



Amazing Conversions – Part 10

Cornelius: The Life Changing Message

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Well, I trust that Pastor Elliott took good care of you last weekend when I was gone. He motivated your prayer life I trust from that sermon in Colossians Chapter 4. His generosity and sacrifice in coming to preach here allowed me to go and preach at a conference they had postponed from last year out in Tennessee and was able to preach five times there representing our church and you and God's word. So I'm happy to report now that I'm back, that it went well. It doesn't always go well, just so you know, when I'm gone preaching elsewhere. Like the time I was preaching at a Christian executive's conference. They asked me and it wasn't five times, I just had one slot in this conference and it happened to be at the Ritz-Carlton of all places, which I'm not used to going to. It is kind of a frou-frou highfalutine, Pastor Mike find your tie and put it on kind of event.

And so I went there and like places like the Ritz-Carlton there was no self-parking. So you kind of get shooed into the line for the valet, which I wasn't really prepared for and whatever. They're good at it, they greet you, they open the door and I felt kind of shooed out of my own car a little bit flustered. But I grabbed my Bible. I grabbed my notes folder for the sermon, and I grabbed it all and straightened the knot on my tie and walked through the entrance of the Ritz-Carlton. Then I figured out where it was, all the signs, went down into the ballroom. In the ballroom they immediately met me. I met some, you know, luminaries and did a little chit-chat, that was nerve-wracking enough. And then they took me to the very front row where they had the speaker participants of the conference up there.

So I sat there waiting my turn and they sang some worship songs. And we were a couple of worship songs in in this conference, and the handler leans over and says, "OK, you'll be up right after this song." So I'm, you know, the whole time trying not to peek at my notes because I don't want to give anyone the impression I'm not prepared for this. But when he said that I couldn't help, I was already a little nervous about this crowd. I mean, people I'd seen around the country on TV and there they were. So I had to kind of sneak a peek at my notes. And so I cracked open my little leather-covered note folder and opened it up and there it was. Nothing. I didn't have any notes in the folder.

You might think this is a nightmare that I'm just reciting to you, but this happened in real life. It is the recurring nightmare of pastors, you know, we wake up in a cold sweat like in a crowd somewhere and then they hand us the microphone and say, "Go," and we're not ready. We're not prepared. And there is really no worse feeling than the spotlight and the microphone and like someone holding you up on a platform and having you're supposed to be saying something important at this point and not having, you know, not being ready. That is the most horrible feeling. You better go to those situations prepared.

We've been studying Acts Chapter 10, and it's been a lot to get to the punch line. We've reached the zenith of the text where we're going to have Peter share the gospel with Cornelius. So much of this text with 29 verses preceding where we're at today was all about



preparation. It's all about the prep that God was doing to get Peter ready to do this and getting Cornelius ready to have this encounter. Now I know this was a monumental encounter, and this is one of the reasons we explained last time why it took so long to get here because this is a, you know, Jewish apostle sharing the gospel with a Roman centurion and talking about the ends of the earth. What a monumental layer to break that the gospel was going to this representative, a very powerful representative of the Gentile nation. It's all about Gentile inclusion. And so Peter needed to be ready.

And I can sympathize that while we are not engaged in probably a conversation about Christ this week with someone who is on the magnitude of Gentile inclusion in the book of Acts, every encounter you have with a non-Christian about the gospel feels monumental, does it not? I mean, that's when your heart starts to beat a little bit more when the conversation turns to religion or the Bible, the afterlife and Christ, and you know, this is a go time. I got to talk about the things we learn about in church, the things I read in my Bible. It's time for me to talk right now. And there's nothing worse than when the topic comes up and you are like, it's like your turn to talk and not being prepared. I mean, it's that horrible feeling.

And so I want us to get in the sandals of Peter. After all this preparation, we reached like the climax of this passage where here he's going to share the gospel to say, I want to make sure I'm as prepared as Peter was. So I know the setting is different. The environment is different. The focus of our, you know, evangelistic concerns are somewhat different. But sharing the gospel is that sweaty palm nervous need kind of discussion that all of us need to make sure we're thoroughly prepared for. So I'm going to try to get through, if we can, verses 30 through 48 herein Acts Chapter 10. And because we're a Bible church, I want you to open up your Bibles, whether it's electronic or printed on the page and look at these verses with me. Let's just go through this a section at a time and try to get ourselves as prepared as we can be. Because you do not want to be in a conversation on Tuesday afternoon when you know the gospel conversation is teed up and you're the one who is supposed to kick this through the field goal and the goalposts, and you're not ready. You need to get ready. Church is about being equipped and prepared. So Christian, I want to get you ready for the next conversation about Christ with a non-Christian as best we can from this text.

Let's start in verse 30 as we're picked up in the middle of this scene. We've got Cornelius now under the same roof as Peter because Peter has been brought to Caesarea where all these Romans are running around in Caesarea Maritime where the Roman soldiers are stationed. And it's go-time. It's time to talk about the gospel. But first in verse 30, Cornelius is going to set it up with, "Hey, I've been prepared for this conversation four days ago." Look at it verse 30, "Four days ago about this hour, I was praying at my house in the ninth hour," that's 3:00 in the afternoon, "and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing," and that obviously we know from the beginning of this chapter, we're talking about an angelic being here.

So God sends this supernatural, angelic being, he's there like a person in bright clothing. "And he says, 'Cornelius, your prayers have been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa,' get a contingent up there or down there to Joppa down the Mediterranean coast, "and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He's lodging



in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' So I sent for you at once." This is Cornelius saying this to Peter now that he's finally under his roof. "And you've been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you've been commanded by the Lord."

Now this is where if you're reading in your actual Bibles, you have the subject heading here and a new paragraph, because that was like Cornelius describing how he'd been prepped. But I want to in this first point include verses 34 and 35 because this is Peter and I want to be in Peter's sandals this morning. He is seeing and recognizing that he's been prepared. And of course, he'd been prepared to deal with the gospel conversation with someone who had been prepared. And he says this, verse 34. "So Peter opened his mouth and he said, 'Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him.'"

Now that's the section here, those 6 verses, of my first observation this morning and I trust it will be a very brief observation because I want you to see that the division in our logic starts in verse 36, where now he's going to start to say what he's asking for. You're asking in verse 33, I want to hear all that you've been commanded by the Lord. Now, verse 36. "As for the word that he sent to Israel," and then he's going to explain the elements of the gospel. It's a summary discussion. This is not a transcription of what he said, but a summary, a divinely orchestrated God-breathed, God had driven Luke to write these things down as a synopsis of what the gospel discussion was all about.

