

Acts 9:32-10:48 - Papendorf

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Date: 28 June 2026

Preacher: Dave Papendorf

[0:00] There we go. I've been off for a bit. Sorry. Good morning. Good to see you. It's a pleasure to welcome you in the name of Jesus.

Yeah, I was doing some math. Can you guys hear me? You're looking at me like maybe you can't hear me. It's still off. It's still off. Yeah, well, I'm off, right? Better? Oh, how nice. Thank you. Good. Okay, I was doing some math. We're about a third of the way through the book of Acts already, if you can believe it.

And we've heard lots of stories, unique stories, interesting stories, scary stories, all of them weaving together a tapestry, something beautiful, this vibrant theology of the book of Acts.

And our passage today makes a significant contribution to that, an important contribution that has echoes throughout the rest of the book of Acts. Right here in this text, this collection of stories, we see the clearest and fullest expression of how the Gentiles, not the Jews, but the Gentiles are being welcomed into God's covenant people through Jesus.

And we see that confirmed by the power of the Holy Spirit. So this collection of stories wants us to see how the Gentiles are welcomed into God's covenant people through Jesus, confirmed by the power of the Spirit.

[1:35] That's why Luke spends so much time here, talking about these visions and relating the dialogues and even pairing some healing stories. Before that, all of these work together to make that point clear to us.

And we reach the climax, which hopefully you felt as Tad read. The Spirit comes down on these people, and we're meant to be amazed as readers, just as the Jewish Christians and Peter were amazed.

One scholar says this, that this passage is best described as Peter and the Gentile Pentecost. Which is pretty good. I think that's a good way to go about it, a good way to frame this idea.

And as we study, I need help, we need help. So let's ask the Lord to be with us. Lord, I pray this morning that as I preach a sinner clay jar, that your glory and power would be made known, that it comes from you.

We ask that you would grow all of us as we hear your word, as we read ancient texts for Christian instruction for us today. We ask this by the Spirit that you so richly pour out through Jesus the Son.

[2:47] Amen. Amen. Okay, as we jump into this mega passage, I want to teach you something about music. Or remind you something about music. I'm obviously the most qualified person to do this.

And if you want to check my work, you can check my work. You can speak to principal cellist, cellist in residence, Dan Godoy, a little bit later. Okay, we know what a melody is.

A melody is like the main thing of a song, the main idea of a song. It's what we know about a song. But complex pieces of music can also sometimes have not just a melody, but something called a counter melody.

It's not something that competes with the melody, but it's another melody that kind of sits beneath the surface. If you're listening closely, you can hear it. It adds texture and depth to a piece of music. You can listen to a Bach organ fugue later today, if you'd like, for some vibrant Sunday listening, if you want to catch that. Or next week, if you must, you can corner Deacon Eric Saul and you could ask him about counter melodies in the secular musical Hamilton.

[3:56] You can ask him all about that next week if you must. Okay, so counter melodies, they don't compete, but they add layering. And sometimes, if a piece of music is written just so beautifully, artfully, the counter melody can become the main melody, the main idea, the main thing you hear, even if just for a short amount of time.

That idea of melody and counter melody and even the action of a counter melody becoming the main thing that you hear is really helpful for us to understand this passage of Acts that Luke is writing for us and the direction that Acts is going.

Because there's a clear counter melody and the main thing that we're going to be talking about. Unexpected that the Spirit is pouring out on them and they speak in tongues. This is not a thing that Jewish Christians expected. Because if you remember from reading Leviticus and studying it together, there's all sorts of exclusions that make it so that only certain types of people can approach God's presence.

And even live among his people. Think of the camp of Israel and outside of the camp and all of the layers inside. But in the book of Acts, we see all those people who might not otherwise be allowed to be in proximity with God being brought in and being brought closer to him.

[5:51] Samaritans, we've met them already. Magicians, eunuchs, enemies like Saul. And this all fulfills big Bible promises from the prophets, especially Isaiah, but others too.

Now, all of you read Luke in preparation for our study in Acts. And so, you know, Luke was already getting at those things in his gospel. And they flower here in the book of Acts as well.

