

Acts 10:34 “Telling the Good News of peace”

Acts 10:34-43 NIV

“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.’”

As Jesus bluntly told Satan: people don’t live just on food; we live by every word God speaks to us.¹

All God’s words are necessary.

We long for harmony.

Today’s text gives urgent info about attaining peace.

Yet few folks comply with the complete counsel of God’s words.

From our neglect, war, factions, and hate result.

By God’s Holy Spirit, Dr. Luke carefully wrote this Acts text.

¹ Matthew 4:4

Despite Luke's thorough account, folks still miss its meaning.

This passage resembles an old uncle whom everyone thinks antiquated, but discovers later they should have listened to the old guy.

Our text tells about discrimination, but doesn't tell the usual prejudice story.

It pivots to a part not often told.

Acts ten turns many presumptions topsy-turvy.

When you see the real perspective, I think you'll agree on the Bible's importance.

Following God's word resolves divisive hate.

Today's lesson confirms God's wisdom.

Charles Dickens wrote *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Acts ten and eleven tell a tale of three cities.

Refer to the attached **My Notes** at the end of this sermon for **Map 1** and the **aerial photo of Caesarea**.

In the first century BC, King Herod built Caesarea as a city for his pleasure and convenience naming it after Caesar.

Acts ten introduces us to Captain Cornelius, a first century Roman military officer from Italy on assignment in Caesarea.

The religion of the Jews made sense to Cornelius likely because Jews believed in only one God as opposed to the numerous gods many Romans worshipped.

He probably also found God's instructions in Scripture insightful.

In the Bible, our Creator gave us humans easy-to-follow owner's manual directions.

Capt. Cornelius and family prayed to God and they helped many poor Jewish folks.

But Cornelius never underwent all the Jewish rites, so most Jews considered him a Gentile.

Now we include another vital detail.

Jesus and all twelve apostles were Jews.

Though after his resurrection, Jesus told the disciples to teach all nations, for about ten years, they preached only to Jews.

For a decade, many Christians observed Jewish rites and attended synagogue services on the Sabbath or seventh day.

On the first day of the week (recalling Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection), they gathered to break bread as one in Christ.

As Cornelius prayed one day, an angel told him: “your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. ⁵ Now dispatch *some* men to Joppa and send for a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter; ⁶ he is staying with a tanner *named* Simon, whose house is by the sea.’

“⁷ When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants, ⁸ and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.”²

Cornelius sent a devout soldier and two of his servants 39 miles south to find Peter at Simon the Tanner’s house in Joppa (Map 1).

Joppa (or Jaffa) was an old port city where Jonah boarded a ship headed for Spain.

Norma and I visited Joppa in 1980 and I took the photo of “Simon the Tanner’s house.”³

Some brief comments about Simon’s place.

- As you know, deceitful people make lots of money off of gullible tourists.

² Acts 10:4-8 NASB

³ Refer to the [My Notes](#) attachment.

The Simon the Tanner’s House picture illustrates my point.

For almost three hundred years after Jesus, Christianity was illegal in the Roman Empire. Numerous wars destroyed many landmarks.

Very few items or sites can be positively identified now.

The arches shown in this photo are likely from Crusader times (1000-1100 AD).

“Der Gerber” is German for tanner meaning that some German tourists are gullible, too.

- **2) That Peter stayed at Simon’s house tells us something about the apostle.**

A tanner’s house was reverse of five-star-rated.

Because of the unpleasant odors associated with the trade, tanners were among the lowest class of citizens in Israel.⁴

Peter might have enjoyed a great view of the Mediterranean, but the stench would have been unbearable.

The next day near noon, as Cornelius’s men approached; Peter was hungry and went to the housetop while lunch was prepared.

⁴ See the *Mishnah*, Ketuboth 6:10

Peter, too, had a vision, but not the sort of dream a good Jew wanted.

Mosaic Law forbade Jews to eat many animals, including snakes, lizards, crocodiles, horses, and pigs.

Imagine dreaming of the very best snakes for snake steak, the finest crocodiles for croc ribs, etc., presented on a big white sheet.

A voice said, “Arise, Peter, kill and eat.”

Peter declined, “Lord I don’t eat such things. I keep the kosher laws. I’ve always been kosher.”

The Lord stated to Peter, “What I have cleansed, don’t call unclean.”

Peter dreamt the same three times.

After the third time, Cornelius’s men arrived and asked for Peter.

When Peter carefully questioned the men about their mission, they explained why Captain Cornelius sent them.

Peter invited them to come in and stay the night.

He really made himself at home, didn’t he?

Next day, Peter went to Caesarea with them escorted by several believers from Joppa.