Before we get there, I just want to look at verses 34 and 35. Peter is saying, I know you're the right person to share the gospel with you. I know God has been working on you and has prepared you. Now if I say, hey, you Christians should be evangelical, go out and share the gospel. It's not like every single person you meet.... And you know that how this works in real life is God is directing and moving, Acts 17, people into places where you're going to have a conversation and you even know it in the moment, like this is the conversation that should be turned to biblical spiritual things. And that's because you've got to look for the person who is prepared. You have to detect the fact in one way or another that God has prepped this person for this conversation. Not that there's not a thing such as cold contact evangelism. There is, surely. But the reality is real good gospel conversations, and I've done a lot of cold contact evangelism, but the conversations where God is working, it's like we get this sense with a coworker, a neighbor, some parent on my kid's soccer team, there's this sense in which, OK, this person is ripe, so to speak. He's ready to have a conversation about spiritual things.

So let's make this observation for a first point, make it as quick as we can. Number one, we need to "Detect God's Pre-Conversion Work." If you're taking notes, that's what we need. Your preparation involves you being prepared enough to say, I think this is the right conversation with this person. The way we do that, if you want to go back in your thinking, is to the beginning of this chapter study, which was three or four weeks ago when we looked at the first section in Acts 10 where we describe something that got a little mushy in people's minds as a theological discussion of this pre-conversion grace. We talked about natural revelation, special revelation. We talked about the fact that God has this general grace, this



common grace it's often called that keeps the sun shining on the fields of people and keeps them digesting their food and oxygenating in their blood. God is giving all these people. He feeds the animals, he feeds the people, he keeps everybody going.

But then there's a kind of grace, a kind of favor, a kind of unearned work that God does in bringing people to himself. And those moves of God in the circumstances and hearts of those people is not salvation, but it's preparatory for them being saved, for them responding rightly to the gospel. This is pre-conversion grace. This is God's work of preparing them to hear this. We quoted John 6:44. We talked about the fact that no one's going to come to Christ unless the Father first draws him. There's this pre-conversion work that God is doing. Now, even as I say that it's just undeniable that obviously God, and we looked at several things at the beginning of this chapter, was doing in Cornelius' heart to make him a key candidate for this discussion as the first-named Gentile in the book of Acts to be to be saved.

And that picture when he is there as this key convert, it's like, yeah, God had been working in his life. And all I want to do is have you think, even now, do you think sitting here in church with air conditioning and padding under your rear end to say, "OK, are there people in my sphere of influence that I can see, I can detect, I can sense that God is working on them." If you want to take it from another angle, think about how Jesus talked about the Spirit being sent into the world to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. Right? Remember that verse? The Spirit is going out. That's not their conversion, but it gets their ears open and their eyes open then to see Christ and to hear the gospel. That is the preparatory work. And some of you and we talked about this a couple of weeks ago, you think you became a Christian when you started feeling conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit or you started to get something out of the Scriptures and church made sense to you or the Bible made sense. "I must have become a Christian then?" No, no, no. That's pre-conversion work.

You're not a Christian until you respond rightly to the gospel in repentance and faith, but that pre-conversion work now that we're Christians, if you are a Christian here this morning, sharing with non-Christians, we've got to be able to detect that. And I'm not saying you don't get into some conversations and test this out and it makes it clear in their response, I'm not even interested in talking about these things. But you know people who you sense maybe they've gone through something, you think they really are feeling something more than the average non-Christian's conscience here. It seems like they're under some kind of conviction. Or even like Paul, they're kicking hard against Christ, and it seems kind of odd there, the way that Christianity has become this target of their vitriolic comments and yet they seem to be searching for the meaning and something eternal and God is working in their hearts. Or maybe they're just coming to church regularly, but they're really not a Christian. But you know they're kind of in it and they're willingly packing up and showering, putting on deodorant and coming to church. It's like, wow, you know, what's motivating them? God's doing something. But they're not a Christian yet.

And I just need you to think about that and detect that. And I don't have time to explore that further. But I would suggest if you weren't here at the beginning of our study of Acts Chapter 10 that you go back there and think of all the ways in which God's pre-conversion grace, that



grace that reaches and starts dragging people in, that you look for that and that becomes the thing that you say, OK, now I'm going in with the gospel. It's like having fish being taken downstream. Right? And the Bible says we're dead in our transgressions and sin. No one seeks after God. No one swims upstream. And they don't. And you're supposed to be there on the shores with this little net and you're catching people for Christ. Yeah, well, God has to send his Spirit out first and hook this dead fish and start dragging them upstream. And that's what happens, right? No one comes to Christ unless the Father first draws him. There's all of this work of God drawing them.

Well, now when I'm seeing this dead fish, this is a terrible illustration, but kind of moving in the wrong... It's like, why is that non-Christian seeking God, right? Because God is enabling that, right? We know that no one seeks God, Romans Chapter 3, and this was the whole premise of that sermon. But God's dragging them in this direction, dragging them toward us. I'm going to reach in now and I need to have that conversation. OK. That's a modern application of this ancient work of what God had done miraculously through this angelic visitation. And I just want to say I want to have eyes to see those who are starting to have eyes to see the gospel, right? I want to be able to listen to conversations and have ears to hear that someone is starting to have ears so that they might hear the gospel.

If, by the way, it bothers you that Peter says, "Hey, I understand that God shows no partiality and every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." Well, good. Then why do I need to convert him, right? If you start quoting this passage, as some foolishly do, to say, "Well, then the Buddhist can stay the Buddhist and the Hindu can stay the Hindu and the Muslim can stay the Muslim. Why do we need to convert anybody? That's so non-21st century." Listen, the whole reason this statement is made is because now this person, it's much like Hebrews Chapter 11 verse 2, the idea that you've got to believe that God is this God who is, and he's a rewarder of those who seek him. That there's this sense which, OK, now I'm ready, I'm seeing the value in this.

In other words, they now have ears. That's a gift of God, the grace of God, and those ears now that have been given to them, now they need to hear the gospel. The whole point is Peter is being sent here to this guy who God has placed his favor on, pre-conversion favor, that he might get him the gospel. If it didn't matter, let him just live in Rome and do his thing and come visit Israel and Caesarea and go home. "It doesn't matter because you fear God and, you know, you do the right stuff. You seem to be praying and you're good. You don't need Christ." That's not the point. You need Christ, that's what this whole passage is about.

So let's talk about that. You need to be ready as he is, let's now read verses 36 and following, with a message of the gospel. He's going to give this word which is "sent to Israel," right? Because he's a Jewish apostle, and it's all about the preaching of good news, right? That's "Euangelion," That's the word, euangelion. "Eu" is "good." Angelion, "Angelos," "angels," not baseball, these messengers. Angelos is a messenger. This message, right? Which is what this is all about. The good message we call it the good news we call it, here's the English word, the old English word for it, the "gospel." The good news. We got a message of good news. So are you ready with this message that God sent first to Israel and now you're a



Gentile? You're like a progeny of Cornelius. Now you're, you know, this Gentile who has the message. Do you have it? Do you understand it? Do you know it? Are you ready to share it?

