

# The Lord Breaks Down the Dividing Wall

Acts 10:1-35

*Halifax: 13 May 2012*

## **Introduction:**

The chapter that we have come today in Acts (Acts 10) records for us one of the most important events in redemptive history.

- Here we see how the Lord took down the wall that He had erected to separate His people Israel from all the other nations.
  - In Ephesians 2:14, Paul refers to it as a “middle wall of separation” between Israel and the Gentiles (Gentiles are the other nations).
  - In Ephesians 2:15, he describes the wall as “the laws of commandments contained in ordinances.”
    - By that, he refers to those laws that are not moral—ordinances that have to do with ceremonies and rituals.
      - God instituted these laws through Moses to pre-shadow the work that Christ would do—they were a pre-enactment.
      - And these laws included rules about clean and unclean foods, rules about ceremonial washings, and many other such things.
      - By requiring rules about clean and unclean, God taught His people through these rituals that He was holy, and that they must be set apart as holy to come before Him.
- But these laws also had another purpose...
  - They were designed to keep Israel separate from the other nations that did not know God.
- Paul refers to these “commandments contained in ordinances” as “a middle wall of separation” between Jews and Gentiles,
  - because they had the effect of separating them.
    - If you are unable to eat with people because to do so would make you unclean,
      - it has the definite result of isolating you from them.
      - You have your own restaurants and your own markets and you cannot share in their weddings or their funerals.
  - This separation of Israel from the other nations was, of course, deliberate on God’s part.
    - In Leviticus 11, He declares that His people are to be holy because He is holy.
      - They were not to engage in the idolatry or the immorality of the other nations,

- nor were they to give their daughters in marriage to them or take their daughters in marriage for their sons.
- So in part, the ceremonial law was designed to help Israel remain separate from the other nations until the appointed time for God to extend mercy to the Gentiles.
  - Many of the Jews in the Old Testament understood that that day would come when the Messiah came...
    - Some of them even taught that when He came, the food laws would be abolished.
- So you see then that God put up the wall because He wanted Israel to be distinct until Jesus came and completed His work...
  - Then, after the gospel had been established among the elect in Israel,
    - the Lord brought down the wall,
      - signalling that the time had come for the Gentiles to be called into the church.
    - This is very important for most of us in this room because most of us are Gentiles!
      - We should be very thankful that God was pleased to bring down the wall and to welcome our people into the church,
        - else we would still be cut off from God.
    - As Paul says to the Gentiles in Ephesians 2:11-18:
      - **(Eph 2:11-18) <sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh-- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-- <sup>12</sup> that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, <sup>15</sup> having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, <sup>16</sup> and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. <sup>17</sup> And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.**
- Here you see that the great event that put an end to the law of commandments contained in ordinances was actually the cross of Jesus Christ.
  - After Jesus went to the cross,
    - the ceremonies of the Old Covenant that presented His work in shadows were no longer appropriate.

- They were a pre-enactment of Christ's work, but...
  - when the real event had taken place, the shadows were no longer needed.
  - Shadows are not needed when you have the thing itself!
    - That is also why the New Testament ordinances are not a re-enactment of the work that Jesus did on the cross...
      - They are about applying His redemptive work to us!
      - Any ceremonies shadowing His work of redemption and all that goes with them became passé at the cross.
- Nevertheless, there was a transitional time before God's people understood that the ceremonies of the Old Covenant were abolished.
  - And what we have before us in Acts 10,
    - is God's instruction to the church that the laws of commandments contained in ordinances are no longer to be practiced.
  - Those ordinances that separated the Jews from the Gentiles are no more to be regarded...
    - The time came, in God's redemptive plan, to gather the Gentiles into His church, so the wall of separation must come down!

Let us look with thanksgiving at this great event that changed everything for our people.

- Here we have before us the calling of the first Gentile as a Gentile (without circumcision) into the church!
  - This is the beginning of what is to be a great flood of Gentiles coming into the church.

**I. See here (in Acts 10) how God prepares the first Gentile to come in to the church.**

- The Gentile's name in *Cornelius*...
  - He is a Roman—a centurion of the Italian Regiment...
- A. The Lord sends an angel to make arrangements with Cornelius that he will be able to hear the gospel.
  1. You can see in verse 3 that God sent the angel when Cornelius was praying at the customary hour of prayer for the Jews—at the ninth hour of the day which we call three in the afternoon...
    - **(Act 10:3) About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"**
    - The words translated "saw clearly" indicate that Cornelius actually saw this angel.
      - As is usually the case in such occurrences, Cornelius is initially afraid.
        - He knows this to be some sort of heavenly visitation and says, "What is it, lord," in verse 4.

