

The Good News is ... Acts 10: 34-43

Outline adapted from "Salvation Top Ten Series" by Rich Dunbar @ Sermon Central.Com

The California Zephyr with its two powerful General Electric P42 Locomotives was making the 51½ hour trip across scenic America from Chicago to San Francisco, when somewhere in Nebraska, one of the engines broke down. The engineer thought "*No problem, we can still make it to Denver and get a replacement engine there;*" so the train rolled on at half power. But a little bit further down the rails (if you didn't guess by now), the other engine also broke down, and the train coasted to a standstill in the middle of nowhere.

Needing to inform the passengers about why the train had stopped, and always trying to look on the bright side of things, the engineer made the following announcement: "*Ladies and Gentlemen, I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that both engines have failed, and we will be sitting here for a while until additional engines can be brought out to us. The good news is that **you didn't take this trip in a plane!***"

The world is so full of bad news these days, don't you wish you had some really good news that you could share around? You do!



If you are a Christian, you have the very best news which in fact you have been ordered to share with anyone who will listen: that Jesus Christ has provided and freely offers salvation to all who will receive it. And that is exactly the News

that Peter is sharing with Cornelius in our scripture

lesson today – that is after God reminded him that this Good News about Jesus Christ was truly for ALL People.

You see Peter's initial hesitancy with sharing this Good News, whether or not he would admit it, was that he was prejudiced. Certainly he had heard Jesus say, *when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw **ALL** people to myself.*' (John 12:32). And he had also heard Jesus say that one day, *people will come from east and west, from north and south, to sit at table and eat in the kingdom of God.* (Luke 13:29). And yes, he had been there on the mountain to hear Jesus command for him to go, disciple, baptize and teach **ALL THE NATIONS** everything that he had learned from Jesus. (Matthew 28:19).

Yet ten-years after that mountaintop commissioning, even though the herald angels announcing Jesus' birth had said that this **good news of great joy would be for ALL people** (Luke 2:10-11), Peter still thought that the word "ALL people" only meant "ALL Jewish people" – in other words only his kind of people.

Well, yes, there were the Samaritans – but then they were at least half Jewish. And there was also the Ethiopian but he came from a people who also worshiped the God of the Hebrews. But as far as Gentiles in general, and especially the occupying Roman military, I am sure that Peter just didn't think they would be interested; I mean why stir up trouble by trying to witness to a soldier with a weapon.

Besides there were also kosher rules forbidding Jews from socializing with or ever entering the home of a Gentile, who because of their idol worshipping were

considered “unclean,” “untouchable;” nobody that a good religious Jew should be caught associating with.

That is, until Jesus reminded Peter – through the vision of a sheet filled with animals – that there was no such class of humans that God considered “untouchable.”

And then by the Holy Spirit, ordering Peter to go with that Roman soldier and two servants, currently standing at his front door, to the house of Cornelius where a large group of Gentiles had assembled to hear *ALL that the Lord had commanded Peter to say* (Acts 10:33).

Talk about a command performance. But at least you can see the light bulb coming on in Peter’s head, he finally gets it, when Jesus had commanded his disciples to bring this Good News to all people, he truly had meant ALL people even those Peter would never have even considered talking to, “*even Gentiles.*” And so Peter finally begins to speak.

“I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.
Acts 10:34,35

I am sure that Peter spoke for a lot longer and said a lot more than was recorded here in these 9 verses in Acts, but thankfully Luke has provided us with a 10-point outline of the essential historic facts behind Jesus’ ability to offer salvation to whoever asks it of him. And here are the first five points:

The Good News is ...

1. For everyone v. 34-35
2. From God v. 36
3. Through Jesus v. 36
4. Evidenced by the Spirit v. 38
5. Witnessed by the apostles v. 39

Let’s look at these together.

1. The Good News is for everyone v. 34-35 – Jesus is “Lord of all” As Peter has just learned, God truly shows no partiality but will accept ALL who turn to Him. And with this introduction, we learn that all along God had intended to bring ALL nations into his family. That is why He told Abraham that one day ALL nations would be blessed through him.

Yes, the Hebrew nation had been originally singled out specifically to serve as priests of God, to bear witness to this Good News to the rest of the world. But somewhere along the way they had forgotten their mission and had begun to think of salvation as their exclusive privilege. Nevertheless, God’s plan continued forward. And in the fullness time – according to God’s plan - Jesus came into our world and this joyous Good News which just could not be contained in the exclusively Jewish community finally – beginning with Cornelius – broke out into the rest of the world.