The Gentiles are made a part of God's people. And this thing is not competing with the melody.

Remember the melody? The melody of Acts. That God the Father, through Jesus the Son, demonstrated by the Spirit, pours out his gospel and good news for all.

That's the shape of this passage too. The counter melody raises to be heard as well. Okay, so this is a big passage. There's four big sections. I want to give you the sections if you'd like that, if you're a note taker.

There's two healing stories. Those are meant to be understood together. So our first section is chapter 9, verses 32 through 48. Two healing stories. 9, 32 through 48.

[7:04] And then the second section, chapter 10, verses 1 through 33. These are the visions and the meeting of Cornelius and Peter. 10, 1 through 33.

The visions and meeting of Cornelius and Peter. The third section, 10, 34 through 43. This is Peter's Gentile speech.

That's what I'm calling it. 34 through 43, Peter's Gentile speech. And then chapter 10, verses 44 through 48. This is the climax here.

The Holy Spirit among the Gentiles. 44 through 48. The Holy Spirit among the Gentiles. The main point. The climax of the passage. Okay, so jumping in here.

In verse 32. We see that Peter went here and there among them. And he came down to the saints who lived at Lydda. We haven't heard a ton about Peter recently.

[8:02] The last we heard of him. He was rebuking Simon the magician. And he laid his hands on a bunch of Samaritans. And they received the spirit. That's in Acts chapter 8. And then before that, Peter gave a really long speech in chapter 5.

Interestingly, Peter, though still an important character, begins to fade a little bit as the focus of Acts is more squarely on Paul as the protagonist. We'll see that.

But Peter's involved here in some sort of circuit ministry outside of Jerusalem. He was in Jerusalem for a long time. Now he is in the outer reaches of Judea, which sounds familiar.

Jerusalem, Judea, and all the ends of the earth. That's Acts 1.8. So Peter is a part of this thing. He's a part of the spread of the gospel outside of Jerusalem.

And in these two stories, we see a lame person healed and a dead person raised back to life. Similar things happen in Luke 7.

[9:05] Similar things also happen in 1 Kings 17. Interesting business. What Luke is doing is saying, hey, this stuff that Peter is doing reminds us of what Jesus did, which itself reminds us of what Elijah did.

When though there were many in Israel, Elijah goes to a Gentile woman and raises her son back to life. There are hints, there are breadcrumbs already in these healing stories that Peter and the gospel, more importantly, is going among the Gentiles.

In verse 33, Peter is in Lydda. He finds this man, Aeneas, and he heals him by the name of Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 34. Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Raise and make your bed. Thanks, Tad. I actually did make my bed this morning. You can ask Sarah about that, but I'll add to.

It's in the text, right? Anyways. He is healed. And the most important driving point here, all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and they turned to the Lord.

[10:18] That is the point of this miracle. It draws people's attention to Jesus. There were already Christians in this city. Peter goes and ministers there and even more people see and hear what Jesus can do.

Now, in verse 36, we get a longer healing account. Joppa is like a day's travel away from Lydda. It's on the Mediterranean coast.

Very nice. And there's this woman there who's a part of the Christian community. Her name is Tabitha. And she's a perfect example of what we've come to know is true about the Christian community.

She is generous. She is charitable. She does good works. And we hear the church doing that in Acts 2 and in Acts 6.

This is what makes the Christian church the Christian church. She's a great example of that. And she's kind of the anti-Sapphira even, if you want to think about it that way. Well, in verse 38, the believers there, they know that Aeneas has been healed.

[11:21] And so they call to Peter, knowing he's close. He comes and they demonstrate their love for Tabitha by showing her handiwork. They're weeping. They're also expectant.

And so Peter sends them out. That sounds familiar, doesn't it? And speaks to Tabitha. And she, he prays first, speaks to her. And she is raised from the dead.

A godly woman is restored to life. And look at verse 42. It became known throughout all Joppa and many believed in the Lord. And Peter stays there for some time with this guy, Simon.