2. Then he is instructed to send for Peter who will show him what he must do.
  - a. This is what we have seen again and again in Acts...
    - Instead of instructing people Himself or sending an angel to instruct them,
      - our Lord always works by connecting those He wishes to save to those who are already saved.
      - The gospel spreads from faith to faith—from those who already believe to those who come to believe.
        - There is only one church—all grow out from the root.
    - Whenever God wishes to reach people that are far away, He always sends a missionary to them.
      - That means that mission work is dependent on our going—or rather on God’s sending of us.
      - Even Paul, though he saw a vision, was instructed to go to Ananias to hear the gospel...
      - And the Eunuch, though on the dessert road, had Philip the Evangelist brought by divine agency to preach Christ to him.
        - It would have been much easier for the angel that came to Philip to simply go to Eunuch—but God does not send angels to preach the gospel—He sends His church!
  - b. Cornelius is given clear instructions about where to find Peter—at the house of Simon the Tanner in Joppa who lives by the sea...
    - And immediately Cornelius dispatches a devout soldier and two of his household servants to go and call for Peter.
    - Faithful men are often presented in scripture as obeying as soon as instruction is given to them.
      - Learn not to procrastinate!
        - Teach your children not to procrastinate!

TRANS> So the Lord is graciously making arrangements for Cornelius to hear the gospel...but...

B. The passage indicates that God has already begun His gracious work in this man.

1. We are given evidence that Cornelius is already a regenerate man.
  - a. It is evident from the way that he is described in verse 2:
    - 1) That he is a **devout** man—
      - that probably means that he kept the Sabbath and worshipped God at the synagogue...
    - 2) That he is one who **feared God with all his household...**
      - That means that he and his family acknowledged the Lord as Lord in all their ways—their lives were aimed at pleasing the Lord.

- 3) That he **gave alms generously and prayed to God always...**
  - Praying and giving are often indicators of great love for God!
    - It is very rare to find a wealthy man who gives generously...
    - It is even more rare to find busy men who pray regularly...
    - And it is even more rare still to find one who does both—unless he indeed has a heart for God.

TRANS> This description indicates that he was a regenerate man, but...

b. We are given even more certain evidence from the angel's declaration to him in verse 4 that:

- **v. 4: "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God"**

1) The language here is that which is used of an offering—a memorial offering...

- And though Cornelius was not circumcised and so could not participate in the offerings at the temple...
  - His prayers and alms had been accepted as an offering!
  - Prayers and alms are often referred to in the Bible as an offering.
  - Now that we no longer have sacrifices, these are the acceptable offerings that we bring to the Lord.
    - We saw last week in Psalm 110 that in the day of God's power, His people themselves become free will offerings—offering up ourselves in service to Him!
      - It is through His powerful work of grace that we present ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice!

2) If Cornelius had not been regenerate at this time, the Lord would not have declared that his alms and his prayers were acceptable.

- Although Cornelius had not yet been told the good news that Jesus had come and had given Himself as an offering to take away His people's sins...
  - he trusted in Jesus as He was promised in the Old Testament...
    - just as Abel and Noah and Abraham and Moses and David had done...
    - and just as Anna and Simeon and Joseph and Mary had done when they rejoiced at his birth.
  - Understand that there were **many** people like this in the first century...
    - After Jesus came, there was a transitional period in which those who were converted through faith in the promises of the Old Covenant were introduced to the gospel.
      - As regenerate people, after they were once convinced that Jesus was the Messiah,

- their trust went from trust in Christ as promised to trust in Christ as given...
  - to trust in Christ as revealed in the Old Covenant to trust in Christ as revealed in the gospel.
- There were many Jews who were in this category scattered throughout the world in various synagogues,
    - but there were also many Gentile God-fearers who had not yet become Jews and submitted to circumcision,
      - but who had seen that the God of Jews was the true and only God and had devoted themselves to his worship and trusted in His promises.
    - Clearly, Cornelius was in this category.
      - If it were not so, his prayers and alms would not have been accepted as an offering to God.
        - Without saving faith, our prayers and offerings are not acceptable.
      - As a regenerate man,
        - Cornelius had the Holy Spirit,
        - but as an Old Testament believer,
          - he had not yet received the fullness of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit poured out as promised under the New Covenant.
          - That does not occur for him until verse 44 which we will look at next week.
2. But although he was regenerate, as a Gentile, Cornelius had to keep his distance from Israel's worship.
- a. He was permitted to the court of the Gentiles at the temple, and he was permitted in the synagogues,
    - but unless he became a full proselyte and so became a Jew, he had to keep his distance and could not offer up sacrifices.
  - b. But you need to understand Cornelius's attitude about this.
    - He was not bitter or envious toward the Jews.
      - If he had been, he would not have come near to worship God with them, recognising that they had the truth
    - Cornelius had a right understanding about his secondary status as a Gentile.
      - As a regenerate man, he recognised that nobody deserved God's mercy and he thought it wonderful of the Lord that He had shown mercy to Israel!