Number two, let's start with that. "Be Ready to Share God's Gospel Message." And then look at the scary sub-points under this point. Do you have a worksheet? Crazy, crazy. You say, "I heard rumor last night went really long." OK, well, you can't believe those people who come to Saturday night service, you never know what they're going to say about my preaching. So just don't believe any of that. But do believe that we got a lot to cover right here in point two. Ready? OK interactive 9:00 service. We're ready. Look at this, verse 36. Are you ready?

What kind of message is this? It's preaching of good news. Here are two words. I don't, I mean, I was going to say I don't want to make too much of it, but I've got to make a lot of it, "of peace." "Of peace through Jesus Christ (he's Lord of all)." What is this message? Just the tenor of the message, the feeling of the message, the sense of the message, the theme of the message, the subject of the message. When someone finally wants to talk to me about spiritual things and I've done whatever diagnostic conversation... I feel like this person needs... We need to talk about Christianity. We need to talk about the gospel. What kind of message am I giving them, right? It says it's a message of peace.

Now you're tempted because he's a Gentile and Peter's a Jew that we might be talking about kind of "all getting along" because it even ends with this phrase, "He is Lord of all." But that would be a complete misunderstanding of the word peace. In other words, Christianity is not sent to you so that you can have better relationships with everyone. Matter of fact, Jesus asked the question if we're talking merely of horizontal connections with other people, he said, "Don't think that I came to earth to bring peace. I didn't come to earth to bring peace." He said, "I came to bring division and I'll set a man against members of his own household. I'll set a father against his son and wife against her daughters, and just the house it's going to be divided because of me."

What about that passage in the Christmas card? I mean, that's in the Bible somewhere, right? "Peace on earth. Goodwill to men." OK, well, number one, go look at it in your Bible. That's not what it says, right? It's "Peace among those with whom he is pleased." So God is going to grant peace to the people on whom his favor sets. And that group is going to be an embattled group of people with all the people who reject the king, the Lord of all. Right? The people right now, just go write someone in some university professorial office or some, you know, I don't know, some news anchor on some cable channel and say, "Is Jesus your Lord? Is Jesus the king of your life?" Well, of course not. No, that's going to divide us.

So what kind of peace are we talking about? We're talking about a peace that the whole gospel is predicated on, and that is the fact that you have a sin problem. You are alienated from God. Your sins have made a separation between you and your God, to quote Isaiah 59:2, and that hostility needs to be reconciled. Right? There's enmity between you and your creator. You and God are not OK. Cornelius, God's favor is rested upon you. You have now ears to hear God's pre-saving grace is active in your life, but you're not right with God. You



need peace with God. That's a good way to put it. Or the way I put it in a little book I wrote on the gospel is you need to get right with God because we're not born right with God.

So Letter "A" or verse 36 if you're following along in the worksheet here, you need to write this down, "A Message About Peace With God." That's what this is all about. Does it make peace with other people? Well, yeah, if you have Jesus as your Lord. It doesn't matter if you're Jew, Gentile, Scythian, slave, barbarian, free, we're all going to be at peace with each other and work toward harmony with each other. We're all unified in Christ, as we'll see in this next series that starts next week. All of that is important for us as Christians, but with the world and even with members of my own family, relatives at Thanksgiving, we're not at peace with all those people. We can't be if they don't see the Lordship of Christ the way that I see the Lordship of Christ, which is my life is his, he is my king, he's in charge, I do what he says. That's going to create friction and conflict.

But the point is, I get peace with God. And that's the message I'm sharing with my coworker at work. That's message I'm sharing with my neighbor, I'm sharing with someone who is driving the Uber and we turn to spiritual things, and I feel like this is a receptive conversation. I'm going to talk to you about a message, and it's a message about you being at peace with God. Don't miss that because there are a million synthetic artificial substitutes for that, don't you know? I mean, the appeal has been, "Hey, do you want a better life? Do you need purpose? Do you need meaning? Do you feel alone? Do you need security?" I mean, all kinds of things, and it's all about my life here and now, the temporal stuff, and Christ becomes this life coach. That's not biblical Christianity.

Biblical Christianity is a message of reconciliation with who? First and foremost with God. Matter of fact, that's the whole point of redemption is to make you who are at enmity with God, to be at peace with God so that God can look at me and say, "Hey, forgiven. No enmity, nothing separating me and you. You now become an adopted child in my family." That's the feel of the message, verse 36. It's the point of the message.

OK, now verse 37. Are you with me here? "You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea." southern Israel, "beginning from Galilee," northern Israel, "after the baptism that John proclaimed." Which, by the way, is another reminder that predicates on the fact that this is about repentance, this is about Christ being Lord, doing what he says. John preached that message. Jesus even submitted to that message, interestingly enough, in doing something we're about to talk about. And how God, verse 38, anointed Jesus, that's a kind of a weird word in modern parlance. But the idea of anointing simply means to pour and the picture of the Spirit of God being poured on Christ was even depicted in some kind of visual scene at his baptism where the Spirit came on him. And then from that point on he started doing miracles. Right? All the fables of Christ doing miracles as a kid are all wrong. He did no miracles as a kid. He did no miracles as a teenager. He did miracles as an adult, starting with the baptism of John when the Spirit of God came on him and then empowered him to break natural law to show who he was, God in human form. And he went around proving that in a three-and-a-half-year public ministry.



The Holy Spirit, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." So here's this trinitarian discussion. God, this reference for the Father has his Son, who all throughout the New Testament is described as being in the exact image and representation of the Father. "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." "All the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form." Here is the Son, the Father and the Spirit now empowering his work. And all of that trinitarian talk focuses on the message about Jesus living here on earth, in Galilee, in Judea doing all the ministry that he did. And it's depicted here as good, he "went about doing good," because, I mean, look at him, God was with him. God, the Father was on him. He and his Father were one. Everything was copacetic between him and the Triune God. He was a good man in the perfect sense.

When someone came to Jesus and said, "Hey, good teacher." Jesus said, "Why do you call me good. No one's good but God alone." Right? He wasn't eschewing this title. He was making it clear, "Do you understand the implications of what you just said?" Absolute goodness, which of course he is. Matter of fact, he was without sin. "He was tempted in every way as we are yet without sin." So we have a message about someone who's going to save us from our sin. But it's very important that we present him accurately. He wasn't just a decent guy or a guy who was better than the rest of us. It's put this way, verses 37 and 38 on the outline, it's "A Message of a Perfect Savior."

Now. All these sub-points right here are all for this purpose. If you said, "Hey, Pastor Mike, you got kids? Tell us about your kids." And I said, "Yeah, I got three kids. Matt, John and Stephanie." And my wife said, "Did you tell him about the kids?" And I said, "Yeah, I just did. Matt, John and Stephanie." OK. To just say the words that represent an entire life is not enough. So if I say, "Yeah, I know the gospel. I know the gospel about sin, about Christ, about his deity, it's about his death, it's about his resurrection." You can say all that in the conversation. If you cannot explain that, if you can't make it clear what that's all about, then we haven't done our work. You're not prepared. You're not equipped. You have to be able to say, why is it that the message of the gospel resides and the spotlight shines on a perfect savior? Why is that important?