So these two healing stories are not randomly placed. Sometimes when we read the Gospels or we read Acts, we think that these stories are just sort of plopped in there. There's always a rhetorical strategy.

That's what's going on here. We're getting some anticipation. Like 1 Kings 17. Like Luke 7. That there's this Gentile opening kind of thing.

[12:25] Even as the Gospel is still among the Jewish people. We're to anticipate this. By the way, a tanner is someone who works with leather.

Leather comes from dead animals. Dead animals are not to be in the camp. Interesting that Peter stays with him. Now, Luke does what Luke does.

And sends us to another location at the start of chapter 10. So we're in our second section here. We're visions and the meeting of Cornelius and Peter. We move locations to this place, Caesarea. And there's a man there that we meet, Cornelius. A centurion of what is known as the Italian cohort. There's lots of Caesareas in biblical times.

They're named after Caesar. Caesar in the Bible, bad guy. Okay, Caesar is a pagan leader. And this city is named after a pagan leader. And this is a guy who works for him.

[13:24] Who's a part of the Roman troops. We know the Roman troops most infamously for crucifying Jesus. But remember in Luke 24, there is a centurion who speaks and says, truly this man, he's speaking of Jesus, was the son of God.

Luke speaks through another centurion here. Because shockingly, verse two, this guy who's a military general, who lives in a pagan city, works for a pagan boss, is what?

A devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms, that would mean charitable giving, alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.

This is an unconventional person to say the least. Not the sort of behavior we would expect from the person with this kind of job. Interesting.

And then a bunch of other weird stuff happens, at least weird from our perspective. There's an angel who comes to him in verse three and speaks to him. Cornelius is freaked out.

[14:27] Verse four, what is it, Lord? He says. And the angel says, your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

Wow. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel burn offerings. And the idea and the vision and the visual is that the smoke as it ascends to heaven is a fragrance that metaphorically God regards. There's a deliberate Israel offering metaphor here from this pagan, employed Roman Cornelius guy.

Your prayers, the good works that you do, are just like those offerings in the Old Testament. Wow. Okay, Cornelius might not understand it exactly that way.

We can. And then he's commanded to send away for Peter. And that's what he does. He obeys. He sends away for Peter.

[15 : 31] And his servants go on their way. In verse nine, we go back to Peter. Still in Joppa. Decides to pray around lunchtime.

Is very hungry. Goes on top of the roof. Children, do not pray on your roof. Peter can pray on his roof. There's these things called parapets, which, you know, keep you safe on top of the roof. Unless your parents have parapets, don't pray on the roof. Peter does, though. He's praying up there. And God uses this occasion of Peter being hungry as a redemptive moment to teach him something and to bless the church.

So, we have this really long narrative here, starting in verse nine all the way through verse 33. Lots of back and forth.

Lots of dialogue between Peter and Cornelius. Some repetition even. Did you guys notice that? Luke is building the tension for us. Kids, maybe you can think of a story that you know or a movie where right as things are about to get the most intense or the most exciting or something dramatic is about to happen.

[16 : 40] Things seem to slow down. Like, maybe somebody is kind of tiptoeing and they're about to look around the corner because they're worried about what is around the corner. That kind of strategy is what Luke is using here to build the tension for us.

Peter himself has a vision. What an interesting one indeed. Next week in chapter 11, Peter's going to explain it himself. So, I'll just call out some of the main ideas.

He has a triple vision. Okay, so he goes into a trance. He begins to see things and there's this big blanket that comes down from heaven and there's all sorts of animals on it.

The language that's used here is the language from Genesis. Reptiles and birds of the air and animals. And he hears a voice, which we know to be the Holy Spirit, which commands him, Peter, to kill these animals and to eat them.

And Peter's a good Jewish boy. So, he says, oh no, I would not do such a thing. You shouldn't eat iguanas or whatever. But the voice speaks back to him and says in verse 15, what God has made clean, do not call common.

[17 : 54] And this happened three times. A triple vision. Interesting, impactful moment. See, in the Old Testament, as we know, there are certain animals you're meant to eat if you're a part of God's people.

