

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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LESSONS ON SALVATION

Acts 10:23-48

Sunday, April 18, 2021

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The three points of today's message:

- Salvation is for everyone.
- Salvation is through Jesus.
- Salvation brings about change.

**INTRODUCTION:** Before we begin, let's have a quick review. Luke begins the book of Acts with the ascension of Jesus and the replacement of Judas, the disciple who betrayed Christ. About 49 days after the resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit descended on the believers, and the disciples, led by Peter, became bold evangelists. As more and more people came to know the Lord, a community of believers was formed—what would come to be known as the church. They prayed and worshipped together, fellowshiped with one another, and shared meals, including the Lord's Supper. God continued to provide power to the disciples, allowing them to perform miracles in his name. As their testimony became bolder, the religious authorities began to take notice, and some of the disciples, including Peter and John, were threatened and imprisoned. However, instead of stifling the spread of Christianity, the growing persecution emboldened believers who prayed for courage and ministered to one another by sharing their possessions.

The early church, composed of regular human beings like us, was not without its own set of problems. For example, when Ananias and Sapphira intentionally lied and tried to deceive the elders about a financial matter, God struck them dead. When a group of widows was left out of the daily distribution of food, other members of the body of Christ began to complain. But God used even the difficult circumstances to help instill a godly fear of himself and a deeper love for one another, and the church continued to grow.

As more and more people began paying attention to the message of the gospel, the high priests became increasingly concerned. When a devout believer named Stephen boldly preached the message of salvation from Abraham through Christ, the Jewish leaders were infuriated at his accusations. As Stephen called them out for their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah, they dragged him out of the city and stoned him.

Among those who participated in Stephen's execution was a man named Saul, a zealous Pharisee, who took it upon himself to hunt down and persecute Christians. God had another plan for Saul, though. As you probably remember, Jesus stopped him on the road to Damascus and spoke to him personally. After three days of being blind, God sent Ananias to heal and minister to Saul, who immediately gave his heart and life to the Lord and joined those he once persecuted.

Stephen's death was the beginning of a wave of persecution that scattered believers, but they continued to share God's Word wherever they went. Disciples like Phillip and Peter preached the gospel in areas outside of Jerusalem and to people who looked, spoke, and lived very differently than they did.

And so, that brings us to last week's sermon, where we met Cornelius, a godly Roman centurion, who received a visit from an angel. The angel told Cornelius to seek out Peter who was in Joppa staying with Simon the Tanner. Before the arrival of Cornelius's men, Peter was waiting for lunch and growing hungrier by the minute. In a vision, Peter saw a net full of clean and unclean animals, and he heard the Lord tell him to kill and eat. Peter, probably thinking it was some kind of test, argued with the Lord. He had always tried to follow the rules, and the rules said that he shouldn't eat unclean things. Peter was reminded not to call anything unclean that God called clean. We learned that although Cornelius and Peter were both good men, they were not good enough. God still had more in store for each of them. This week, we'll discover what lessons both Peter and Cornelius had to learn.

Like Paul Harvey always said, "Now, for the rest of the story..."

# 1-SALVATION IS FOR EVERYONE

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 10:23-35

*Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. <sup>24</sup> The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup> As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. <sup>26</sup> But Peter made him get up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.” <sup>27</sup> While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. <sup>28</sup> He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. <sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?” <sup>30</sup> Cornelius answered: “Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me <sup>31</sup> and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. <sup>32</sup> Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’ <sup>33</sup> So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.” <sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism <sup>35</sup> but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.*

**EXPLANATION:** Cornelius was a Gentile. He was a God-fearing Gentile, but he was still a Gentile. Peter was a Jew and a Christian. For those of you who may be unfamiliar with the terms, the term “Gentile” referred to anyone who was not a Jew. However, the word carried with it much more than a distinction of family or race. Some Biblical translators have gone as far as to translate the original word “pagan” or “heathen”, which honestly offers a better understanding of how the Jews perceived everyone else. The Roman historian, Tacitus, once wrote that Jews “regard the rest of mankind with all the hatred of enemies.”

Gentiles could convert to Judaism. For males, however, this meant that they must be circumcised; so not many took that final step. Therefore, God-fearing Gentiles may have been considered “good people,” but they were still not accepted among

the Jewish people. They were, in fact, considered unclean. And remember what we have learned about unclean things? Jews believed that just being around something unclean could make them unclean too. Of course, Jesus taught his disciples to love one another and to be kind to one's enemies. But for Peter and other Jewish Christians, there was a big difference in loving someone from afar and accepting a Gentile as an equal.

