don't know if you do that because I'm watching. Go with them without hesitation.

You know how the Jews thought about Gentiles? Not just unclean, but some even regarded them as dogs, less than human because they were not of the people of God, because they did not have the oracles of God.

All the things that Paul would walk through in Romans 1, 2, and 3. Even in the scribal tradition, it was understood that even if you went into a Gentile territory, you got Gentile dust on your feet, that's not good.

And as I was researching and rehearsing this, I went back through the Gospels, and there's even a moment in John 18 when the high priests are taking Jesus from place to place, seeking to get a charge pinned on him, and they go to the governor's house, who's a Gentile, with Jesus, and they don't even step inside the governor's house.

[20 : 42] They're bringing Jesus to the governor's house to get charged, but they're like, yeah, governor, can you come out? We can't bring him in because you're unclean. But we would like to talk to you. That's how much they despise the Gentiles, and now the Spirit tells him, go with them, make no distinction.

And for those of us who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, understand this is what he certainly calls us to do. We ought not be people who make distinctions like that.

Surely those of us who have been brought near again, redeemed back to the Father by means of the Spirit, because of the work of the Son. Surely we understand that there are to be no kind of regard for people in this way.

Make no distinction. Whether there are people or people groups that maybe the Spirit is bringing to your mind right now that you have regarded as less than godly, that you have regarded as less than image bearers, to put it better, this moment the Spirit is reminding us, make no distinction because of what Christ has done, because of who he is.

Make no distinction. I want to make a couple observations from the initial reaction right there, beginning at verse 24. Look at verse 24 of chapter 10.

[22 : 20] On the following day, they entered Caesarea. So Peter now, after the group from Cornelius' place, stays with him a day. The next day they get up to leave, to go back to Caesarea.

They go to Caesarea, verse 24. Following day, they enter Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them. Look at this. And had called together his relatives and close friends.

Observation number one. Cornelius has already put together an evangelistic event, and he's not even saved. He doesn't even, he doesn't know the message.

I'm sure he knows it's going to be good. Something's good is going to come of it, but he's already in, like, got Peter's coming. What is he going to say? I have no idea. Observation number two.

Peter understands that the messenger is not to be confused with the object of the message. When Peter enters, Cornelius seeks to worship him, and Peter understands that the message that he brings, namely the object of the message, he's not to be equated with that.

[23 : 33] And oftentimes, just a footnote here, what prevents us from seeking to share the good news is, I think, because we have too high of a regard for our own selves, when literally the role that we're playing is a mere messenger.

Our responsibility is to get the message right. Everything else is left up to God, as we're going to see in this particular instance. Our responsibility is to be faithful and trust God with the fruit.

Peter doesn't want Cornelius to make that mistake. No, no, no, don't worship me. I'm just a messenger. And with that being said, the third observation that I made, look at verses 28 and 29.

Those are just awkward to me. Look at how they read. And Peter comes in. He tells him, don't worship me. I, too, am just a man.

Look at the Spirit's work in Peter's life, attributing full manhood to Gentile Cornelius now, especially given that history.

[24 : 43] That's what the power of God does in your life. But look at verse 28 and 29. I consider that these are just Peter moments. I don't know what else to do with them. 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. And the reason why that probably doesn't feel uncomfortable to us is because we're a bit familiar with the Jew-Gentile tension.

We understand that Peter has had this divine experience and he's just recounting what he's heard. But think about that for a second. You show up to a person's house who's of a people group that you have had a very low regard for, less than human, and you show up and say, okay, before we get started, just know that I really shouldn't be here.

But God has taught me something. What? It just comes off as offensive, right?

But it's just a Peter moment. But we're getting a rehearsal again of that fundamental truth, aren't we? That God has done this in Peter's life.

[25 : 59] There was this history of tension. Peter readily acknowledges that. So why do you have me here? Cornelius is going to go on to recount his experience again, as it were.

