

Acts 10:34-49 NIV

“What a military officer needed to hear”

“Then Peter began to speak: ‘I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.

He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us

who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.’

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles.⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said,⁴⁷ ‘Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.’

⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.’”

A respected friend invited me to a meeting on what he said was an important subject.

When several of his guests assembled, he went to a chalkboard and began writing stats relating to income.

Within moments, it became evident that the meeting centered on making extra money by selling Amway products.

As I recall, I excused myself early.

Today’s text tells of folks like us being invited to a meeting in the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius in ancient Caesarea, Israel.

Was money a worry in the first century? Sure.

In the sixties, Nero devalued Roman coins by decreasing their silver content.

Was society in turmoil then?

Roman farmers suffered repeated crop shortages leading to famines during the reign of Emperor Claudius (41-54 AD).

Claudius also expelled all Jews from Rome.

Was crime a problem?

Jesus’ Good Samaritan parable illustrated the danger of traveling alone back then.



In the fifties of the first century, groups of assassins known as *sicarii* (dagger-men) slipped into crowds and killed people sympathetic to the Romans.

Life was uncertain then, too.

Captain Cornelius didn’t invite his friends and loved ones to discuss life’s woes and challenges.

Peter didn’t talk about government corruption, vengeance, earning extra cash, or stashing food.

Peter’s talk centered on something more vital than inflation, safety, or food shortages.

God has Good News about guilt and death and He wanted Cornelius and all people to hear it.

As you see, Peter centered on these positive facts:

“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and . . . he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree*, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen . . .” * The cross was probably two crude tree branches.

“He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name (Jesus).””

You know how modern society has rejected belief in our Creator.

If life is accidental, it has little purpose beyond keeping us happy for the moment.

Folks make their own rules.

“It depends on what is is.”

Everyone is his/her own god, which is about where American society is now.

And death obliterates everything.

God created life and created us to serve Him and to love one another.

Though we failed him, he gave us a chance for new life in Christ.

Jesus obeyed God, paid for our mistakes and came back from death.



God wants His church to tell of Jesus’ life; his resurrection; his power to raise all people from their graves, and account to him for their lives.

That’s the Gospel—the Good News.

Through his resurrection, Jesus defeated death! God assigned us the task of telling these facts.

Few churches mention resurrection now except at Easter time in spring.

The New Testament Church celebrated Jesus’ resurrection every Sunday, if not every day.

They didn’t need an annual special day.

About a hundred years after Jesus’ ascension, churchmen decided that one day should commemorate the resurrection.

That it coincided with spring pagan fertility rites made it convenient to “convert” pagans.

In fact, guy named Victor, a Bishop of Rome about 190 AD said: those not keeping the Roman practice should be excommunicated.

That’s the preferred treatment of many religious folks who find people who disagree with them.

Excommunicate them—banish the buggers!

A day the Apostles celebrated at least once a week, if not every day, churches now observe once a year—with an altered emphasis.

Making sense of this is more difficult than the challenge two Irish youngsters faced one day.

They passed a Methodist minister. Seeing the reversed collar, the little boy said automatically, **“Hello Father.”** The other child sharply elbowed the first. **“He’s no father,”** she said, **“He’s married and got two kids.”**

We clarify rumors by speaking to eyewitnesses.

Peter witnessed Jesus’ resurrection.

And in the home of this military officer, Peter used some phrases that cut to the heart.

How we respond to what Peter said reveals how Jesus’ has affected us.

1. Here’s the first key phrase: God accepts people, “from every nation who fear him and do what is right.”

Is doing the right thing important to you?

In 1947, Harry Truman wrote to his sister:



“The President is...a glorified public relations man who spends his time flattering, kissing and kicking people to get them to do what they are supposed to do anyway,” *The Ultimate Reference Book*, p. 238.

What motivates you to do the right thing?

Does flattery, kissing, or kicking work best?

Well, it depends on who is doing the flattery, kicking, or kissing.

Is doing what’s right important to you?

Peter said that God accepts people “from every nation who fear him and do what is right.”

Some of us are interested in the benefits of religion, but we aren’t ready to do the right.

Unless we are ready to do that, nothing can help us; not even God.

2. Here’s the second: “the good news of peace.”

Is that what you really want?

- **Peace of mind when you try to sleep at night?**
 - **Peace with your spouse and children?**
- **Peace with your neighbors?**
 - **Are we ready to do the right thing?**
 - **And do we really want peace?**

Here’s a third penetrating issue.

**3. Peter spoke of being released from,
“the power of the devil.”**

**Would you say that you are in charge of your
life or do evil forces possess you?**

News headlines alarm us about powerful forces
trying to take control of the world.

Are these serious threats?

I’m not trying to discount them, minimize
them, or make light of them.

But there are more immediate threats than
powerful extremists with world ambitions.

Think of these evil forces that possess folks:

- **Jack Daniels and his allies**
 - **Las Vegas and their fellow
bandits, one armed and otherwise.**
- **Pornography whether in magazines,
on the computer, or big screen.**
 - Anger that rages out-of-control bringing
physical and mental abuse to families.
- **Inability to control credit card spending.**
 - **Nagging, aching guilt.**
 - Shuddering, trembling death-terror.



Greed is an ever-spreading pandemic.

The devil captivates millions of folks in these
ways and only Jesus can save them.

Back to Peter’s sermon at Cornelius’s house.

Peter probably said, “I hung with Jesus a long
time and saw things no ordinary person can do.

He healed people that no one expected to live.

He yelled at a violent storm and it stopped.

“Lazarus had been dead four days and was
decaying, but Jesus called him from his grave.”

“Later, the others and I saw Jesus beaten
unmercifully; they drove nails through his hands.”

“We watched him die. You know what he said?

It was ‘Father, forgive my killers. They don’t
know what they’re doing.’”

“I saw a soldier run a spear through his side.”

I think Peter said the following, too:

“It’s true that not everyone saw him alive after
his resurrection. Mary from Magdala saw him
first. We thought she was out of her mind.”

But Peter said “I saw him.”

“All eleven apostles saw him alive.”

“Thomas wouldn’t believe until he touched Jesus’ scars. But once he did, he never doubted again.”
“We ate with Jesus; he even baked fish for us.”
“Jesus appeared to five hundred of us at once.”

“I know how much Jesus challenged me to change; I needed a lot of work.”

“When the authorities took Jesus to the high priest’s mansion, I was so scared I swore that I didn’t know him. Three times I swore.”

“But now I know that on the cross Jesus forgave me of that and all my other failures.”

“Jesus forgives all who believe in him and publicly join him in baptism.”

“My mission now: **Tell everyone I meet about this forgiveness—how good God is.**

And tell how Jesus defeated death.”

“Jesus’ resurrection changed my life.

“He gave me purpose I never had before.

And I’m not afraid anymore.

He makes things so much better with my family.

It changed the other apostles, too.”

“Two of my fellow apostles, James and John, had temper problems.”

“They were real hotheads.”

“Because of Christ, they are loving, patient, and compassionate.”



Believing in Jesus’ resurrection and accepting him changes even hardened people.

It did in Peter’s time. It still does.

Has he changed your life?

Have Jesus’ death, his resurrection, and his return to judge all people changed you?

“He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead...

Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

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