Upon their arrival, the following took place: **“Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.**

“²⁶ When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁷ But Peter raised him up, saying, ‘Stand up; I too am just a man.’

No one but the Lord should allow another to kneel before him/her.

“²⁸ As he (Peter) talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. ²⁹ And he said to them, ‘You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. ³⁰ That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me.’”⁵

⁵ Acts 10:25-30 & 34 NASB

Cornelius explained the Lord's response to his prayer:

34 “So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

35 Peter replied:

“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.”

This passage shows the importance of every word of God.

It's dangerous to neglect or distort any of God's words.

Some religious folks claim that: “God loves you and accepts you just the way you are.”

As you see, this passage doesn't say that.

God accepts those: “**from every nation who fear him and do what is right.**”

If you've forgotten the distinctions between right and wrong, you should probably reread 1 Corinthians 6 and Galatians 5.

God clearly doesn't pick favorites.

The word favoritism is related to the Greek word for face.⁶

Israel's judges weren't to show bias in favor of good looking people, their social status, color, or on the basis of their money: “**You shall not show partiality in judgment.**”⁷

Jesus' half-brother Jude condemned favoritism in the early church:

“These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others (look on and praise *beautiful or wealthy faces*) for their own advantage.”⁸

Literally, God does not choose faces.

He does not want us showing favoritism.

Every believer is a servant of God making us all part of the same class.⁹

Consider some facts about the early church:

- Many slaves accepted Christ.
- Many slave owners accepted Christ.

⁶ James 2:1 uses a similar word for favoritism.

⁷ Dt. 1:17 NIV The Greek Septuagint uses the same word for favoritism .

⁸ Jude 16 (NIV):

⁹ See Luke 17:7-10

- Tall people accepted Christ.
- Short people accepted Christ.
- Average sized people accepted Christ.
- Many Jews accepted Jesus as Christ.
- Numerous Gentiles accepted Christ.
- People of all colors and nations accepted Christ.

Regardless of their life-status, all joined the same servant class in Christ.

At their Lord's Supper gatherings, all God's servants ate from the same loaf of bread and drank from the same cup.

As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:

“¹⁶ Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

¹⁷ Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.”

In Christ, none of us has any more status than another before God.

Whether we wear fine robes, rags, Good Will specials or Salvation Army handouts, in Christ we remain servants.

We all share in the same loaf-the body of Christ.

Imagine rich, middle income, and poor all sitting at the same dinner table.

We come in all colors, speak different languages, widely range in education and in worldly social status yet eat the same food.

All are only servants.

That means we have no right to criticize or judge our fellow servants.

To Roman Christian who criticized one another, Paul wrote: **“Who are you to judge someone else's servant?”¹⁰**

On the basis of their birth, looks, or wealth, God is no respecter of persons.

We gain His favor by faith in Christ, and try to conform to Christ's way by acting right, and loving others.

God intended that Jesus' church be comprised that way.

¹⁰ Romans 14:4

When we recognize that truth and live that truth, keeping all His word, the Lord puts us on the path to harmony and concord.

There's no other way to find peace.

“God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. The message God sent to the people of Israel, tells the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.”

Jesus is Lord; all believing human beings are merely his humble servants.

The most common way Jesus' Apostles and church leaders referred to themselves was as *servants*.¹¹

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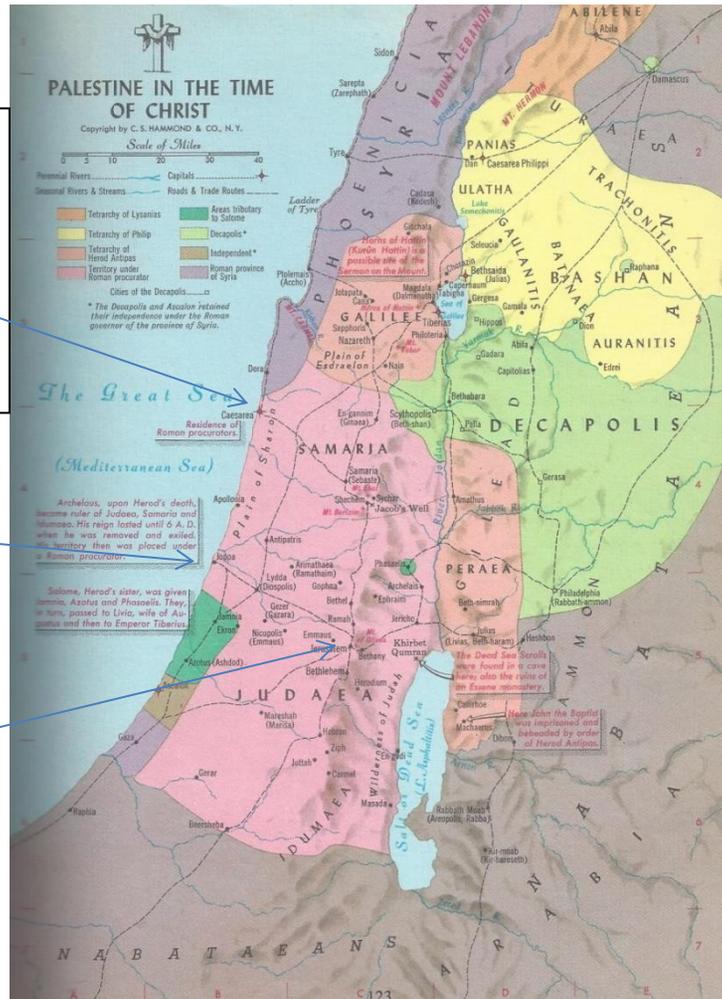
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¹¹ See Romans 1, James 1:1, 2 Peter 1, Jude 1.