Well, the Bible talks a lot about that. It talks about the fact that his goodness was something done in humanity as a human being, fulfilling, that's why this is partly so focused on his humanity, all his human life was the good life that we should have lived. We are sinners. It's a message of salvation being right with God. Here is Jesus who was right with God because he was good, perfectly good. He was righteous. He was holy. He was, as we say, perfect. We talked about in holiness. Perfect. Why is it important?

Theologically, we sometimes call this the "active obedience of Christ," right? That concept has to be understood in your mind in some way, if you're saying more than Jesus was God and Jesus was good and Jesus never sinned. So what? Are you sitting there talking to Cornelius? What does that matter? Right? Couldn't God just look from heaven and say, "Hey, you guys are forgiven?" No. No, he had to send his Son and you say, "Well, it's about him dying for us." Yeah, it's more than that. It's about him living for us, right? It's about this thing



that he did in the entirety of his life from the manger to the cross. Right? God did not beam his Son down to earth like a Star Trek episode on Thursday to have the Last Supper and then die on Friday and get raised on Sunday. He had all these years in between. Right?

And those years were what some theologians call the "preceptive righteousness of Christ." The perceptive obedience of Christ. The reason some theologians like that phrase is because they don't like what it implies when you're talking about him dying on the cross being passive. Because there is nothing more active than him in the garden, saying, "Not my will, but yours be done." There's a sense of passivity but he is actively engaged in dying on the cross, and he's also actively engaged for his whole childhood, his teen years, in being actively obedient and fighting temptation. "Tempted in every way as we are," and his public ministry began after this great, "Hey, the Spirit of God is now empowering you," and he went immediately into the desert. The Spirit led him into the desert to be tempted, to be very clear in some magnificent way that he's perfect. He's God, he's divine.

And why is that important? Because Jesus had to do all the things that we did not do IN HIS HUMANITY so that we can look at a guy like Cornelius or Fred or Tim or Brenda, or whoever you're sharing the gospel with and say everything you didn't do in high school the way you should have... Matter of fact, let's talk about your junior high years. What you did as a bone-headed adolescent, I just want to tell you all of those things that you need to have somehow made right before God, God has to impute this, has to credit this to you. And here's the thing, Jesus lived as a 13-year-old perfectly. Jesus lived as a 16-year-old morally pure. Jesus lived as an 18 and 19-year-old without any sin. I need God to be able to have some human righteousness now imputed to me.

Now, I didn't make the rules, but this is the way they're described. Jesus goes to get baptized. Why would you be baptized? I mean, here is John the Baptist looking at Jesus coming and saying, "Hey, behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Here comes the perfect one and Jesus says, "Baptize me, John." And John goes, "Oh no, no, you should be baptizing me, right? This baptism of repentance. I mean, you haven't done anything wrong." I mean, that's the implication. And Jesus says, "Permit it at this time so as to fulfill all righteousness." I have to do it and I have to do it right. I have to do with the right motive. So all of those human righteous decisions can be credited to Mike Fabarez and every other person who I've called to salvation, including Cornelius and Peter and everyone else who is going to get saved in this scene. Human, right? Active obedience of Christ imputed to our account, I need a perfect savior.

He also needs to be divine because I need that to be credited to all those who are being saved. So that's a big calling. And the priest can't do it who are sacrificing sacrifices for their own sin, as well as the sins of the people. I need a perfect savior. That's important that you're able at 2:00 in the morning to wake you up tonight and say, "Hey, wake up, wake up. Christ was perfect. Why?" Right? Well, because you need to think through the perceptive, righteous obedience of Christ being imputed to sinners. I got to have that.



The next part. Well, that's old school. I know that part. Look at the next part, verse 39. "And we were all witnesses of what he did in the country of the Jews and Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree," a tree. Now why did he use that phrase, hanging on a tree? Well, we know about the death of Christ. I know I got to talk about the death of Christ with non-Christians. OK, you're right. We need a message about peace with God. We need to make it clear that's the whole thrust of this message. We need a message about a perfect savior. I need to know something about the acts of obedience of Christ. We also need this message, a message of a death on a cross. But what's that death on a cross all about? Well, it's a substitutionary death. If he's perfect, "The wages of sin is death," he should not even be dying. God should just assume him into heaven like the Catholics wrongly think that Mary didn't die because she was sinless, so she was brought up into heaven because she shouldn't die. That makes perfect theological sense. It's not historically accurate, nor is it true, and it's heresy, but it makes sense.

Well, why wasn't Jesus who was actually sinless, why wasn't he just assumed into heaven? Because he was going to die? Die? Why? Here's how First Peter puts it, "The just," the righteous, that's what the word just means, "for the unjust," for the unrighteous, "that he might bring us to God." So that is a substitutionary death. And that's the message we're bringing. In verse 39, if you're taking notes, it's "A Message of a Substitutionary Death." Why the word "tree" and not "cross," but he used the word cross. If anyone knew about a cross, it was the Roman who is actually carrying out executions. A guy like Cornelius. Luke doesn't use cross. He uses a word that reminds us, now this is Greek, of course, of the Old Testament reminder that "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree," that was made of wood, and it certainly stands in as a word to represent the Roman cross that was made of wood. But the point is this is a sign of cursing. This is God's curse. You hang up a Jewish man on a tree and kill him or hang him, whatever, that is a sign of God's displeasure and his curse and his anger toward that person. I mean, that's like the ultimate justice.

Well, that picture of hanging on a tree and God's curse being upon a person, Luke says "Well, we know that that's what happens to Christ. We were all witnesses to that." And that reference is a reminder that Jesus dies as though he's under the punishment of God the Father. "And yet you, Pastor Mike, just told me he went around doing good. The Spirit of God was on him, powerful, breaking natural law, in sync with God. What's going on?" Well, what's going on is all my sin then was placed on him. That imputation works two ways. His righteousness is imputed, credited to me. And if you think I'm getting too theological, that's not a biblical word. It is. The Greek word in the New Testament, repeated over and over is "Logizomai." Logizomai is the idea that we need it credited to us, credited as righteousness. His righteousness is credited to us, and then my sin is imputed to him on the cross. All of my sin is on him. God is treating him as though he was me as a sinner. He dies with the curse that I deserve. That's called substitutionary. It's actually called penal substitutionary atonement. Penal is legal. It's the structure of God's justice, its substitutionary. I should have been dying there. And it's also an atonement or a redemption that God is now taking care of the sin problem.



Think about how Second Corinthians 5 ends, right? "God made him who knew no sin." Good. God on him. The Holy Spirit anointed him all over him, right? This is the triune God all here in bodily form. We have this God, the Son, in sync with the Spirit, in sync with the Father. All of that. And yet "God made him who knew no sin to be sin," for us in our place. He becomes the embodiment of what God is going to do to sin. "So that in him we might become the righteousness of God." I'm quoting now Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 21. Look at the last verse in the chapter. That picture of substitution, that's the message that we bring to people.

