

Hello everyone. It was quite a week at the church. A pipe froze and broke, flooding the carpet but fortunately, it went down the elevator shaft which is where the sump pump is. Our trouble shooter, Danny Miller, got it cleaned up and taken care of and we had worship as normal. It was a little cooler than normal but we had no heat at all on Sat. which is when we found the trouble. we stil need new faucets for the upstairs bathrooms and the carpet cleaned, but we should be good to go. Praise the Lord Patty and Faith went over to clean the church Sat. morning.

My dad is home now from the nursing home. Please keep him in your prayers as he makes adjustments and lives on his own for the 1st time.

This cold weather extended Faith's Christmas break. School was canceled 2-3 days last week and ran on delays the other days. Today looks like things are back to normal. Hope you all have a great week! God bless you!

Pastor Don

“When God’s Plan Comes Together” Acts 10:34-43 1-12-14

A man is not complete until he is married -- then he is finished. Everything has a beginning and an end. We don’t always like how things end do we? Some times they don’t end like we want them do; how we planned them out. Life is a gift to us from God. It comes with instructions and a plan; do we follow them?

The early 1980’s had a TV show called the “A team”. It was an action show that I always thought was a blue collar version of the 60’s series “Mission Impossible”. Every good TV show has a tag line. In Mission Impossible, they started very episode with the leader getting a tape that said “your mission should you choose to accept it” and ended with “this tape will self destruct in 5 seconds”. The A-team’s tag line was "I love it when a plan comes together". It is neat to watch a plan come together just like it was designed to do and accomplish what it was designed to accomplish. Acts Chapter 10 shows us God’s plan coming together. Do we love it when God’s plan comes together? What plans have we seen Him accomplish in our lives? What plan is He working on now in our life? Have we accepted our mission? Do we know that with God, nothing is impossible? –Pray

Today's text begins with Peter at Cornelius' house, preaching the gospel to all who will listen. So how did Peter, a Jew, get to the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, and get to preach the gospel to them? That is God's plan coming together.

We meet Cornelius in Acts 10:1. The author tells us that he is a devout man who fears God, prays and gives generously. This respected Roman Centurion, leader of 100 Roman soldiers, has a vision of an angel of God visiting him. The angel told him that his prayers had been heard. He told Cornelius to send men to Joppa and bring Simon Peter to his house and he would tell Cornelius what he must do. So Cornelius sent two household servants and a devout soldier to Joppa, which is roughly 30 miles south of Caesarea, the town where Cornelius was living. These 3 men found Peter living next to the sea, at the house of Simon the tanner, just exactly as the angel had said.

Vs. 9-16 tell us that God was working on Peter in preparation for this trip. The 1st way God was breaking down so Peter would be a successful witness to the Gentiles was that he was living in the house of a tanner; a man who made his living taking hides off dead animals and turning them into leather. Jews were not to touch dead animals. Being a tanner was not an acceptable job to the Jewish person. Taking hides from dead animals and turning them into usable leather was not only hard, smelly work, it was considered unclean by the Jews. By staying at Simon's house by the sea, Peter was beginning to tear down barriers between Jewish and non-Jewish believers. Then God gave Peter a vision.

While waiting for lunch to be prepared, Peter went up on the roof to take a nap. We could say that since he was hungry, he dreamed about food, but in reality, it was God working on him and teaching him a lesson about equality in God's eyes. Peter saw a sheet coming down to him from heaven filled with all kinds of animals. And a voice said arise Peter, kill and eat. He responded that it was unlawful to eat unclean animals. Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 give us the definition of clean and unclean animals. Then Peter hears a voice answer with these words; "What God has cleansed you must not call common." This vision and conversation is why it is alright today for Christians to eat basically what ever we want. It did away with the law restricting believer's diets.

This vision telling Peter that what was cleansed we must not call common was to prepare Peter for his trip to Cornelius' house. For no sooner than the vision was gone did the 3 men sent from Cornelius arrive and ask to see Peter. He met them, listened to them and agreed to go with them. The 3 men ate with Peter and spent the night at Simon the Tanner's house. Then in the morning, they, Peter and 6 other believers from Joppa set out for Caesarea and the house of Cornelius. Why did Peter take 6 fellow believers? Simply for help or so they could be witnesses? No, 7 is the number of completeness and spiritual perfection. The number 7 is found over 700 times in the Bible. God created the heavens and the earth in 6 days rested on the 7th, completing the 1st week of time. On the 7th day, the children of Israel marched around the city of Jericho 7 times, gave a shout when the trumpets blew and the walls of the city fell down flat. Gen. 6:9 says "*Noah was a*

just man and perfect in his generations". This is the 7th time Noah's name is mentioned in scripture. The number 7 is important. Peter took 6 men for a reason.

When Cornelius met Peter for the 1st time, Cornelius fell down at Peter's feet. But Peter lifted him up and said "stand up; for I myself am also a man." As they talked Peter said to Cornelius (vs. 28-29) "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. ²⁹ Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?" Cornelius then told Peter of his experience with God's angel (V.32-33) "Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you." ³³ So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God." This brings us to today's text (v34)

"Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵ But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." Peter is telling us that God's word and salvation is available to any and all who will believe it. The word accepted means that those who willingly accept or believe God's word are marked by favorable manifestations of God's blessings upon them. Any and all are free to choose Christ for themselves. People of all nations are searching for something; Jesus is what they are searching for. Simply seeking God is not enough; one must accept God once they find Him. How can they find Him if no one will help them?

