

ACTS 10:9-48

Peter's Vision and the Gentile Pentecost

Memory Verse

"Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

Acts 10:47

Real-life Problems

Rejection—All of us at some point have or will experience rejection. This can come in a variety of ways: Perhaps you didn't get into your dream school, you didn't make the team you tried out for, or a relationship that means a lot to you has turned sour. Tense relationships, disappointments, and rejection are aspects of this fallen world we'll have to deal with until Jesus returns or we go to heaven.

The Good News

The good news of the gospel is that no matter how much rejection you may face from the world, if you believe in Jesus, you'll never be rejected by Him. Those for whom Jesus died will never be plucked out of His hand (Jn 10:28). Jesus, the King of the universe, will never reject us, whether the world does or not.

I. Introduction

OPENING QUESTIONS

Idea #1: Where do you feel most at home? At your house? On a basketball court or somewhere similar?

Idea #2: Have you ever tried out for a team and not made it? What did that feel like? What about when you make the team?

Idea #3: Do you have any secret handshakes or inside jokes with your friends? Do you like those elements of your friendships? Why or why not?

PRAY

Open your time together in prayer.

REHEARSING THE GOSPEL

What does gospel mean?

Good news

What's the good news?

Jesus died for my sins

Why did He die for your sins?

So that I can have abundant life in relationship with Him now and forever

What is grace?

God's undeserved love for sinners

REVIEW

1) Who wrote the book of Acts?

Luke wrote Acts as a history of the earliest days of the church.

2) Who was the original audience of this book?

The original audience of Luke, narrowly speaking, is Theophilus. More broadly, though, Luke has written Acts with elements that appeal to both Jew and Greek, so the ultimate audience appears to be any Christian from any ethnicity.

3) Why was the book of Acts written?

The book of Acts was written to record the works of God in the early church.

What's going on?

REMIND

Last week we learned that God is faithful to us and cares for us, even in the midst of fear and difficulty.

TODAY WE'LL LEARN

- 1) About God's plan for every nation.
- 2) How God works providentially through His people.
- 3) About the Gentiles receiving God's Spirit.

Read

Read **Acts 10:1-48** aloud in your group.

II. Questions for Discussion

A. WHAT?

1) Where does Peter go (and why) in Acts 10:9 and following?

Peter goes up on a housetop at the sixth hour (around noon) to pray.

2) What does Peter see in his vision (vv. 11-12)? What does God say to Peter in his vision (vv. 13-15)?

He sees the heavens open, a sheet descend, and in the sheet were "all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air." God tells him to arise, kill, and eat. Peter is concerned about eating things that are unclean or common, but Peter hears a voice say, "What God has made clean, do not call common."

3) Who is Peter directed to see (v. 22)? Who directs him (vv. 19-20)?

Peter is directed by the Holy Spirit to go down and meet Cornelius and his men.

4) How does Cornelius greet Peter (v. 25)? What is Peter's response to Cornelius (v. 26)?

Cornelius greets Peter by falling on the ground and kneeling at his feet. Peter responds by telling him to get up, for Peter is only a man.

5) In verse 29, Peter notes that he came to Cornelius "without objection." Why does he do that?

Verse 28 records Peter saying that "God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean."

6) In verses 34-43, Peter shares the gospel with Cornelius and the Gentiles with him. How does he end his speech?

By telling them that Jesus is the one to whom "all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

7) Why are the Jews who are with Peter amazed in verse 45?

They are amazed because the Holy Spirit is being poured out *even* on the Gentiles, not just the Jews.

B. SO WHAT?

1) Why do you think the episode where the Spirit says to Peter that he must rise, kill, and eat is important?

This signals the end of the ceremonial law for God's people. In the Old Testament strict regulations governed what Jew could eat, do, wear, and even the people with whom they could associate. Here, God is removing those ceremonial restrictions from his people because those regulations pointed to Christ. Even those simple laws were laws God's people couldn't keep perfectly. However, Christ could and did keep them perfectly to fulfill the holiness requirements that God's people couldn't fulfill themselves.

2) Why is it significant that Peter doesn't accept the worship of Cornelius?

This is a great scene. It shows us a bit about how Jews in the first century viewed God. Peter, a Jew, would not even fathom accepting Cornelius' worship because he wasn't God. That being said, Jesus certainly accepts the worship of the disciples (Mt 14:33), because Jesus is God in the flesh.

3) Why do you think the "Gentile Pentecost" of chapter 10 is notable?

If you remember, the first Pentecost, the one that the church celebrates even these days, occurs in chapter 2. The fact that the very same thing that happened to the Jews is now happening to the Gentiles here, along with the developments mentioned in Acts 10:11-15, show us that God has now brought even Gentiles into the community of His people.

Do You Think I Love You That Little?

Adjust to your experience.