But I wouldn't get there, just like Peter didn't get there, until we deal with some of the big issues like this is a message of salvation from sin. This is a message about you being reconciled to God. This is a message about a perfect savior who lived in our place, about a perfect savior now that dies in our place. He hangs on a tree. And again, this is a summary. There is a synopsis. Who knows how much he went into detail on this, but I know the rest of the Bible goes into detail on this, and you ought to go into detail on this, and you ought to be able to be woken up at 3:00 in the morning and have someone say, "Why did Jesus die on the cross? What is that about?" The curse of being hung on a tree, the picture of God, his justice being spent.

And again, non-Christians they're not prepped for any of this. They have to just struggle with that idea. The "cosmic child abuse theory" that the modern liberals and skinny jean preachers preach about. I'm not bagging on skinny jeans. Jeans can be as skinny as they want, I suppose, but my point is... I'm sorry. They wear like ski caps when they're not skiing... Anyway, whatever, it doesn't matter. I'm an old guy. I get it. But my point is it isn't cosmic child abuse, right? Which is a dumb way to put it. I would love to rant about that, but I have no time. The point is God the Father cannot be a just God dealing with sin unless he deals with the problem and there has to be a payment.

There's no judge who can just be called a loving, nice judge just because he releases every single criminal he sees. He can't do that. You can't even let go of criminals who you like or criminals who are related to you. All of that is egregious. It's a travesty of justice. That's why the shoot-em-up movies still work because we think the bad guys should be punished and the good guy should win. Well, the point of us being exonerated from our sin, it has to be dealt with and that's what the cross is all about. God did settle the score with sin on the cross for his children, a single sacrifice that perfects us, Hebrews 10:14 says.

All right. Verse 40. "But God raised him on the third day," raised him on the third day, "and made him to appear." And just to make it clear, what we're talking about, this is not some metaphorical, some kind of spiritual, some kind of gnostic raising from the dead, verse 41, "Not to all the people." And he's not going to show up here in your house, Cornelius. It's like Thomas being chided, "Like, I wasn't here when he was here. I want to see him." It's like, you're going to have to trust the witnesses. And there were so many. Read First Corinthians Chapter 15, sometimes at one time 500 people hearing the resurrection of Christ.



He appeared for 40 days after his resurrection, but to certain group of people and you have to take their word for it who are willing to die for that truth. Right? And there are many of them. Even as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said many of them are still alive today. Go talk to them. He ate and drank just so you know he's not a ghost or a phantom. He ate and drank with them after he rose from the dead. So here is a resurrected physical body. The body that we put in that grave is no longer there. You go in and it's not like some new thing happened in the sense that that bodies there and now he's got a new body, and you sometimes talk in that shorthanded way about the resurrection. Don't talk that way, at least not in your thinking about the resurrection.

That's why it's important, even what we do with our bodies, even though who knows how long it's going to be from the time that you lay the body in the grave and the time that it's resurrected, God has a one-for-one correspondence between the body in the grave and the body that's resurrected. And that body, whatever's left of that body in that state or wherever the rest of the atomic matter is, God is going to take that, reassemble it, reconstituted it and glorify it, it says in Romans Chapter 8, and reanimate it and do what God did to Christ. And that was something that proved that all of this worked.

Remember Jesus on the cross said the word, "It is finished?" I say it's a word, that is bad grammar Pastor Mike, that's three words. "It is finished" is one Greek word "Telelestai." And it means, it's an accounting term, among other ways it's used, "It's done. It's paid in full. Finished." So if the wages of sin is death, and he went and said, I'm going to pay the payment of sin, "I came," he said, "not to be served but to serve and to give my life as," a payment, "a ransom for many." If he makes that payment and it's acceptable and the sin problem has been paid for, then I think the wages of sin that his death ought to be reversed and we ought to have some ratification of this thing, this whole equation by a resurrected body.

Because if you're saying if Mike Fabarez dies as a sinner, he's going to be resurrected in a glorified state without reference to sin, then I want to see that as the ratification, the down payment, the first fruits as it's put in First Corinthians 15, I ought to see that happen. I mean, that would make sense. And God says, of course, and that's what we did. That's what happened to Christ. Raised bodily, the teeth in his mouth, his tongue, the taste buds, the eyelashes, the elbows, his fingernails, all of that raised from the dead, glorified, made perfect, impervious to decay and destruction. And that is something we're holding up to people as a ratifying act.

I put it this way, verses 40 and 41, we have "A Message of a Ratifying Resurrection." The resurrection was the validation. It was the thing that showed this worked. When he said, "It is finished," you can stand back, cross your arms and go, "Really?" Yeah, well, three days later you'd know it. Well, why didn't get raised three minutes later? Because you would doubt it, right? You're doubting it anyway, but he let him be on... You know what a dead body does? Even in the coolness of a tomb for three days. I mean, think about that. On the third day, he is going to be a putrefied rotting corpse. I don't care how many spices you put around him. You put spices in that wrapping so that he won't stink up the whole town.



Well, what's the point of that? The point is that he's dead, really dead. Super dead, fully dead, as the Princess Bride would remind you, you're fully dead. And you now are seeing him rise from the dead. And when you're fully dead, your body will rise from the dead. It will be reanimated if you trust in Christ, because this ratifies the whole equation. The wages of sin is death. Death has been paid for. Now we have the validation and ratification of salvation.

Verse 42. Verse 42, "And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to judge the living and the dead." Now there are some strong words and none of these really play well in the modern society. Let's start with the word that I have to say every time they say, "Well, what do you do for a living?" "I preach," "Oh man, really? Preach?" "Yeah, preach." "Well, don't preach at me." They're even telling non-preachers to not preach at you. Preaching. Preach. A strong word, "Kerusso," proclaim. I mean, preach. I remember when I was an early Christian in ministry, I was like, I don't want to use that word. It's kind of harsh. Asked me now, I'll say I'm a preacher, I preach.

What does that mean? I'm declaring strongly a message that is super important for you to hear. Why? Because there's something, here's something people don't like to hear, either, he's going to judge people, judge people, right? Think about how much we don't even like that word. "Don't judge, lest you be judged." He said that, right? No, that's not what he said in the context of what he's talking about. He says, do not judge in a measure you're not willing to be judged by. You better be very honest and fair in your judgments about things, like "judge with righteous judgment," he says. A whole nother sermon. But what's the point?

Here are some strong words about something that needs to be said strongly about something that has a great consequence. And that is, one day you're going to stand before your maker, whether you're living or dead. Those are metaphorical euphemistic ways to talk about the dead do not have the favor of God. They go to a particular kind of judgment. It's called the Great White Throne Judgment. Follow me now. And then Christians, think about that. If you were raised in church, probably never even heard a sermon on the Bemis Seat Judgement of Christ that every Christian will be called to account for his or her life before God. Second Corinthians Chapter 5, First Corinthians Chapter 3, Romans Chapter 14. We're going to have to go and answer before the living God as a Christian, the living, or at the Great White Throne in judgment for the dead, the non-Christians.