Other animals you're not meant to eat, iguanas would be one of them. Don't eat lizards in the Old Testament. But instead, there's a reorientation here. The Holy Spirit is saying to Peter, Peter, you're misunderstanding this idea of what it means to follow dietary laws.

They're not about separating people because God is a good creator that has created all things. I want to teach you something. And we'll see, Peter internalizes this message as he's called to have fellowship with Gentiles, a thing Jews usually don't have.

Okay, so Peter expects that an envoy is on their way. And in verse 23, he meets the men who come from Cornelius and he goes with them back to Cornelius's house.

So they're going to travel together. Peter leaves a city where there are Christians and goes with this guy, Cornelius, who he doesn't really know all that well, who's a Gentile. He's commanded to go with him.

[19 : 08] And so they go together. Sorry, Cornelius is still at home. He goes with his envoy and in verse 24, they meet each other. Look at this.

Cornelius was expecting them. He called together all of his relatives and his close friends. This is meant to be understood as a big group of people. Cornelius has a vision. Hey, call for this guy, Peter.

Cornelius says, sure, I'll do that. Scary angel. And I'm going to bring everyone. We're all going to be here. Friends, relatives, guys, Gentiles.

It's acceptable for Jews to host Gentiles in their house, but not the other way around. If you're a Jewish person in the ancient world, you're not supposed to consort with Gentiles because their house might be full of unclean things.

But what God has called, what God has created is not to be called common. Peter enters his house. Now, Cornelius is still a bit mixed up.

[20:06] Verse 25, he worships Peter. Peter lifts him up and says, I'm just a man. And then he gives a short introduction here.

Verse 28, you know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.

Peter's internalized what his vision means. The vision was about animals. Peter realized, oh, God is teaching me something about people. That just as there are not clean or unclean animals, more importantly, there are not clean and unclean people.

And so, he was sent for. He came without objection. And then says, what do you want exactly, Cornelius? Verses 30 through 33, Cornelius kind of explains, hey, we want to hear from you. Here's what happened. We want to hear all that you say. Teeing Peter up to speak. Okay, we should pull back from the text just a minute and we should notice that God, God the Father, has sovereignly arranged all of these things to happen just so.

[21:24] The visions at the right time between these people who do not know each other. The right sort of communication and understanding and expectancy between them.

Peter already begins to understand what his vision is meant to mean. That Jewish Christians and Gentiles ought not to be separated but brought together by God.

There's visions. There's unity and fellowship. And soon there will be preaching of the gospel and even the Holy Spirit. Peter doesn't know that quite yet. Okay, we're getting that counter melody, which is beginning to rise to the surface here of God reconstituting, remaking his people in unexpected eschatological ways.

They're ready to hear from Peter, verse 33. Cornelius says, we're ready to hear all that you've been commanded by the Lord. And so Peter opens his mouth, verse 34, and gives a speech.

A speech, a speech, which is the message of Jesus, the gospel. And I want to suggest to you that it's a Gentile-shaped gospel message.

[22:34] Here's what I mean by that. This short speech misses a lot of things that are in a lot of the other speeches. Did you notice that? No Moses, no temple. There's not religious leaders nearby.

John the Baptist is mentioned. We heard of him in the reading today. There's no patriarchs, no Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. There's interesting details of Jesus' ministry.

But this speech has its main point on the top and on the bottom. And here's what the main point of Peter's Gentile-shaped gospel speech is.

God shows no partiality, verse 34. Verse 35. In every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

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

[23:41] That's the thesis on the front end and on the back end. God shows no partiality. Those who believe in him are his people.

God the Father shows no partiality because, verse 36, of the good news of Jesus the Son, who was anointed by the Spirit. Verse 38. And the Gentiles are soon to be anointed by the Spirit too.

44 and 45. Still Trinity-shaped. Just packaged, understandable for a Gentile audience. Who might not have the reference point for exactly who Isaac was, but certainly know who Jesus is.

And have heard of John the Baptist. And know, verse 39, that they put Jesus to death by hanging him on a tree. And amazingly, verse 40, God raised him on the third day to appear and empowered the apostles to go and to speak.