- Instead of making him bitter with envy, seeing God’s mercy to Israel made him hopeful.
- It showed him that God was a merciful God and that gave him hope!
- He was like the woman from Syro-Phoenicia whom Jesus initially rejected, telling her that it was not right for Him to take the children’s bread and cast to the dogs to which she replied...
  - “But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master’s table!”
  - Gentiles like this woman and Cornelius were not insulted that God had chosen Israel...
    - they simply marvelled at His abundant mercy to Israel and hoped that if they sought God, they might get some crumbs!
    - A crumb of such great mercy as they had seen would be enough for them!
      - This was a mark of great faith—of saving faith!
      - This was the faith of godly Gentiles before the dividing wall came down.
        - They accepted their place and looked to God for mercy.

TRANS> So you see how God had prepared Cornelius to come to Christ...

- He gave Him saving faith and now it only remained for him to hear the good news that Christ had come and saved His people,
  - and that now whoever believed—be he Jew or Gentile—would be saved.
  - He was prepared by God to come as soon as the good news was brought to Him.
- But this idea of God preparing people for the gospel raises an important question for our day (about which there is much confusion) that needs to be addressed...

#### C. In what way does God prepare people today?

1. God prepares people by effectual calling—which involves many things...
  - He enables them to see their sin and their need of forgiveness...
    - He enables them to understand the work of Christ and their need of Him...
      - And then, to complete their calling, He enables them to turn from their sin and to receive Christ through faith as their Lord and Saviour.
  - And it is possible and it happens frequently, that persons in places where Christ has never been preached are prepared in advance for missionaries...
    - Before the missionary comes, God’s Spirit works in them to show them their sin and their need of forgiveness...
      - Sometimes they begin to cry out to God, and then God sends the missionary to them and they immediately receive Christ.
  - But you must not think that these persons are regenerate or have saving faith until they believe the gospel.

- If they are elect, God not only prepares them, but also sends the gospel to them so that they can be saved.
  - But they are not saved until they trust in Jesus.
- 2. In the first century, there was a transitional period as regenerate persons who had saving faith under the Old Covenant learned of and embraced Christ as revealed in the gospel.
  - But you must not suppose that there are such persons now.
    - The Jews of our day who cling to the Old Covenant do not know Christ in the saving way that Anna and Simeon did before Christ came.
    - If they are elect, they will be saved through believing the gospel.
      - The transitional period is long past.
        - God may certainly use His word from the Old Testament to prepare them for the gospel,
          - but they cannot be saved until they receive Christ.
        - Peter made it clear in his day that there was no other name, given among men, by which we must be saved.
  - The same is true of people of all other faiths...
    - They are not regenerate—no matter how devout they may be in their own religion—until the Lord graciously brings the gospel to them and they believe it.
      - They may be *prepared* to receive it, but they are not saved until they actually receive Christ.
    - Persons who have not been exposed to the gospel are in a similar state to the Gentiles before Christ came...
      - They are accursed because they are cut off from the covenant.
      - They have no access to God until the Gospel comes
      - They are, as Eph 2:12 says,
        - Eph 2:12: **without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel [now the new Israel] and strangers from the covenants of promise [now the gospel], having no hope and without God in the world [not until the gospel is brought to them].**
  - But there is one great difference between them and the Gentiles before Christ...
    - And that is that God has commanded that the gospel be preached to them.
    - Remember that even when Christ was on earth, He commanded His disciples *not* to preach to the Gentiles.

TRANS> So there is a great change now that Jesus has come...