My Notes

Acts 10 Telling Good News of Peace Map 1 from *Baker's Bible Atlas*

Palestine in Jesus' time



Caesarea, where Cornelius was based. He and his family worshiped God as Jews wish poor people, but he had not fully undergone Jewish rite of circumcision.

Joppa, where Peter was staying with Simon the tanner.

Jerusalem, where Christ's church began on the Jewish feast day Pentecost.

“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.”

Deuteronomy 1:17 NIV

“You shall not show partiality in judgment.”

Acts 10:34-43 NIV

As he prayed, an angel told Cornelius: “Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. 5 Now dispatch *some* men to Joppa and send for a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter; 6 he is staying with a tanner *named* Simon, whose house is by the sea.”

“ 7 When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants, 8 and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.”

Acts 10:4-7 NASB



Above, stock photo of Joppa (Jaffa)



Right, 1980 photo by Bob of place advertised as Simon, the Tanner’s house

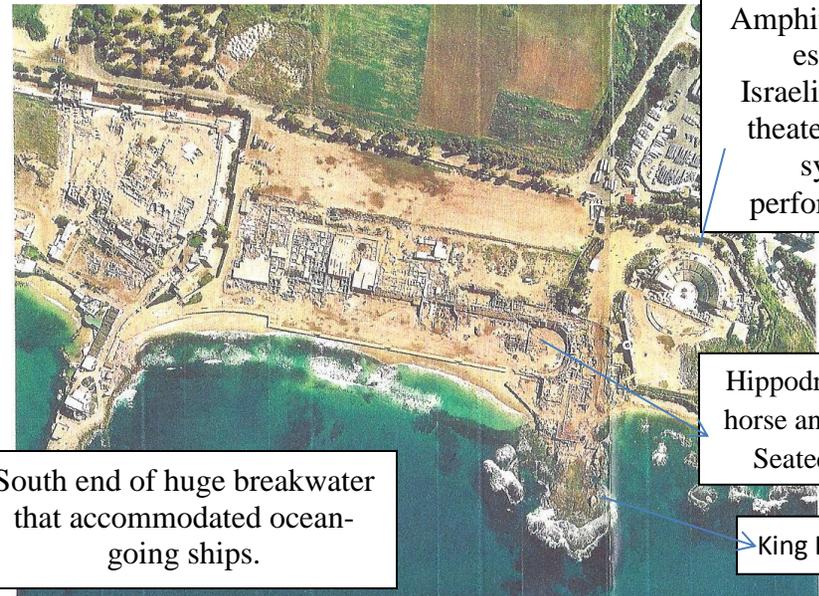
Acts 10:25-30 & 34 NASB

“Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.”

26 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped *him*. 27 But Peter raised him up, saying, ‘Stand up; I too am *just* a man.’

28 As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. 29 And he said to them, ‘You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and *yet* God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. 30 That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me.’

“So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”



Amphitheater seating est. 15,000. Israelis still use this theater for outdoor symphony performances, etc.

Hippodrome (circus) for horse and chariot racing. Seated about 5,000.

South end of huge breakwater that accommodated ocean-going ships.

King Herod’s Palace

Aerial photo of Caesarea, Sept/Oct 2004 **Biblical Archaeology Review**. Some scholars term it “Herod’s fun city” because so much of it was dedicated to pleasure, by King Herod, a vassal of Caesar. Cornelius (Acts 10, 11) was a Roman centurion in this city about 40 AD. In about 62 AD, Paul was imprisoned here.

1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17 “Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.”