Very quickly after Cornelius, we will read, that in spite of continuing Jewish prejudice even resistance, of large groups of Gentiles coming into the faith. And then we will learn of Paul & Barnabas’ mission trips dedicated

specifically towards bringing the Good News to the entire world regardless of race or culture or social status. And when you think about this, it is not too surprising, that it was mostly those considered untouchable, unworthy of attention by the upper classes of society, who most joyously received this Good News of freedom and forgiveness offered to them by Jesus: slaves, itinerant merchants, trades people, those living in the underside of Greco/Roman Culture.

2. So this Good News is for EVERYONE and Secondly, this Good News comes directly from God: v. 36 – God is the one who initiated this reconciliation between Himself and mankind. While this message did first come to Israel, **Jesus was always meant to be “Lord of All.”** *So, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.* (Galatians 4:4-5). After that it was just a matter of time until Jewish converts to this new understanding of their faith lived up to their original commission and took the Good News out to the rest of the world.

3. The Good News while always meant for the whole world, it is nevertheless offered exclusively through Jesus v. 36 – Jesus is not only Lord of all, he is the only Lord of all. The only one who can offer God’s peace to those who receive it. As Peter boldly proclaimed soon after Pentecost: ***there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.*** (Acts 4:12). Had he thought more deeply about what he had been saying back then, Peter should have

realized that he could not keep the Gospel exclusively within Jewish confines. Because, from the moment John the Baptizer proclaimed Jesus as *the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.* There was no way that this Good News could be contained, exclusively offered to just a select group of people.

4. So this Good News has always been for EVERYONE, but it is only through Jesus as evidenced by the Spirit v. 38 – The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus’ ministry in the flesh just as He empowers us to continue that ministry today. Peter testified that Jesus *after being anointed by the Holy Spirit went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.* At the end of his life, even as the disciples still continued to struggle with understanding that Jesus and the God the Father were one and the same, Jesus pointed back to the works they had witnessed him doing as proof of his relationship with God. And at the same time, he promised that the same Holy Spirit empowered works that they had witnessed him doing, they too could do through the same empowering Spirit who would soon also be dwelling within them (John 14:11-12).

5. The Good News was witnessed by the apostles v. 39 – As Peter would later assure his readers, *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty.* (2 Peter 1:16). The apostles saw firsthand the things which Jesus did up to and including His death and resurrection.

Now in our turn, we can be witnesses to great things as well by giving testimony to the way Jesus has changed our lives and the lives of those around us because of His death and resurrection.

Let's take a look at the next five points

The Good News is ...

- 6. Provided through crucifixion v. 39
- 7. Proved in resurrection v. 40
- 8. Preached by believers v. 42
- 9. The standard by which all will be judged v. 42
- 10. The only way to receive forgiveness v. 43

6. The Good News is Provided through crucifixion v. 39 – Our salvation was made available through Christ's death on the cross for our sin. Through the ancient law of substitutionary atonement, Jesus was able to offer his life in exchange for ours, in payment for our guilt.

*now that we have been justified by his blood,
we will be saved through him from the wrath of God
Romans 5:9*

As our Bible declares it was *while we were yet sinners, yet enemies towards God, that's when Christ proved his love by dying for us ... Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God (Romans 5: 8-9)*

7. So, while this Good News was provided by Jesus death, it was Proved in resurrection v. 40 – While the work for salvation was finished on the cross, the proof that it was really finished was given in Jesus' resurrection. Death held no power over Jesus, and he has promised us the same, that those who are in Christ will also rise again to eternal life. Such assurance prompted the Apostle John to boldly declare, ***Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life*** (1 John 5.12). It is the resurrection of Jesus, as witnessed and testified by his Apostles that gives us assurance and hope.

8. But the Good News must be spread by believers v. 42 –

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead
Acts 10:42

Most people don't realize it, but the reason why Jesus spent 3-years gathering and training his disciples, is because they originally, and then we who have followed them, have been commanded to proclaim this Good news to all people. The last thing Jesus said was *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have*

commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”(Mt.28:18-20).

It is good that Peter finally realized that Christ meant ALL nations and opened his mouth to shares this Good News with Cornelius, or else we wouldn't be here. But the same commandment also applies to us. We are still ordered out into our world with the Good News; baptizing, discipling, and teaching the next generation all that we have been taught about Jesus. Just like those chain letters you used to get in the mail, but now by email, we have been charged to not “break the chain” or in this case the next generation may pay a terrible price.

Let me explain.

