**Acts 10:34-43**

**The Impartial God**

# Read 10:34-43

# Pray

* "We are gathered to hear Your word, command your Light into us! As your Holy Spirit came upon them all, Do the same this morning for the sake of your fame"

# Background

* Peter's vision, and Cornelius' visitation. Map, travel days.
	+ ch10 - Italian Centurion vision - 'send to Joppa, for a Simon Peter'. The following day while on journey, Peter's vision - 'What God has made clean do not call common'. Returns with them; Cornelius and friends**: Read v30-34**

# Introduction

Our main concern this morning is Peter's answer, **v34-43**

34-35 So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

* "*Truly I understand* " "in truth" is an idiom of **exclamation**. "*Certainly*!" But for Peter, everything was changing. The system he'd grown up in and built his entire life around was challenged. Some of us have heard this news truth before, but we all need to be freshly surprised because it never gets old.
* **God is not** '***face-regarding'*** (partial/ respector of persons/biased/prejudiced).
* **APP**: The first thing we do when we see someone new is sum them up and categorise, often comparing to ourselves - bigger, smaller, hotter, uglier, smarter, dumber, richer, poorer, ... and more appropriate to this passage - more acceptable to God, or less acceptable to God. [PAUSE]
* **ILLUS**: Learning the pecking order in school. - Many can think of some reason why they may be lower on the pecking order of God's favour. **But both the foremost disciple Peter and the scarcely-mentioned Gentile Italian go before us here, on God's frontier revelation** -
"***no partiality... every nation... anyone***".

This is the first of 2 lessons which I've enjoyed rediscovering.

* **CONTEXT:** Non-Jews must have always felt somewhat buffered from nearness to God; and prevented from that significance that the Jews enjoyed (cf Samaritan woman "*even the dogs eat the children's crumbs from the table*"). One could become a convert to the entire Jewish culture and identity of course; and one would have to because Jerusalem, the city of the Jews was the place of 'true worship' - and only Jews were allowed into the inner temple area. Gentiles could worship, but had to remain in the outer court. The Jews had the Hebrew **scripture** from Hebrew **heritage**. They had even a direct blood **descent** from the man Abraham - the **original Hebrew** - to whom God appeared and gave a **covenant** - that Abraham's children would "inherit the earth"! **Cornelius**, an Italian! Roman centurion over 600 troops, stationed in Caesarea.
* People like Cornelius **skirted** the worship of God - What could a gentile do who believed in the Jews' God, but worship that One True God, but from a distance, and with no guarantee of His **acceptance** (**35b**, LIT "*welcome*").
* **APP**: we need not pretend the same doesn't happen in our society. There are the Peters and the Corenlius'. There are Cornelius' who are on the outside. So much so that even if they might be inwardly drawn to God, are feeling forever **distanced**, **unqualified** to be on the inside - and "obviously", low in God's pecking order. What's worse, is sometimes the Peters think it too. But I've spoken with men who I can tell, beyond the friendliness, feel they belong on the other side of the shop window.
* **This event changed Peter, and it changed Cornelius. God has no pecking order, they discovered. All people are equal before Him!**

How can this be? Let's move into the passage then.

# The Revelation

* in v33 Cornelius says, "Peter, God has a revelation for us - tell us what He has commanded you to **say** " - Peter starts by saying*, the* ***word*** *you need to know is about* ***Jesus***!

**v36-38** - is an awkward sentence which I'll translate for easier understanding. "Tell us the Word from God...":

God sent word to the Jews, "evangelising" peace ...**on account of Jesus Christ: He is of all Lord,**

* Up until now, in Cornelius' vocabulary, it's been 'God'/'the Lord' - **though he had known about the amazing man** (37)

## Fame

You've heard what's been going down in the whole of Judea, beginning from Galilee with the baptism which John preached:

**Jesus** the [One] from Nazareth,

as God anointed **Him** with the Holy Spirit and with power,

who went around doing good and healing all those being oppressed under the devil
since God was with **Him**.

* **FCF**: Passage so significant to me because so applicable to our world today - people know the name *Jesus* - a heritage of church/ Christian-values/ brought by missionaries, inculcated and put into curricula. At least my generation - though after us it's disappearing. All of you here today have heard about the Amazing Man, Jesus. But **'Jesus'** and **'welcoming acceptance before God'** didn't connect in Cornelius' mind, and likewise, neither in the minds of thousands today. Jesus remains simply a chapter in the library of knowledge - but there's no Relationship with Him.
* Cornelius wants to know what God is saying to him, and Peter starts by saying*, the* ***word*** *is about* ***Jesus***!
* **APP**: There is no good news without **Jesus. v36, The Good News from God is** *'PEACE' on account of Jesus Christ*. Without Jesus there is no good news; - just a vague discouraged hope that God might just maybe accept us if we are sincere enough. ...But Listen to: **Rom 5:1**

we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

* v38: *Anointed with the HS & power* - Anyone can **claim** to be bringing a message from God - but **Jesus** was **qualified** to claim that - by His acts of Power, His Goodness, His Wisdom & preaching -
	+ no one could defeat Him,
	+ no one was too insignificant to Him
	+ Confounded the teachers, Silenced his opponents, Liberated the oppressed, Changed sinners into saints - **When Jesus moved, a Heavenly order penetrated the Devil's domain**