Now, I said Gentile-shaped gospel message. I don't mean that it's different fundamentally or a different kind of gospel than the other speeches.

[24:51] There's an important detail here. Look at verse 37. You yourselves know what happened throughout all of Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed.

Remember, John is a part of the redemptive plan. Verse 36. As for the word that he sent to Israel, an important marker we need to note. Okay, Paul, who we'll hear from later, Paul writes in Romans about how the gospel comes through the people of Israel to all people.

And so there's continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, if we want to be broad about it. This is a culmination of the gospel for all people here.

That's what Peter is getting after. And again, I hope you hear the main message that Jews and Gentiles, that's all people. Even if those categories don't mean quite as much today in 2026, all people are equal in God's sight.

They actually always have been. And Peter is not just saying Gentiles can also be saved. That's a struggle that the church will continue to sort of work out.

[26:02] It's not just that Gentiles can be saved. It's that within the Christian community, there is no distinction between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, or Chilean Christians and American Christians, or pick your two.

It's interesting that Peter is the one who first says this. Paul famously is the apostle to the Gentiles, is he not? We heard something about that last week in chapter nine. God says that that's who Paul is and will be.

Peter is the first, though, the first mouthpiece authenticating this mission. So, Peter gives this speech and our fourth section here, verse 44.

While he was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. Guys, Gentile Pentecost. That's it.

When Peter is speaking, the Holy Spirit falls on those who are listening. This is an amazing thing. In verse 45, the believers from among the circumcised, that's the Jewish heritage Christians, who had come with Peter, were amazed.

[27:16] Yeah, they should be amazed. They were amazed because these are not the sort of people that are a part of God's people, but actually, they are. And in fact, continue on.

The gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on them, verse 46, for they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.

This is a miraculous occurrence. These people who otherwise would not be in fellowship with Jewish Christians are not only fellowshiping with them, but are speaking in tongues, the miraculous demonstrator of God's presence among his people.

Just like had happened in Acts 2, where Jews in Jerusalem from all the different nations were speaking in tongues, and all languages could be heard, the same thing happens here.

That's a deliberate parallel. We need to feel that and be amazed, like verse 45 and verse 46 suggest to us. This is the climax, the thing to which all of the bits of our passage are building, but do you notice how short it is?

[28:22] It's very short, kind of startlingly short. I think Luke does that on purpose. This is the counter melody becoming the main melody.

God has reconstituted his people, reshaped it to include Jews and Gentiles, both of which are filled with the Spirit.

Gentiles are in fellowship with the people of God, which is no small thing. Next week in chapter 11, Peter is going to rehearse what happens here before Jewish heritage Christians in Jerusalem, because he's got some explaining to do, and he will do that next week, and we'll get even more of the importance there.

But our passage isn't over, because another interesting thing happens. Look at verse 47. Peter asks a question, maybe we should just call it like a call for baptism or something.

In verse 47, can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? No, is the answer to that. What a loaded question.

[29:35] Can anyone withhold water? No, is the answer. And so, verse 48, Peter commanded them to be baptized, the Gentiles to be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Very interesting pattern here. Just a word on baptism in Acts, a thing to be mindful of here.

We've already seen a number of people being baptized in Acts in a bunch of different circumstances. There hasn't been a uniform pattern of baptism, and there really isn't a uniform pattern of how exactly baptism works, and who it's for, and when it happens throughout the book of Acts.

And we should notice here, at least, the flow of the passage, that there are these breadcrumbs of God working among the Gentiles in the healing stories. There are these visions that unite this pagan military guy who's confusingly a fear of God with Peter, the apostle, and the Holy Spirit is poured out.

There's a unification of these people, and baptism is a marker of that unity. That's the theological flow of this passage here. And at HCC, maybe you know, you probably do, our conviction on baptism has that theological center, that baptism is about being a part of God's people.

[31:02] Baptism has something to do with faith and even the Spirit. Now, we can share that conviction even with different forms of practice. Maybe just a hermeneutical or a reader's

suggestion here.