Most of us wouldn't be here today, were it not for the witness of a Boston Sunday School teacher named Everett Kimbal. One day an unaccompanied teenager showed up in his small Sunday School Class in this small down town Boston Church. After Church the boy walked home alone, but Mr. Kimball felt in his heart that he had to approach the lad about his faith in Christ. The boy worked as a sales clerk in his uncles shoe store. After praying about the matter, Kimball arranged to visit him at the store. In his own words Kimball said, *“I was determined, “to speak to him about Christ and about his soul, and started down to Holton's boot store. When I was nearly there I began to wonder whether I ought to go in just then during business hours. I thought my call might embarrass the boy, and that when I*

*went away the other clerks would ask who I was, and taunt him with my efforts in trying to make him a good boy. In the meantime I had passed the store, and, discovering this, I determined to make a dash for it, and have it over at once. I found him in the back part of the building wrapping up shoes. I went up to him at once, and putting my hand on his shoulder, I made what I felt afterwards was a very weak plea for Christ. I don't know just what words I used. I simply told him of Christ's love for him, and the love Christ wanted in return. That was all there was. It seemed the young man was just ready for the light that then broke upon him, and there in the back of that store in Boston, **D. L. Moody** gave himself and his life to Christ.”*

Of Course DL Moody went on to be the greatest evangelist of the 19th Century, leading as many as a million people to faith in Christ. One of them being a young man from Richmond Virginia, named **J. Wilbur Chapman**. His family had always wanted him to become a minister, but not until Chapman attended one of Moody's evangelistic meeting did he become serious about his faith. He then went on to become Presbyterian pastor and later an evangelist himself.

One of the people who came to the Lord as a result of Chapman's preaching was a Presbyterian Elder named **William Ashley “Billy” Sunday** who went on to become one of the greatest evangelists especially among the working classes of the early 20th Century.

One of those who attended Billy Sunday's revival meetings was another young man named **Mordecai Ham**, who then went on to become an Independent Baptist evangelist. And it was at one of Rev. Ham's Tent revivals that a young man from Charlotte N.C. named **Billy Graham** gave his heart to the Lord.

To this day, countless millions of people have come to faith in Jesus Christ, because a Boston Sunday School teacher, courageously followed the Spirit's lead to speak to a young sales clerk about his need for Jesus in his life.

So, whether as pastor or evangelist, Sunday School teacher or simply church member, we have all been given this ministry of reconciliation, we have all been left here to be ambassadors for Christ, and to invite ALL people to be reconciled to Christ and who knows where the next person we lead to Christ will take their faith. (2 Corinthians 5: 18-20).

EVERYONE who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."
Acts 10:43

9. Because the Good News is the standard by which ALL will be judged v. 42 – God has given Jesus the role as final arbiter of our eternal state based on how we have responded to this message of the gospel. As John's account declares

God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. John 3:17-18

10. Accepting the Good News offered to us by Jesus, is the only way any of us will receive forgiveness. This my friends is the fantastic Good News of Jesus also known as "the Gospel." Not by any works of righteousness which we have done, but only by trusting in God's mercy as actuated by Christ's death on the cross have we, or anyone else ever been saved. The Gospel is the message of God's power to save all who come to Him by faith...For this reason, *those who would be righteous must live by faith* (Romans 1:16-17).

This is the same Gospel as explained by Peter to Cornelius so long ago; it is still the same message we carry today. For Peter it took a vision and a day's march into the unknown to finally learn the truth that when God declared His offer of salvation to the whole world, He truly meant everyone, even those whom Peter, and we still might wrongly consider unworthy, or uninterested, or untouchable.

What do you think? Buddhists, Muslims, Black Muslims, robbers, murderers, prostitutes and pimps, gay singles, gay couples, everyone in the entire LGBTQ community, and yes even our still unbelieving Jewish friends ... how will they ever hear the Good News of God's love for even them if we are unwilling to share it.

This then is our take home for today: The Gospel is the Good News of God's saving love, provided through Jesus Christ for ALL who will receive it. And this is the same message which has been entrusted with us to share with all who will receive it.

For God so loved the world that He sent us his only son....

What are you willing to do, where are you willing to go for the love of God?

Poor Peter didn't even get the get to give his alter call, before all those unworthy, uncircumcised, Gentiles joyously accepted Christ as their savior, were filled with the Holy Spirit and had their own day of Pentecost.

I am not going to make the same mistake, if you have never personally asked Jesus Christ to be your savior... what are you waiting for? The Gospel is the best news you are ever going to hear, but it does have a time limit. As Paul wrote in his letter to the Hebrews, *just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those [all those] who are eagerly waiting for him.* (Hebrew 9:27-28).

Friends this is great news: believe it, receive it, then share it!

Lets pray about this.