When I was in my teens, I remember a season when I had a string of bad failures. I wrecked our family's cars (one right into the other), I failed some tests, and I was playing my chosen sport very poorly. I felt like I couldn't do anything right. That season sent me into a really somber mood for quite a few weeks. One day, my father asked me what was wrong, and I broke down—I told him that I felt like everything I did was wrong, and even when I tried to do things well I missed spots. I remember telling him, "I just want to know that you still love me." His next words were, "Do you think I love you that little, that wrecking our cars and failing a test or two would make me love you less?"

Similarly, we might feel like we're in the midst of seasons where we can't do anything right, where we feel like we always fall short and disappoint the Lord. It's true, we might be (and probably are), falling short. In those situations, we should seek help from the people God has placed in our lives. In addition, we must be assured that the Lord Jesus died to cover our sins and bring us to Himself—and He won't allow anything to snatch us out of His hands, according to John 10:28.

4) Why do you think the Jews were amazed at the Spirit falling on the Gentiles?

For the entirety of Israel's history, the Jews have been God's chosen people. For someone from another nation to enter into God's community, they essentially had to become Jewish. Now, the benefits the Jews received at the beginning of the book of Acts are falling on the Gentiles as well, which shows that God's kingdom is broadening.

5) Why does Luke note in verse 44 that the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the Word?

What Luke is telling us is that God's work is never divorced from God's Word. Just as God's works in the past are faithfully recorded in His Word, the Bible, God's Word is always attached to the work God does in a person's heart to bring them from death to life in Him. As Paul says in Romans 10:17, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

C. NOW WHAT?

1) Do you think Cornelius is a good example of faith for us to look to? Why or why not?

In almost every way, Cornelius is a good example of faith for us. He sends men for Peter at God's prompting, he hosts Peter, he listens to his preaching, and he takes him very seriously (unlike the witnesses of the first Pentecost who assume the Jewish believers are drunk). His faith is confirmed by the Holy Spirit being poured out on him and those who are with him. The only thing that's out of balance for Cornelius is that he dropped down to worship Peter

when only God is worthy of our worship. We should keep this in mind—even for the most faithful among us, the temptation will always exist to worship things that aren't God in God's place. Whether it's a subtle mistake like Cornelius' seems to be, or whether it's a pattern of sin we allow ourselves to be caught up in, we must be vigilant to resist elevating anything or anyone to God's level.

2) Throughout this passage, God is the main actor. He is the one who directs people, who brings things to pass, who pours Himself out on His people. What does this tell you about who God is?

Answers may vary. It should tell us that all the events that come to pass are in an ultimate sense ordained by God. God is the one who will accomplish His purpose ultimately, and while we are called to be faithful and play our role, it is God who will bring His plans to fruition, with or without our work. This should take a lot of pressure off of us because God is the one working through us to accomplish what He wants to accomplish. We don't have to work our way into our own salvation—God has made that happen for us. We don't need to work ourselves to the bone to accomplish what we believe are God's plans—He will bring them to pass, usually by using us as He used Peter, by directing our steps, and by offering us everyday opportunities to be faithful to Him.

3) How does God's inclusion of the Gentiles encourage you in your relationship with the Lord?

Again, answers may vary, but leaders should be looking for something like the following: God included the Gentiles into His covenant through the work of His Son and of His own free will. If you believe in Jesus, He's included *you* of His own free will. You haven't earned your status before God; it has been given to you. Just as non-Jews didn't earn their way into God's covenant—and thus can never have it taken away—if you've truly repented and believed in the gospel, that itself is a gift of God (2 Tim 2:25) that will never be taken away (Eph 1:14). No matter what rejection you face in this life, you will never be rejected by the one who loves you enough to have died for you.

Main takeaway

Just as God brought Gentiles into His family never to be removed, so, too—if you repent and believe the gospel—has He brought you into his family never to be removed.

III. Closing

REMEMBERING THE GOOD NEWS

The good news of the gospel is that no matter how much rejection you may face from the world, if you believe in Jesus, you'll never be rejected by Him. Those for whom Jesus died will never be plucked out of His hand (Jn 10:28). Jesus, the King of the universe, will never reject us, whether the world does or not.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Lord, thank You for drawing us to Yourself and into Your family. Encourage us with the assurance that our status before You is not in doubt, and spur us on to live and walk with You. Amen.

Supporting Resources

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1) When did something happen that made you feel rejected?
- 2) How did you deal with that rejection? What made you feel better?
- 3) Honestly answer: In your heart of hearts, do you believe Jesus will reject you one day? Why or why not? If your answer is yes, read John 10:28.

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- 1) How have you dealt with rejection in your life?
- 2) Can you think of a time when rejection actually turned out for your good?
- 3) Do you find comfort in the fact that, if you believe in Jesus, the Lord will never reject you? Why or why not?