As you read Acts, and when you read Acts, if you're hunting for a kind of clear answer or position on baptism, you're not gonna find it. You're very unlikely to find it.

That doesn't mean these passages are irrelevant to our theology of baptism, but they don't say, hey, here's what you do when you baptize. So, as you read, don't be looking for maybe markers of confirmation.

Be readers of the theology of the text. See what the text is saying and how it flows. If you have questions about that, don't worry, we're gonna explore more about baptism in Acts or you can ask any of the pastors.

I'm on sabbatical, you can still ask me. I'm happy to talk with you about that. That's where our passage ends, a short climax. And like I mentioned next week, you could just peek ahead to chapter 11.

[32:04] The apostles and brothers heard this and Peter goes up to Jerusalem and receives some criticism. Peter's going to unpack the meaning of this for those Jewish heritage Christians.

But even as it exists for us, this long passage, which is descriptive of a redemptive event, it does call to us today. It calls us to action.

I think two main ways, maybe two main application points if you wanna think about it that way. This passage can help stretch our concept of ecclesiology or church, what it means to belong to the church.

The book of Acts does that robustly. This passage does it especially. Tad has said something about this. Felipe did. John did. That's one of the messages here. The gospel of Jesus has boundless power and it unites unlikely people because Jesus is Lord of all.

Verse 36. You, that's all of you, are members of the historic Christian church, which means Augustine is your brother and Hildegard of Bingen is your sister.

[33:17] You're also a member of the worldwide church through space. So that means we have brothers and sisters in Chile and Togo and wherever you pick.

Maybe a good way to think about it is to frame it this way. There are more Christians, both through history and that exist right now, who look differently than you, think differently than you, and practice Christian discipleship differently than you, than there are those who are just like us in our context, which is very humbling, very cool, and is a good frame for us to consider what it means to be an active Christian disciple.

We wanna be aware of tribalism or cultural superiority. The way that we do Christianity is the only way to do it. We don't wanna think that way. Sometimes we think that way actively. Sometimes we might passively assume those things.

We wanna challenge those assumptions. And one way we can do that is to be connected to the church around the world through time. Of course, you can read, but also you can hear testimonies. You can make friends.

You can go on missions trips. Neopolis does a really good job with this kind of stuff. Of course, the history professor is gonna tell you that you should read. You should read Christians who look differently than you.

[34:33] If you're not doing that actively, you're maybe missing something. That doesn't mean that we should strive for some weird, like, cultureless Christianity or something. We wanna be faithful in our particular context, and we wanna be united with Christians around the world.

That tension is something we wanna at least be thinking of. Okay, the second point of application our text calls us to is pretty straightforward. It's throughout the entire passage.

God shows no partiality. In Deuteronomy 10, 17, that's what the Lord says to Moses. I show no partiality.

Here in Acts, we see a dimension of what that means. In the Gospel of Matthew, we heard today a dimension of what that means. Care for other people.

In the Epistle of James, James says this, brothers and sisters, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Lord.

[35:35] James is talking about Christians inside a church, and he says, don't hold one better than the other. In James' case, he's talking about rich people, but in our case, we could pick anything.

We don't wanna be classifying and stratifying other Christians. It could be easy to do such a thing. Let's show no partiality. Let's receive that lesson.

Okay, kids, what that might mean for you is that your sisters, your brothers, your friends can teach you what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, just like your parents can, or I can, because I get to stand here at the pulpit.

Parents, your children are not lower-class Christians than you are. Jesus says, let the children come to me, and tells disciples to have childlike faith. You can learn from their faith.

Theologians, here in Wheaton, that's us. Let's not be haughty or dismissive. Look down on other Christians, lowbrow preachers.

[36 : 38] I don't know. Let's humbly receive the truth of the gospel, be humble and learn. And let's recognize Jesus as the Lord of all. As we consider what it means to show no partiality, we are all gonna meet at this table in a moment to serve and be served.

Let's do that in unity, in the name of the Father and Son and Spirit. Amen. Jesus calls us to be at peace with one another. Let's stand and offer each other a sign of peace.

Thank you.