I'm going to jump for a second to Peter's message, beginning at verse 34 of chapter 10. 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. These things are laced all throughout this message, no partiality.

Every nation, he is Lord of all. Look at that statement in verse 36. Peter has now understood now that the truth that he has just learned is integrated into the gospel, isn't it?

It's an implication of the gospel message. They're tied together. That the gospel as he's understood it now has this wonderful truth that hovers over it.

[27 : 11] That Jesus is, he's Lord of all. So it would rightly make sense that the gospel ought to be commended to all. And he gives them this wonderful gospel review.

And friend, if you're not a Christian in here this morning, this particular section is very much so tailored for you that there is one true and living God.

And he has created all that exists out of the overflow of his perfections. His crown of his creation, humanity, he created us all in his image, that we literally bear the divine image.

But we understand that even though God has created us all with no partiality, that God has, as it were, created all the individuals of all the nations, something has gone terribly wrong.

Verse 43 recognizes that in the way that Peter's message ends, something has gone wrong, namely this issue of sins. We have literally lived as though we were spiritual orphans when we really had a father who loves us and who desires us to obey him and live for his glory.

[28 : 28] But even though we were created in the image of God, that image has been marred and tainted, we have fallen. We continually fall short of his glory. And because of that, God would be right and just in condemning us because of his holiness, because of his goodness, because of his justice, demands a response, a dealing with our sins.

But in his great grace, he sent Jesus. Look at what Peter says about Jesus, beginning at verse 37. You yourself know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism that John proclaimed, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with 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. Yes, they did. That on the cross, the father treated the son, to put it personally, as if he lived my life.

And by placing your faith in the son, the father turns around and treats you as if you lived Jesus's life. He credits his life to your account.

[29 : 45] This is very much so a righteousness issue, because we all have sin. The question is, is our sin forgiven? Is it covered under the personal work of Christ?

If you're not a believer in here this morning, I commend Christ to you today. What an appropriate passage that blows any human distinctions out of the water.

I don't care who you are, where you come from, what you've done. But the gospel of grace can reach down to even you. This is what all of us who profess Christ in here believe.

If you're not a Christian, I encourage you to talk to one of us about what it means to follow Jesus before you leave this morning. So Peter got this new revelation, shows up, preaches this gospel message, and as he is talking, what happens?

The spirit just falls. That's what every preacher in here would want to happen. That's what Greg wants to happen. That's what I want to happen. As he's preaching, spirit falls.

[30 : 56] He can't even finish. Tongues going everywhere. We wouldn't necessarily know what to do with that, but let them roll. Cornelius gets saved. Cornelius gets saved.

Can you imagine Peter now at this point like, ugh, great. I knew something like this was going to happen. Cornelius gets saved.

And the same thing that happened, and this is why God is so amazing, the same thing that happened to Peter and his boys in Acts 2 happens to Cornelius. So if there's anything in Peter at this moment that's coming up to say, this can't be, the same thing happened.

So Peter's having flashbacks of his proclamation of Joel 2, right? And on that day, the spirit of the Lord shall fall upon all flesh. He's like, oh, this is all flesh. Cornelius gets saved.

The same manifestation of the spirit took place, and because of the miraculous and evident nature of God saving Cornelius, baptism is what ought follow.

[32 : 11] The same reasoning that we saw in Greg's sermon from chapter 8 with the Ethiopian eunuch. Well, after that takes place, why would you deny them baptism?

It just follows. It's the outward expression of the inward reality that has taken place. Verse 48, he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and they asked Peter to remain for some days.

And he does. I think the text is suggesting that. He does. One who has regarded Gentiles previously as less than human, perhaps dogs, now staying with them, rubbing shoulders with them.

And Peter did this before, even as his presence at the Tanner's house, right, makes clear. Greg walked through how horrible of an experience that would have been.

So now Peter has to go back to his boys, according to the flesh, to his fellow Jewish brothers.

[33 : 17] And of course, criticism awaits, doesn't it? When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party, circumcision party, isn't that a phrase? That just conjures up all kinds of unhelpful things in our contemporary culture.

