

The Gospel Moves to the Gentiles

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Text: Acts 9:32-11:18

I. Jesus has Power Over Sickness and Death (9:32-43)

9:32-35 A Paralytic healed

- Jesus heals Aeneas, an 8 yr paralytic in Lydda.
- This is a mirror image of Jesus healing the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12.
- The result: many “turned to the Lord” – v.35.

9:36-43 Tabitha Raised from the Dead

- Jesus, through Peter, brings Tabitha back to life.
- This is a mirror image of Jesus healing Talitha in Mark 5:41.
- The result: “many believed in the Lord” – v.42.

Jesus is Power

- Jesus has power over sickness and death.
- This demonstration of power enabled people to believe!
- These miracles were done to show the power of God, to build hope, faith and belief.
- He is power!
- Though there is evil in this world, there is One more powerful than evil, and He is at work.
- I believe God wants to build our faith – faith in Him, in His power, in His ability to change realities.

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” – Hebrews 11:1

- The paralytic was undoubtedly tempted to think that his circumstances would never change. But God broke through and made Him well.
- Let us put our hope and faith once again in the Lord.
- Let us lift our drooping heads and weary hands and look to the One who can do all this morning.

II. Jesus's Death and Resurrection Offers Salvation to All (10:1-48)

10:1-8 Cornelius and the Angel of the Lord

- Though Cornelius had a sort of reverence for God and was generous and prayed, he still did not have justifying faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- He needed to hear the gospel preached by Peter.
- What's significant here is God's pursuit of the Gentiles.
- God sent an angel to Cornelius, so that he would send for Peter, so that Peter could come and preach the gospel to Cornelius so that Cornelius and his household could repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ!
- So in response to the angel's message, he sends men to go retrieve Peter to bring him to his house.

10:9-16 – Peter's Vision

- God gave Peter a vision related to the dietary laws.
- One reason God sent this vision was to communicate that the ceremonial laws of the Old Covenant were being repealed.
- God had given laws to Israel related to the eating and not-eating of certain types of foods and animals.
- God had commanded that they keep these laws, so obeying these dietary laws under the Old Covenant was very important to a Jewish person.
- In fact, Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego had been willing to put their life on the line because they would not eat the king's food or bow to the king's image.
- God had given these ceremonial laws to remind the people of Israel that He is holy and that He expects holiness of His people.
- So they were forbidden to eat certain kinds of food – because by eating them, they would be considered ceremonially unclean.
- But now, at the dawn of a New Covenant God was making with His people, those former restrictions were passing away. Christ had come!
- Ceremonial laws were going away because all who are found in Christ are made clean forever!
- Now not just Jews, but people from every nation, tribe and tongue could be washed clean by the blood of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.
- Christ offered a once-for-all cleansing sacrifice and now the gospel was going to the Gentiles.

- The gospel was breaking down the barriers and building a new people for God! God was on the move!
- If the gospel had not come to the Gentiles, like you and me, we would still be lost in our sins, under penalty of death.
- This was the point of Peter's vision: The food laws are fulfilled and completed in Christ and the good news of forgiveness of sin is being proclaimed not just to the Jews but to the whole world!

10:17-33 – Peter goes to Cornelius's house

- While Peter was receiving and thinking about this vision, the men who traveled from Cornelius's house arrived, seeking him.
- And v.19 tells us that the Spirit of God spoke to Peter to go with them, without hesitation.
- So Peter greets them and hospitably puts them up for the night.
- The next day they depart for Cornelius's house, and they arrive the following day to find Cornelius and his family assembled in one place, with guests and friends with them, ready to hear Peter's message.
- Peter opens his mouth and preaches the gospel.

10:34-43 Peter Proclaims the Gospel

- Peter proclaims that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism, that He has power over sin and the devil and that He died on the cross for sin.
- He also proclaims that God raised Him on the third day, thus defeating sin and death once for all and that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ receives forgiveness of sins through His name.
- God has commissioned all His people to proclaim this message to the world – “In Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
- Church, let us declare the gospel!

10:44-48 The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles

- While Peter was preaching, the Holy Spirit of God was active in the hearts of Cornelius and his family and their friends and they believed in Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit fell on them and granted them repentance and faith in Jesus name.
- And in the same way that the Spirit came to the disciples in Acts 2, so the Spirit came to these Gentile believers.
 - They were speaking in tongues.
 - They were praising their Lord.