Helping others find Christ is our job. Cornelius sent for Peter; who is sending for us?

Our mission, should we accept it, is to help people find Jesus. Jesus instructed His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." We are all called to share Jesus with people. We don't need lengthy sermons with big, flowery words. Peter gives us an example here of good witnessing. He simply tells what he knows. He tells them 1st of all that Jesus is Lord of all and that peace only comes through Him. He begins with Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist. At His baptism, God anointed Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus went all over Judea, Samaria and Galilee "doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." Then Peter reminds his listeners that he and the other disciples were eye witnesses to these things.

^{v 39} "And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem." Peter and the other disciples saw many, many miracles. They shared those miracles with others. Do we share the miracles we have witnessed with others?

Next he tells of Christ's sacrifice for the sin of mankind. "Whom they killed by hanging on a tree." Peter is using poetic language here to tell of Christ's crucifixion. The word tree represents the cross. Our main message to people searching for Jesus needs to be the cross. 1 Cor 1:23 "but

we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness". Jesus is the only way any person's sins can be forgiven. Hebrews 9:22 "without shedding of blood there is no remission". Only Christ's blood will atone for mans sin. Jesus is the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. John the Baptist said that when he saw Jesus coming to him for baptism. Jesus was born to die for our sins; He did that. Then God resurrected Him. Christ's resurrection proves He is our savior. If God did not resurrect Him, that would have meant that His sacrifice was not sufficient for our sins, but since He has been resurrected, God's will has been fulfilled and now heaven is open to all who will receive it.

Peter continues with v ⁴⁰ "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, ⁴¹ 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." On Easter evening, the disciples saw Jesus. Mary saw Him outside the tomb on Easter morning. Lots of witnesses saw the resurrected Jesus. He is alive! We serve a risen savior who is in the world today! We know that He is living no matter what men may say. You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart. Does He live in your heart too? Then we must tell others; Christians can not keep Jesus to themselves, we must share Him.

V⁴² "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins." Here Peter is speaking of the afore mentioned Great Commission Matthew 28:19-20. It is the believers' job to tell. That is all we can do; we can't make anyone else believe. The hearer has 2 choices; they either believe or they don't. In order to receive the remission of sins one must believe. That is all that there is to it; simple faith in Jesus. Eph. 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast." Eternal life is all about faith and grace. We are saved by our faith in the blood of Jesus to wash a way our sins. God has grace, unmerited favor, mercy if you will, upon those who believe in His Son. Therefore, who ever believes in Him will receive remission of sins. Acts 4:12 tells us that "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Jesus is the only way to salvation. Salvation is a free gift from God to any one and every one who will receive it. It is a gift, which means it must be received. Have we received the gift of eternal life?

The biggest barrier to the spreading of the gospel in the 1st century was the Jewish-Gentile conflict. God put a plan together to over come prejudice. His plan is the universal love of all believers. Proverbs 10:12 "*Hatred stirs up strife; but love covers all sins.*" Jesus said in John 13:35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Peter's dream is part of God's plan coming together. Do we have Gentiles in our lives that we don't want to witness to?

Paul tells us in Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." Jesus is for everyone. He loves everyone. Our mission as His ambassador is to take His image, reflection and light to everyone we come into contact with and share Him with them. Are we willing to do that?

Peter left his comfort zone and allowed God's plan to come together in his life. Are we willing to let God's plan come together in our lives?

Vs. 44-48 tells us that the sermon was successful; everyone received the Holy Spirit. Peter had them all baptized and stayed a few days with them.

Do we celebrate and glorify God for each sinner that comes to repentance? Repentance means to be sorry for your sins and turn away from them. It means to change your mind; your way of thinking and acting. True repentance leads to eternal life.

When we repent and become a believer, we join the family of God. The church is made up of believers with all sorts of backgrounds and histories. Yet we are all one family. Ephesians 4:5 tells us we have 1 LORD 1 faith 1 baptism. We must overcome all of our prejudices and bias if we are to truly love each other.

Prejudice blinds us to the truth. A high school science teacher had his class over one night to study a planet and its moon through a telescope.

The class was told where to look and what to look for. The first several students all said they saw it and it was quite a sight. Finally one student said he did not see anything. The teacher told him to adjust the focus. The student did but still could not see anything. Finally the teacher looked through the telescope. Then with a strange look upon his face he examined the telescope carefully and noticed that he had forgotten to take off the lens cap. The first few students saw in their minds what they were told they would see. That is what prejudice does; it tells us what to see. God tells us to try and see people's hearts. What are we focusing on when we look at our fellow Christians?

God can and will use anyone who believes in Him and will obey Him. Faith & obedience are God's only requirements for becoming a Christian. He doesn't care what our name is, how much money we have, what talents we possess, where we live or what we look like. All He cares about is do we love Him? So, do we love Him?

God has a purpose and a plan for everyone. Do we love it when God's plan for our lives comes together? Do we accept those whom God has declared to be clean?

Do we rejoice when a sinner comes to repentance? Do we pray for lost souls?

Are we willing to help young believers grow in their faith?

God accepts everyone, aren't we glad He does?

Let us thank God that he does accept Gentiles. Let us thank God that he accepts us just as we are; sinners with out one plea except that His blood was shed for me.

Hallelujah! Amen! Pray.