**ILLUSTRATION:** On December 1, 1955, a 42-year-old black woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man. Her actions helped spark a civil rights movement in the United States. Why was she asked to give it up in the first place? At the time, laws of segregation in Montgomery, Alabama, and in many other states, defined where people of color could sit, eat, and even go to school. Which restroom or water fountain a person used was even determined by his/her skin color. People who paid the same bus fare were given different seating options. Blacks were sent to the back; whites rode in front. On that particular Thursday, the white section was full, and the driver commanded that the black men and women relinquish their spots. Rosa refused.

Whether it's because of skin color, religion, or some other attribute, segregation, discrimination, and racism always boil down to one group of people thinking they are better than another. Because God called the Israelites to be his chosen people, they had developed an over-zealous sense of nationalism and religious pride. They thought they were better than everyone else, and they most certainly didn't believe that God's message of salvation could apply to anyone else. Peter, however, knew differently.

He may have been a slow learner, but he was finally getting the message. God loves and accepts Jews and Gentiles alike, and he expects his people to accept one another as well. **God taught Peter that salvation is for everyone.**

## **2-SALVATION IS ONLY THROUGH JESUS.**

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 10:36-43

*You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—<sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross,<sup>40</sup> but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> 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. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*

**EXPLANATION:** Peter was not the first Christian to preach in Caesarea. If you remember from our study of Acts, Philip went there after his visit with the Ethiopian eunuch. So, it is possible that Cornelius and his family had heard the message of salvation before. Still, Peter didn't want to take a chance. He started from the beginning. He told them the gospel story.

- God sent Jesus.
- Jesus did many signs and wonders because God was with him.
- Jesus was crucified on the cross.
- Jesus rose from the grave on the third day.
- Jesus is the judge of the living and the dead.
- Everyone who believes in the name of Jesus is forgiven.

How often do we fail to share the gospel message because we are concerned that we don't know enough? Here, Peter shared the entire gospel message in six sentences. He wasn't worried about what Cornelius already knew or didn't know. He wasn't concerned with whether his words would be understood or misunderstood. He simply told Cornelius what Cornelius needed to hear. Being a good man wasn't good enough. Cornelius needed to know and accept Jesus. Peter started with Jesus

and ended with Jesus because he wanted to make a point. **Salvation is for everyone, and salvation is only through Jesus.**

### **3-SALVATION BRINGS ABOUT CHANGE.**

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 10:44-48

*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. <sup>45</sup> The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup> “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” <sup>48</sup> So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

**EXPLANATION:** Cornelius and those with him believed and accepted the message of salvation that Peter preached. How do we know? Because they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Believers today know that when we accept Christ’s free gift of salvation, we are immediately indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but Peter and his buddies had to wait until Jesus was gone for the Holy Spirit to come. The Holy Spirit settled on them like flames and then gave them the ability to speak in other languages. In the same way, the Holy Spirit came upon these believers. For skeptical Jewish Christians, this was very important because it provided a physical demonstration of the internal change. It was proof that God had actually saved the Gentiles. Peter recognized their salvation because there was a change in their actions.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Have you ever hired a contractor to do work inside your house? Maybe you had a new heat and air system put in, or maybe you had some rooms painted. Sometimes, when you do that kind of thing, the contractors will give you a sign to put in your yard that advertises their business. Why do they do that? Because the work they did was inside your house, it isn’t immediately visible to the public. Without the sign, not many people would know that there was a change. The contractor wants people to know that work has been done in your house. By putting the sign out in your yard, you are saying that you approve of the work that has been done.

We shouldn't have to wear a t-shirt that says we are Christian. The work of salvation happens inside of us, but it should be visible through the changes that take place in our lives. The way we act should be like our sign to the world saying, "Jesus did work in here." God allowed Cornelius and the other Gentiles that day to have a very public show of His Spirit at work in them. By living Christ-like lives, we have the opportunity to do the same.

- Salvation is for everyone.
- Salvation is only through Jesus, and
- Salvation results in a change.

**APPLICATION:** The world has a sin problem. You and I have a sin problem. We are sinners by nature and sinners by choice. We are eternally separated from a holy God and doomed to hell after this life. But Jesus came to make a way to save everyone from the curse of sin. He died on the cross to defeat sin and rose from the grave to defeat death. Through Jesus and Jesus alone, we can have salvation. Jesus didn't just die to save the good ones. He died for everyone. He didn't just die to save the southerners. He died for everyone. He didn't just die to save Americans. He died for everyone. Salvation is for everyone, but salvation can only be obtained through Jesus. He alone is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through him. Salvation is for everyone. Salvation is only through Jesus, and salvation results in a change. If you claim to be a Christ-follower, then you ought to be living like a Christ-follower. You are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, filled with his power and his peace. Can the world see the difference in you?

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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