- Their mouths were declaring the greatness of God.
- Remember, the work of the Holy Spirit is to shine the spotlight on Jesus.
- The Spirit loves to glorify the Son.
- Jesus said of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in John 14:6 “He will glorify me.”
- That’s what the Holy Spirit is come to do – to glorify Christ and to make Him real to us.
- And as Peter was preaching the gospel to these Gentiles, the Holy Spirit was actively opening their hearts to see the beauty and worth of Christ and His offer of the forgiveness of their sins.
- And so the Holy Spirit’s coming and falling on the Gentiles was not only an evidence of salvation having come to them personally but for the Jewish believers to see – the Good News is now not just for Israel, but for people from every nation.
- The gospel broke down those dividing walls which once were there!
- Peter commanded them to be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ.

III. Jesus is Building His International Church (Acts 11:1-18)!

Acts 11:1-18 Skepticism and Faith

- Upon hearing about Peter’s actions and interaction with Gentiles, the circumcision party – meaning Jews who were holding onto Old Covenantal practices, like dietary laws and circumcision – opposed and criticized Peter for his involvement with these Gentiles.
- But Peter refuted their claim and helped them see how God had opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles. And Peter affirmed to them that God had showed him that Peter should go to them, making no distinction – v.12.
- They glorified God, now realizing that God had granted “repentance that leads to life” – v.18.
- This work of God is the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis!
- Praise be to God He is a promise-keeping God.
- Back in Genesis, when God called Abraham to Himself, He made a promise to Abraham.
- What was that promise?
- That through “your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” Genesis 22:18 and now we are seeing the very fulfillment of that promise.
- For as Jesus came from the bloodline of Abraham, and as Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice for sin, that message of the gospel was going forth to Jews and non-Jews alike – to every nation and tribe and tongue in the world.
- So in Acts 10-11 we are seeing the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham back in Genesis 22!

- And by this grace, we also are here today!

Application:

1. God is in charge of all history – and He still acts in His sovereign power!

- He turns things as He will, for His glory.
- We are people of real hope!
- We have every reason for hope – because God is in charge.
- At the moment we're about to be discouraged about the bleak outlook of the future, He loves to break in and change the course of history.
- Let us believe Him, trust Him, have faith in Him!

2. God's intention is that the gospel is proclaimed to ALL people

- God is not a respecter of persons – He promises forgiveness of sin to anyone who will repent.
- I hope there isn't anyone we would consider unworthy, but at times it can grip us all.
- People who have treated us poorly.
- People who are unlike us – different from us.
- People who make us uncomfortable!
- The gospel sends us towards them.
- He loves all, and so should we!
- Our love of God makes us eager to share with anyone who is in need!

3. He still pursues people, even those that seem most unlikely

- Ultimately, it was God who pursued Cornelius.
- No one is outside the reach of the gospel.
- Not Saul the persecutor of the church.
- Not Cornelius, a Gentile who was once hated by the Jews.
- No one is outside of His reach, especially those we think are the farthest from Him.

Conclusion

- We have every reason to hope today, because our hope is in Almighty God!
- We watch, we wait, we expectantly hope because He is ruling and reigning on His throne.

- He takes situations that look dire and He changes things around.
 - He can do this in an instant.
 - He doesn't wait for our permission or approval.
 - There is nothing He cannot do.
 - There is no one whose life He cannot change.
- He can change an individual, He can change an entire family, He can change the world.
- Do you have hope today?
- Do you know the forgiveness of your sins?
- Trust in Jesus, who paid the penalty for your sins.
- He will grant you forgiveness, complete and total.
- Trust Him!
- Let us go with the proclamation of the gospel.
- Let us, dear saints, be so filled with the hope of God this Christmas season that we will be like a Peter who goes to a Cornelius with the Good News!

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Take a few minutes to look over and review the text together (Acts 9:32-11:18), summarizing the main events in the narrative .
- Read the notes from point #1 in the Recap above. How can these stories, of the paralytic healed and Tabitha being raised to life be a real encouragement to us and strengthen our faith?
- What is the significance of Peter's vision (10:9-16)? How does Christ fulfill the Old Testament dietary laws?
- When Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius and his house, this is the first time the gospel went forth to Gentiles. Read Genesis 12:1-3. How does this event begin to fulfill God's promise to Abraham?
- Read the three Application section at the end of the Recap. Which of those three points of application particularly encourages you?
- Consider taking time to pray, for the gospel's continued advance in our world. Pray also for opportunities to share Christ this Christmas season with those who don't know Him.