The point of us thinking about that being an urgent reminder, we're kind of ringing a bell. This isn't like, let's just sit on a talk show and talk opinions about God. "Well, I think this, I think that, whatever, you're right, I'm right, who cares, whatever. That's what I believe, and I really believe it." That's not our message, our message, right? Verse 42, "A Message of Urgent Necessity," that's how I put it. This is a message of urgent necessity, preaching, judgment. Why do I want to get this sin out? Because you're going to die?

I know some people that are, you know, not doing very well in their health and they're elderly, and they're dealing with COVID and all this. And I'm like, man, we got to deal with this message again. "It is appointed to man once to die," and then you'll have a second chance. Do you know that verse? This is the nine o'clock crowd. I know you know your Bible. "It is



appointed unto man once to die, and then comes the ... judgment." Right? That's it. You breath your last on this earth you're set. You're either in Christ and in the living and you will be evaluated for your Christian life, or if you're a non-Christian you're going to stand before God and he's going to open up the books, look at the deeds and he's going to judge you according to what you've done.

I'm just saying I'd rather be rewarded for what I've done and see some things burn up, wood, hay and straw as a Christian at the Bemis Seat and even suffer loss that I wasn't a better Christian, I'd rather have that than have my maker say, "Here's all the things you did and since you weren't willing to put your trust in Christ to have him pay for it, now you have to pay for it." That is the sobering reality. And I think when you're having a conversation with someone who's starting to have ears to hear and eyes to see, ears to hear the gospel, eyes to see Christ, I better make sure that this is not a, "Well, in my opinion, you think about it, whatever, you know, I'll get back. I got some books that maybe you can read. We need to lean forward in this conversation.

This is an urgent conversation. This is an urgent conversation that people need to get. Think about how the Scripture says, "Today," Paul said of the Corinthians. "is the day of salvation." But look what the writer of Hebrews says to his audience, right? "Today, if you'd hear his voice, do not harden your heart as they did in the wilderness," Hebrews Chapter 3. Hebrews Chapter 4 he repeats that over, "Today, today, today." I mean, even Joshua, that picture in Joshua 24, "Today, you got to choose who you're going to serve." This is a time of decision for people, right? And I know some of you high Calvinist don't like that word, but that's what this is. You're making a decision. I understand this is something we credit God with. It's God's work. He draws. He prepares, opens ears. But man, you better know that your volition is going to be involved in this and you better make this decision to follow Christ. It's an urgent message, and I'm here to preach it. Because there is someone who will judge and it's Christ. Christ will be the judge and he knows what it is to be human. He lived as a human being and he will be the judge of the living and the dead.

Verse 43, at least the first part of verse 43. "To him," Christ, "all the prophets bear witness." What does that mean? They wrote it in their books of the Old Testament. Are you doing the Daily Bible Reading with us every morning, I hope, our nighttime or whenever you do it? Good. Thank you. Have you been reading? Did you read yesterday and this morning? We're two thirds of the way through Isaiah in our Old Testament reading and here repeatedly we have God through Isaiah disdaining those who are trusting in the false idols. And the one way he says, you need to know how vain and ridiculous it is, and anyone who puts his trust in idols is an abomination to me. Why? Because they can't do anything.

Today we talk about how you cut down a tree. You make an idol, you prop it up, you take the other half of the wood and you burn in the fire and warm yourself. You don't even realize how ridiculous the mute and dumb idol is. You can't trust... None of that has any sentience, let alone power. It doesn't. It's ridiculous. He said, but look at me, "there is no other God besides me" who can tell you what happened from the beginning before you're born and can tell what



is going to happen in the future. Think about this now, he says, "Yes, I would like the false gods to come and tell us what is going to happen in the future."

Now here's the problem with time/space confined human beings, we can't do that, right? And there's no medium or priest of some idol who can do that. You can guess, you can be Nostradamus and talk in really weird sentences and hope that maybe some of that fits with something in the future. But you cannot be specific like we saw in the reading this morning. Did you read this morning's? At the end of that passage we have him naming Cyrus. It's one of the reasons that liberals don't even like the book of Isaiah being a book that was written by Isaiah in the time period that Isaiah wrote it. Matter of fact, they had all these theories in the 18th century that this could not be one author, right? They said, "Because we do not believe that this guy could have said by name the coming Assyrian king when we were still in the Babylonian epic. It doesn't make any sense." Well, it doesn't make sense if you're just Isaiah kind of winging a few names and throwing them out about somebody in the future.

But if this is God and God is the author, and all these books are coauthored. We got a human author and human penned, human styles and God putting down on paper what is his word. And he says Cyrus is going to be, and we'll start tomorrow morning's reading with this, "Cyrus my anointed one." I'm choosing him. I'm putting... I'm sovereign. No God can do that. Look in the Koran. Read the Koran. Read it, man. It's a mess, really, right? It is a mess, but it's certainly not filled with the predictions, the kinds of predictions we have throughout the Bible. You can read the book of Deuteronomy and see that during this period in the 15th century B.C. we have specific prophecies about not only Israel, this nomadic group of people who just left Egypt, one day having a king in a land. But that king and the people sinning and falling into idolatry, being taken away to a foreign country and in that foreign country repenting and then coming back and being restored.

The whole Babylonian captivity is spelled out in the Pentateuch. And the Pentateuch in the 15th century B.C. those things didn't even happen until when? Well until the 5th century B.C.. So we had a thousand-year period between just those... There's no getting around that. I probably should have put this book on the back. I put it there before and there are several others, and it represents a whole category of books. But Barton Payne wrote a book called The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy. We're not looking for sensational, you know, Hal Lindsey stuff where, you know, the locust in Revelation are helicopters, you know, marine helicopters. That's not the point. What does the Bible say about nations, about kings, about epics, about periods, about times, about the Messiah, about the coming of the Messiah, about where he'd be born and what... all of that? Those are prophetic statements in the Bible, and you've got no other book. The writings of Confucius doesn't work, right? The Hindus, the Buddhists, there's no other God. And that's the point being made in our Bible reading that can do this that God has done it.

You've got a book. And I put it this way what did I call it? It's "A Message of Prophetic Proof." Jot that down. 43a. We have a message and we're telling this message not only with an urgency, but an urgency that can be backed up by the fact that this is all written. I was going to say encoded. It's just there in propositional statements about what God has called from the



beginning of time. Check it out. A lot of skeptics about the Bible have looked for that very thing. And then if you want to start reading people who didn't believe these things, just look at how God kind of pulled rabbits out of hats to say, you guys are ridiculous.