A circumcision party. Criticized him, saying, you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them. Peter's having nothing of it, is he?

He walks through again. He walks through and recounts what took place. And literally, this is where he lands. If you have a problem with it, take it up with God. God is the one who has done this.

God is the one who saves. And that certainly is the truth, isn't it? God is the one who initiates, re-respond to what God has done. God has done this, Peter says.

Take it up with God. A few final thoughts that I think tie some things up. Number one, the conversion of Cornelius is more than a mere turning point in the book of Acts.

[34 : 28] We understand this as a hinge passage where Gentile evangelism, Paul's ministry is going to pick up soon after. We understand this as a turning point.

But it's also a very important precedent. And ought to be an encouraging one for those of us who profess Christ in here today, those of us who are ourselves Gentiles.

That Cornelius' conversion, in addition to all of the other New Testament passages that affirm this reality, Romans 1, that not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of salvation to the Jew first and also the Greek.

All those other passages, in addition now to this, gives weight and legitimacy to our salvation experience, doesn't it? If there's ever a moment where you're doubting, wait, is God really doing this?

Is this really for me? Can I really receive this? This text speaks and says, God sent Peter to Cornelius. Remember that God sent Peter to Cornelius.

[35 : 37] Not just for those of us who profess and are alive, but loved ones who have passed on. Be encouraged by the fact that God sent Peter to Cornelius. Number two, our country is in a whirlwind right now over issues of race and ethnicity.

Reconciliation has become like a buzzword, and I hate buzzwords. I've even been asked by several online entities to write articles about the gospel and racial reconciliation, and I really don't want to.

Not because it's not important, but because so much has already been written. So much has already been said. Some things terrible, but some really good stuff has been said too.

And there comes a certain point that after you write and say, and after even you protest, and those things are all good. But at the end of the day, the question falls back on you.

Are you going to be reconciled to people as you are reconciled to God? This isn't a message calling you to cross the Atlantic.

[36 : 52] To give a footnote there, perhaps God is calling some of you to cross the Atlantic. And he uses messages like these for the people of God to stir up appetites, giftings, that perhaps maybe he is preparing you to be a Peter for a Cornelius somewhere else.

This isn't a message calling you particularly to cross the Atlantic, but it is calling you to cross the street. It is calling you to peek over the cubicle at work to the individual who works with you but does not look like you or doesn't share the same background.

It is calling you to, in the classroom, turn to the one sitting next to you who perhaps doesn't have the language of origin that you do, perhaps doesn't share the same worldview that you do.

This message is calling you to enter their narrative, to get to know them, to hear their stories, and to share your story.

And then perhaps God would open a door for you to share a metanarrative that attaches to all of our narratives. And understand that this is risky work, isn't it?

[38 : 19] This is hard work. And hard work is typically heart work. All of us have our preferences and things that we like, and it is so easy and tempting to think that becoming a Christian or God's plan of what it looks like to be a Christian is to look just like me.

That's the easy temptation, right? What it means to be a Christian, whatever your particular preferences are, attach those to the gospel so that I don't have to shift that much.

You know, God wants all Christians to be, I don't know, gluten-free or whatever your preference is, right? And thankfully, Peter is mighty in this particular passage, but we understand that the process of sanctification doesn't just look like an upward straight line, does it?

It's kind of a jagged line that proceeds progressively upward because there is this moment in Galatians 2 where Peter has kind of a backslide experience. Peter, who's gotten this revelation here that expresses it confidently here in Galatians chapter 2, we're told by Paul that there was this instance after this moment where Peter is sitting down with some Gentiles, acting Gentilish, eating the Julia Bacon cheeseburger, listening to Lecrae, and he's enjoying the freedom that he has in Christ, but then some Jews walk up and then he pulls back.

He puts the burger down, turns the music off, and he acts like, he plays the hypocrite and acts like, no, the right way to be saved is to actually become like the Jew.