- The dividing wall has been removed because now God has purposed to save many Gentiles and to bring them into His church.
  - Now, the church is commanded to take the gospel to every nation.
  - So now, as we move along,



## II. I want to show you how God removes the dividing wall.

- I have already pointed out, as shown to us in Ephesians 2, that the dividing wall was actually abolished by the cross.
  - The ceremonial law became obsolete on the day that Christ fulfilled it.
    - It no longer made sense to engage in rituals that merely shadowed His work because now the work had actually been done!
    - Now the work that Jesus did to redeem us was to be proclaimed!
    - The good news was to be preached in all the world—not by the shadows of the temple, but by the proclamation of Christ.
- But even though the dividing wall was abolished by the cross,
  - The wall remained until the church came to *understand* that it had been abolished.
    - As long as the church, which was all Jewish at first, continued to practice the ceremonial law, the dividing wall that separated Jews and Gentiles stood.
    - And in Acts 10, the wall is taken down...
      - God reveals to His church that the ceremonial ordinances that separate Israel from the nations are abolished.

### A. The Lord reveals the abolition of the wall to the Apostle Peter in a vision.

1. The account of this vision is given in verse 9-16...
  - a. You see that the vision comes to Peter at just the right time...
    - just as the Gentiles from Cornelius's household are drawing near to Simon the Tanner's house.
    - This is God's timing—preparing Peter for the arrival of these men.
  - b. Look at what Peter sees...
    - Peter goes up on the housetop to pray—the roofs in those days were designed as a place for people to go and hang out—
      - and we are told in verse 10 that Peter became very hungry and then fell into a trance (*ek-stasis*)—out of his normal state
    - And of all things, it was a vision about food!
      - He is very hungry, and this sheet—something like a linen cloth—comes down from the sky with all kinds of animals on it—both clean and unclean.
      - And Peter hears a voice that says,
        - **“Rise Peter, kill and eat.”**
  - c. Even though Peter was very hungry, he absolutely refuses...
    - There were unclean animals on the sheet and Peter will have nothing to do with it...
      - He says:

- **(Act 10:14) "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."**
  - This sounds pretty bad, but Peter likely thought that he was being tested...
    - Ezekiel, in a similar circumstance, also refused to eat what was unclean...
      - In Ezekiel 4:14, he said:
        - **Eze 4:14 But I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I have never been defiled; for from my youth until now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has any unclean meat ever entered my mouth."**
        - And the Lord modified His command!
          - Perhaps Peter was following Ezekiel's example!
  - But the reply to Peter is different.
    - The voice says:
      - **(Act 10:15) "What God has cleansed you must not call common."**
      - And then it is all repeated three times just to make sure there is no mistake about it!
2. The important thing is what is being declared to Peter here!
- **(Act 10:15) "What God has cleansed you must not call common."**
  - a. God is the One who declared certain foods unclean through Moses...
    - But if God cleanses something, it is no longer to be called unclean!
    - If He cleanses all foods, then no one should dare to call them unclean!
    - If He cleanses uncircumcised persons, then no one should dare to call them unclean!
  - b. God is the one who put up the dividing wall, and He can take it down.
    - The food laws were only temporary ritual laws,
      - they are not moral laws that cannot be changed.
  - c. There are people today who act as though it is morally better to abstain from the foods that were prohibited in the OT or to be a vegetarian...
    - But this is dead wrong!
      - It is okay to be a vegetarian, but it is wrong to look upon it as morally superior because if you do, you are claiming to be morally superior to Jesus—He was not a vegetarian—He ate fish and He ate the Passover Lamb!
    - And as for abstaining from the food prohibited under the Old Testament, there is no moral superiority in that either...
      - As we see here in Acts 10, God has now cleansed these foods!
      - In 1 Timothy 4, Paul says that prohibiting foods on moral grounds is a doctrine of demons...

- In 1 Tim 4:4, he says,
  - **For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.**
    - *By the word*, in that God has declared all foods to be clean...
    - *And by prayer*, in that we give thanks to God for it and receive it from Him.

TRANS> So Peter is told here that not to call what God has cleansed unclean.

- God is preparing to cleanse Cornelius, the Gentile, without circumcision and without submission to food laws...
    - And Peter is being told that he must accept this.
      - He must be willing to welcome the Gentiles into the church without requiring them to be circumcised and he must recognise that the food laws are obsolete.
3. But understand something—this passage is not about racism.
- a. It has become very popular to make it a text about racism...
    - The idea is that Peter and the Jews have been all wrong about Gentiles and need to stop being prejudiced.
      - It makes for a good sermon about the problem of racism, but that is not what this is about!
  - b. Peter and the Jews did not put the dividing wall up! God did!
    - It is not that Peter and the Jews have all been wrong and now God is straightening them out!
      - It was God's will for the Jews and Gentiles to be separate until now!
      - God is not correcting Peter, but revealing to him a change—
        - He is revealing to him that the time has come in redemptive history for the wall of separation to come down...
          - for Jews and Gentiles to eat together!
          - for Gentiles to be brought into the church without first being circumcised!