Like 1947 and the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Of all the scrolls for them to find first, and they found a ton, right? 38 of 39 books of the Old Testament were there along with commentaries and hymn books and all the things that they had predating Christ. By the time we were in the 19th century believing that Isaiah could not have been written by Isaiah and there were plenty of authors, at least two. We had Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah and all this coming. What's the first stinking scroll to come to the Americans with a guy who has a 35mm camera, right? And here he is taking pictures of the very first scroll intact laid out. Yeah, it's got some rough edges around the top and the bottom. It's the Isaiah scroll all in one piece pre-dating Christ. Which is full, by the way, not only of a 100-year preceding prophecies about Assyrian kings, but what about all those things it says about the coming of the messiah and the particulars of the coming of that messiah and his death and his resurrection? All in Isaiah.

I mean, it's just God is so importantly trying to get us to think. That's why I wrote that little book called *Why the Bible?*, which is one of many. And Dr. Mounce, who was here speaking at a Compass Bible Institute weekend, just came out with a book. He just sent me a prerelease copy of it, *Why I Believe the Bible*. It's a good book. You need to get it. It's just coming out. Zondervan published it. I'm just telling you, if you haven't dealt with that, as Schaefer said, that there is a God and he has spoken. Is the Bible his word? We got to start there. And that, I think, is a good thing for Peter to remind this Roman soldier, this is something that has objective proof. Jesus isn't going to show up in your palace here or your digs, your officer's quarters in Caesarea Maritime, but you've got a book, you've got scrolls, you can go down to the synagogue and read, that testify to who Jesus was. Not only that, but a ton of other biblical prophecies.

Middle of verse 43. What did it bear witness to? Well, among other things, not only to him, but "that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." So you want a little inclusio here? You want the bookends here. We started with peace. This is a message of peace. So we know this is about getting right with God and then here's the word it ends with here. And that is forgiveness of sins. Trust in him. Forgiveness of sin. Your problem with God is sin. Your problem with God is you don't measure up. Your problem with God is falling short of the glory of God. Your problem is transgression and iniquity and sin and it needs to be forgiven or you're going to die and you going to have to pay for all that. That's the gospel. And I don't care what you say, I don't care who you're listening to, if they say something else, they're not teaching what's in the Bible. The Bible says that, and you have to be forgiven.

Wasn't it yesterday's morning reading in Colossians Chapter 1? That beautiful line about you are "qualified in him to receive a share in the inheritance of the saints of light." How good is that line? The forgiveness. We ought to be giving thanks to the Father if you're a Christian for that. And that message is what we're bringing to people. I put it this way, 43b, "A Message of Full Forgiveness." This is not Catholicism. This is not some kind of works righteousness. This



is not you trying to kind of measure up and then maybe going through the spiritual car wash after you die called purgatory and maybe eventually you'll get there and join us. This is about a full qualification of forgiveness.

One of my favorite passages in all the Bible, Psalm 103, it talks about "my sins being removed from me as far as the east is from the west," and that's a long way. And God is saying that here you go. My sin, BAM. I'm still going to be judged for my behavior? Absolutely. Well what does that mean? The condemnation that my sins deserve they're as far from me as the east is from the west. "No condemnation for those in Christ," Romans 8:1. So I know that the message I'm bringing you is at the end of this conversation, if you trust in Christ, your sins will be forgiven.

Now, was there more to this conversation? There probably was because look at the next verse, verse 44. "While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word." So he's in the middle of his gospel presentation and all of a sudden now something happens that happens in every converted life, the Holy Spirit invades them. That's what the Bible says, the Spirit of God then he indwells us and "seals us in Christ for the day of redemption." That's what the Bible teaches, right? In this case, because this was such a big deal, we had this whole Jewish contingent here watching this go down with a Roman centurion.

God then adds a miraculous event that mirrors the miraculous event in Acts Chapter 2. And now, for the second time in the book of Acts, we have people speaking languages. It's almost unfortunate that we translate it tongues because you think of something defined from a Pentecostal movement of people jabbering saying things that don't mean anything. These words meant something. They were saying things in languages that they didn't learn. These Romans, these sweaty, smelly Romans with their helmets sitting on a shelf and their spear leaned behind the door in this palace.

They start saying things in perfect dialects and in languages that they didn't learn. They, look at it, "The believers," verse 45. "for among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift to the Holy Spirit was being poured on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 'Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' And he commanded them to be baptized." This big sign of you are now a part of us. You are in this thing called Christianity. It was yet to be called Christianity. It will be soon. But the sect called The Way. You'll be right with God, you'll be forgiven. We got to show that through this water baptism thing that Jesus talked about. So we got to do it and commanded them to be baptized in the name, the authority, of Jesus Christ. "They asked him to remain." Of course you would. Your evangelist just shared Christ "for some days." And so Peter stays.

That section there, verses 44 and following, 44 through the end of the chapter, verse 48, you ought to expect to see changes in the people who get this. OK? Now there are some miraculous changes going on here, speaking languages they didn't learn. But number three, let's put it this way you ought "Expect God's Post-Conversion Changes" in the people who



actually get this right. And there are people that like to say, "Well, I want the insurance policy. Where do I sign?" And they say, "I don't want go to hell. You're pretty convincing about that judgment stuff and death and all that. So what do I need to do? Pray a prayer? OK? Is there a check I write to someone, your church? What do I do? Go to a Bible study?" They'll try to check a box. But from that point on in their life, there are no significant trajectory changes in their life. Their life goes on pretty much as it did before.

Well, this is the beginning of a life change because now you have in your life the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit. That's a descriptive that reminds us of what kind of spirit he is. Not only is that identifying him as the third person of the Triune Godhead, but he's also a spirit who is all about holiness, doing the right thing. What are you known by? Well, whether people know it or not socially in your life or how egregious your sins are, you're known for sin, you're a sinner, you're a compromised person. Well, the Holy Spirit now is going to live in you. Now we've got the odd couple scenario where the holy one is going to live with me and my spirit, the unholy one, and he's going to get to work. It's called sanctification. He's going to set me apart increasingly in my behavior.

He sets me apart judicially, that's called justification, and be under the umbrella of the word sanctification means I'm set apart for God made right with God, I'm in his family. And now I start the process of sanctification, the Holy Spirit's in my life. Now there's no need for us to see this miraculous outpouring of God's spirit that's going to manifest itself in the speaking of a language you didn't learn. We could debate that, and I have at other times. I put a sermon on the back of the worksheet, even a series about what the tongues phenomenon of the modern age looks like. But I'm talking about the biblical evidence of Christianity today. I look throughout the New Testament, and I see the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness. I get to see all the things that God starts to work on in my life, and that trajectory change I ought to be looking for.

Three things real quick. Verse 44, right? Do you see those sub-points there? What we're going to see, number one, is "A New Relationship with God." Verse 44, "The Holy Spirit fell on them." Even that word "fell on" God's saying they're mine. BAM. And that picture of God now having this relationship with those people, that's what we should expect. That affects stuff like how you read your Bible, whether you want to pray or not, what you pray about. All of those things, the Bible says, begins because God has now started this personal relationship with you. And by that, I mean, it's so involved in your interior life that it's not just about you going to a church or thinking new thoughts, it's about you being driven to do something new in the way you act, the way you think, the way you value, the way you prioritize. God gives you a heart of flesh that beats in sync with God, Ezekiel 33, and not a heart of stone.