## Eye-witnesses

* Now that's not all. Peter goes on. Not only has **Cornelius** **heard** of Jesus, as he "saw Facebook posts and Tweets", rubbed shoulders with the people who talked about Jesus, ... but **before him** stands an **eye-, ear- and hand- witness** of Jesus' entire ministry

**39-41.**

39 And we [Peter and apotles] are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

**1 John 1:1-2** - Peter's close friend John who was also with Peter those 3 years.

[Jesus, God's Word to us, Who] was from the beginning, [who] we have heard, [who] we have seen with our eyes, [who] we looked upon and have touched with our hands, [He] was made visible, and we have seen [Him], and testify to [Him] and proclaim to you [Jesus,]the eternal life, [who] was with the Father and was made visible to us--

* These eye- ear- hand-witnesses, God set up to carry this testimony and specially gave them encounters with the resurrected Jesus. And Jesus overcame their unbelief and doubt by eating and drinking with Him - spending enough time (40 days) to give proof, to explain, to direct them in mission

**1 Cor 15:3-6**

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to PETER, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

* The NT is the collection of these testimonies, collated by 9 authors: Mat, Mar, Luk, John, Paul, auth of Hebrews, James, Peter, and Jude; over 40 years' letters, memoirs, research and archives. These are Witnesses who wouldn't recant even on threat of death (and most of them were killed). Men who had once run away in fear from the Roman guard had seen the Resurrected Jesus, and fears and perspective had reversed. **We have their testimony** - our Scripture, **and the Holy Spirit** who applies it to our hearts as we read it - convicting us of the Truth "Lord pour out your Spirit of Truth"

# The good News and the Critical News

I've shared the first of 2 lessons which I've enjoyed rediscovering

**There is the good news - God is Impartial,** God makes no distinction among people - there is one standard he holds **all** to:(**v35**) "*who fears Him and does what it right is acceptable to Him*" - cf. that relationship He had with Adam and Eve - our first-parents, in Eden - as they **honoured** Him as Lord and **trusted** His definition of Good and Evil.

* The **Jews** have no especial slack from God, or privileged communion with God which others don't have.
* The **sold-out Bible believing servant-hearted church member** has no edge/ qualification beyond anyone else into the favour of God, who may feel like they're on the other side of the window.

**And then there is the critical news, v42 "he has commanded us"**

***Notice*** *... Peter* ***answers*** *Cornelius'* ***question*** *in 10:33 (remember it?) : they want to hear all that "the Lord" has* ***commanded*** *Peter.* So this is the climax of Peter's answer!!

**the commandment is this:** even a devout man who (**10:2)**, fears God, leads his family/servants to the same, gives like Jesus gave and prays like Jesus prayed, - **needs to be saved**! -

That's why Peter has been sent to Cornelius.

**42.**

And He commanded us to preach to the people and to solemnly-testify that He is the (one having been determined) by God, **Judge** of the living and dead.

* *Judge*: Jesus is qualified to claim He is from God - by His acts of Power, His Goodness, His Wisdom & preaching. He is also Qualified to be the Judge!
* Qualified to judge compassionately because He lived the human life,
* Qualified to judge without corruption, because He has no guilt,
* Qualified to execute judgement, because He has power over life and death.
* See the flow from v36-43, All Cornelius had heard about Jesus, all Peter was testifying about Jesus, **culminates in this . John 5: 25-29**.

25 "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. 27 And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

* **APP**: When you die and stand before God for judgement - Who will you be standing before? **Jesus** - the One Qualified Judge
* **ILLUS**: "*will all my sins of the past be forgiven? how will I get to Heaven in 'righteousness'*?" I'm sure Cornelius had the same questions - as many many many today still say, "I hope!"

We learn, over the page in **11:14** that before Cornelius had even met Peter, God had said to Cornelius - "Peter *will declare to you a message by which you and your household will be saved* - Peter continues,

**43**

43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

* The Judge Himself, the Impartial Judge, while we **all** were yet sinners, **died** for us - There is no one in any pecking order - if it looks that way, it's an illusion. All people are sinners and fall short of God's favour. The Critical News is that the Judge is the Saviour. **Rom 4:25-5:1** *Jesus : crucified for* ***our trespasses*** *and resurrected* ***for our justification****; therefore we can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, if we place our faith and trust in Him!*

**44-46**

44-46 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 (For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.)

* The same gift, not speaking in tongues, but **baptism of HS for salvation** - marked at belief**. Eph 1.** **Act 2** - "*this promise is for all who believe*". = presence and power and sanctification upon us! ( tongues at that point necessary to prove the unexpected even shocking truth - that God is **Impartial**)

if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

**47-48**

Then Peter declared, 47 "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

# Summary

**The Good News - God is Impartial!! The Critical News - We must be saved!**

* Doesn't matter who you are - God invites you today to come back to Him - Perhaps the Lord is speaking in your heart right now and you know that you can choose to resist Him, but that that would be pointless - because you've realised who He is and you know you need Him: the Holy Spirit has come upon you! - **Now is the time for you to Acknowledge Him as Lord**! Come to Him and don't delay - **Pray with Me, "LORD...** ".
* If you have prayed that prayer, I need to give you something, and I want to pray for you - won't you come and speak to me ... Or perhaps you have questions - something's not clear to you - Let me try answer them. Just after the service, or if you can't wait, during the last song!

All men are equal at the foot of the cross