[40 : 10] That's the better way to be saved. And Paul says, I would stand Peter face to face. Paul says, I had to deal with that right there on the spot. Peter, can you get up for a second?

Everybody look at Peter. Paul confronts him right there. He says, wait, wait, first, wait, wait, wait. Peter, we've already been here.

He says, your behavior is not in keeping with the gospel, that you are walking in a manner contrary to the gospel. And he confronts him right there. Peter has even his backsliding moment.

And I want us to hear that because as we take the risk to invite people in our homes who don't look like us, to go to lunch with people who don't look like us, who don't share the same background, it's risky.

You're probably going to say something stupid. Think back to what Peter said. Well, as you know, I'm not supposed to be here, but God has shared with me.

[41 : 10] Something's going to happen and it's going to be uncomfortable, but if we are going to truly be the people of God, transformed by the gospel, we have to go here. You have to go there.

And whatever your sphere of influence looks like, you can't come to a passage like this and leave out of here the same way. I'm convinced and convicted that if you are wrestling with issues like these in relation to a particular person, particular people group, understand that God's grace gives power to overcome that.

And know this, that you yourself, cannot become all that God has called you to be without overcoming that. And that's where even my heart is often tempted.

Well, I can just mature in faith and I'll, you know, I'll deal with that at glorification. No, you will not be sanctified in the way that God wants you to be sanctified unless you go here.

Meaning, let's bring it down to even more particular way that until you form that relationship, with another brother or sister, whether they be a brother or sister in Christ or not, until you go there, you have not yet learned all that God has called you to learn.

[42 : 35] Until you go there, you certainly cannot claim to have been conformed to the image of Christ to the degree that he wants you to be conformed. Your spiritual maturity hangs in the balance and perhaps someone else's salvation hangs in the balance.

The church has the message that not only reconciles man to man, but the church has been entrusted with the message that reconciles God to man, which is the prerequisite for man truly being reconciled to man.

This is something that you're not going to get from the world. This is a truth that the church has been entrusted with, that all breaks in relationships are stemmed from our break with God.

And until that relationship is restored, every other relationship on this level is going to be pseudo at best. So share, promiscuously share.

I love redeeming that word. Share promiscuously. Show no partiality. Understand that we're all image bearers, but God in his grace has reconciled a people.

[43 : 56] Look at back at verse 35 of chapter 10 and we'll end on this point. God has reconciled a people in every nation. In other words, there are people like Cornelius in every nation.

Revelation tells us that on that day, there will be around the throne people from every tongue, tribe, and nation. Far from commending anything that would suggest color blindness, God wants us to be love struck.

We have this model here with Peter and Cornelius. Let's pray. Father, there is so much that you have for us in this passage.

Lord, I pray that this truth that is rehearsed all throughout this section, that you are a God who shows no partiality. partiality. You are a God who has created all in your image, that you, by your grace, and because of the work of your Son and the power of the Spirit, redeemed people from every nation.

So, Father, we are thankful this morning that because of the gospel of grace, distinctions like the Jew-Gentile distinction, the wall of separation has been torn down so that both Jews and Gentiles are now a part of this one new man that you are forming.

[45 : 37] Father, thank you for reminding us of that this morning. And, Father, I pray that we do not simply hear a message like this and disregard it and walk away from your word forgetting what we saw.

But, Father, I pray that we are hearers and doers, that you would embolden us to risk, that we would form friendships that perhaps we never intended or expected to form, that we would get over ourselves.

And, Father, recognizing that this world is beautiful, beautifully colored. Lord. And, Father, you have, by your grace, allowed us to be in proximity to one another, to be in relationship to one another, to reflect over the glory of the gospel with one another.

Father, this is what we do now as a church. And, Father, one day we will do it eternally. Father, I pray that our practice is more in line with what that day will look like.

We ask all these things in Christ's name, by the power of your spirit, to the glory of you, the Father. Amen. Amen.