You ought to expect that post-conversion change. Even as it says in Romans Chapter 8 verse 16, "His Spirit will bear witness with our spirit that we are children of God." And every Christian who sits here today, I hope you can look at that reality. When I put my trust in Christ, God had prepared me, I had ears to hear, I got encountered with the gospel and the messenger of that gospel. And then from that point on something change in the interior of my life, I had a new relationship with God. I wanted to read his word. I wanted to pray. And now



all the sudden, I started seeing things in my life happen that gave me that assurance that I am actually in this thing called Christianity.

Verse 45. Here were the circumcised, "And the believers from among the circumcised," right? That's an indicator of their Jewishness. They came with their Jewish senior pastor from Jerusalem. They'd gone through Lydia and all the cities and they came to Joppa. And now he's in Caesarea and they're there watching their Jewish pastor win this Roman to Christ and "they were amazed." Why? Because they got the same gift that we got. The Spirit of God was given to them. It was "poured out on them." So we got the word "fell" "poured out." They are just as connected with the real God as we are. Talk about a message of reconciliation. They are reconciled.

And do you know what that started to do? Now we talk about this horizontal peace, this kind of reconciliation among people who were at one time alienated from each other. Now all the Christians here start to get together, and now the Jewish/Gentile thing. We had some things to iron out in terms of the proclivities and the preferences of people, and we have this thing called the Jerusalem Council coming up. But what we have starting right here is Jews going, "Wow. They are as in this as I am." And that then becomes something that they want to hang on to. Matter of fact, look at how it ends, the last verse of verse 48. "They asked them to remain for some days." And the Jews and the Romans sat in a place in Caesarea and they slept on the couch, you know, and they had this fellowship because now this Cornelius had a new relationship with God's thing called the Church. I put it that way.

Verse 45. You now have a new relationship with God, verse 44, verse 45, you have "A New Relationship with the Church," the people of God. And I don't think there is a single person in this room, if you're genuinely Christian, who didn't immediately say what I need now is not only this new relationship with God that it's manifesting itself in a different kind of prayer life, a different kind of worship and a different kind of Bible reading, but I need the people of God in my life. The Christians now become your family. The Christians now become your team. And we talked about that in the last sermon. I don't want to go over all that, but we no longer have that separation from those people. It doesn't matter what socio-economic background we come from, we are in this thing together, this is our family, a new relationship with the Church.

They were hearing them speaking in tongues, extolling God and Peter declared, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who received the Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized." And as we'll read in the recapitulation of the story that gets told again here we know that they did it. It's a lot like the pre-conversion obedience. They wanted to hear. They were eager to hear. And now they're eager to obey and they get baptized.

We'll see more on that in the next chapter. But jot it down that way, there's "A New Kind of Obedience," a transformation to the interior motives of people's hearts are changed. That is the evidence of a transformed heart. James says, "how can you say you have faith" in this relationship with God, I trust in God, I'm forgiven, the Holy Spirit lives in me, "and not have



works?" Those works are going to be a manifestation of that. You're working out of your salvation is going to be a natural following evidence of your new relationship with God.

It's good to be back at our church, and I know it pretty well because I know on the patio, if I didn't finish the story about the Ritz-Carlton you're going to ask me what happened. When the guy said that and I opened my folder and I found no notes in there, I had to make a quick decision. And again, I'm just nerve wracking this group. I mean, people that I see on television, they're out there, you know, the Christians of the society, and I leaned over to my handler and I said, "I'll be right back." And I was right in the front row and went down the aisle. I walked briskly, trying to act like I was fine. And then I got to the door where I knew they couldn't see me and I had my suit on, remember that, I ran baby from that ballroom down the hall into the lobby to find the valet to speak to him in very terse terms about my need for my car.

Bordering on the violent and the frenetic, "I need my car now. I don't care who's waiting for their car, I need my car now. I got my wallet somewhere. I will make this worth your while. Matter of fact, I don't even want you to get my car. Can you run to wherever my car is in some bunker, wherever it is and let me just see if I can keep up with you?" And so he has to fumble for the keys, gets the keys and we run. He was young, he outran me, but I was running as best I could behind him to find where my car was. He had the key and he opens it up and sure enough, I go there in the back seat and there was my briefcase, which I had gone through my notes and printed them out and read through them, stuck them there, grabbed my folder, thinking I'm going to need my folder because I got to put my notes in the folder, but that was the stuff I missed. And I grabbed those things. I put them in my folder and I ran. And this time I ran faster than he did because I was heading to the lobby and down the hallway and into the ballroom. And as I'm coming in the back they're introducing me.

You've seen like the old-time heavysset preachers in the South who come up with a hanky as they preach. Man, I needed one of those. I barely got to the platform on time. And I preached. The moral of the story, if I couldn't wake you up at 2:00 in the morning and have you tell me something about the act of obedience of Christ or the substitutionary atonement of Christ, or why the resurrection is important, what the message of the gospel is all about, if you feel like you don't have the preparation and grasp on things you need, then here's the moral of the story. Run. Get it done.

When the writer of Hebrews wrote the Hebrew audience, he said, Listen. "By this time you ought to be teachers, but instead you're there sucking on the bottle." You're a big Baby Huey, if you know what that old reference is. You guys need to get it together. You ought to be teaching these things. "You should have no need for someone to teach them to you because you've been a Christian long enough." And all I'm telling you is when you're brand-new Christian, you can give your testimony and point people to church, point people to the Bible. But many of you in this church, particularly the 9:00 o'clock crowd, my most mature and astute crowd. Don't tell them I said that at 11. They're fun at 11. But I know how smart you are. I'm just telling you this. We got to catch up. Right?



And the word in that passage, and I don't want to start preaching another sermon right now, and I shouldn't, but "Nothros" in Greek, it's the word you're just sluggish. Let's not be sluggish. I don't care if you're wearing a suit. Run. Get it done. Let's catch up. And if you're not a Christian I don't know what to tell you other than I hope this sermon you've been listening to it. You need to respond in repentance and faith.

Let's pray, God, give us a passion to know the gospel, to master the gospel components. Not just the words, not just introducing our kids by saying their names, not just sharing the gospel by saying, "Jesus loves you. He died for you. You're a sinner. Repent." But being able to unpack that for people and explain that to people. And God, I know that means we got to do some, some thinking. We've got to do some explaining. We've got to talk to our kids about this. We've got to practice discussing what these things mean. We need to dig deeper in books that matter, not just reading about starlets in Hollywood or sports stats in Sports Illustrated. God help us to dig deeper into these things that we might be ambassadors who know our king and we know his message. So prepare us this week and give us opportunities as we see those open doors of people who you have prepared for the conversation about the gospel.

In Jesus name. Amen.