TRANS> The problem with saying that it is about racism is that it makes it as if God had done wrong to exclude the Gentiles.

- c. God was not wrong before to exclude all nations but Israel!
  - We Gentiles deserved to be excluded!
    - First there was the fall—that was good reason for God to exclude every human being!
    - But in his mercy, God revealed His plan of redemption—that He would crush the Serpent's head through the seed of the woman

- but the families of the earth spurned God's mercy and God sent the flood to destroy them all—as they deserved...
- And then He started over with Noah, revealing His redemptive mercy to him and his house...
  - But over the years, there was rebellion again!
    - At the tower of Babel, the Lord dealt with those who spurned His mercy and choose one family upon which to show mercy—
      - the household of Abraham.
      - God makes it clear that He did not choose Abraham because of any good that was in him—it was out of sheer mercy...
        - But in choosing him, He excluded all the other families of the earth.
      - Now He would only reveal His mercy to this one family until Jesus came...
        - And then He would show mercy to the other nations as well.
    - There was no wrong in this because the nations had repeatedly spurned His mercy...
      - God can have mercy on whomever He wishes because nobody deserves mercy... we all deserve the opposite.
  - The Jews who truly knew God in a saving way understood that they were not superior to the Gentiles...
    - They understood that God had freely chosen to show mercy to Israel even though they in no way deserved it.
    - And as we saw with godly Gentiles like Cornelius and the Syro-Phoenician woman—
      - they also recognised free mercy when they saw it.
      - They were not offended with God for choosing the Jews, they were amazed to see such mercy and wanted only the crumbs...
        - They got far more than that!
- But do you see the point here?
  - The Gentiles were not excluded because the Jews were racist—they were excluded because God had excluded them until the time he had appointed to show mercy...
    - This does not mean of course that the Jews were blameless!
      - Many of them were very proud and arrogant and many of them were racist...
      - That was because they did not understand God's mercy to them...

- but God is not trying to correct Peter in Acts 10...
- He is showing Peter that the time has come for the reception of the Gentiles into the church.
- As a leading apostle, Peter is a gatekeeper who has been entrusted with the keys of the kingdom...
- And the Lord is making it clear to him that the time has come to let the Gentiles in without circumcising them first!

TRANS> He revealed this to him first through a vision...

B. Next He reveals His will to accept the Gentiles though direct instruction...

1. No sooner does Peter come out of his trance than the Gentiles arrive from the house of Cornelius!

- Look at verse 17:
  - **(Act 10:17-20) Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate.<sup>18</sup> And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.<sup>19</sup> While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you.<sup>20</sup> Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."**
- You see here that Peter is given a direct command from the Holy Spirit to go with these men without doubting...
  - God Himself had sent them!
    - So Peter obeys.

2. You can see that Peter does things that he would not have done if it had not been for the vision and the instruction to go with these Gentiles...

- Look at verse 23...
  - First, he invites them and lodges them!
    - Jews did not ordinarily give lodging to Gentiles!
  - Second, he departs with these Gentiles.
    - Peter travels with them which involves eating with them and probably spending the night along the road as it was a ten hour walk from Joppa to Caesarea.
    - A Jew would not have such close dealing with Gentiles—but God has instructed Peter to go with them!
- And finally we see that Peter actually goes into the house of Cornelius!
  - This must have seemed very strange to him!
  - This is something he had never done!

TRANS> But this was not just a huge change for Peter!

C. This was a huge change for the whole world!

1. Our gracious Lord here throws open the gates of salvation to the Gentiles!
  - In His mercy, He pulls down the wall of separation and welcomes them into His kingdom of salvation through Jesus Christ!
  - From this time onward, it is His purpose to gather not only the Jews, but people from every nation!
2. Now that Jesus has come, the law of commandments contained in ordinances is done away!
  - The cross takes the place of all the OT sacrifices and the ceremonies that go along with it!
    - Now the way of salvation that was not so clearly seen in these ceremonies is openly manifested...
      - Jesus, the Lamb of God, has been accepted as the offering for the sins of the world.
      - He is the propitiation not only for the sins of the Jews, but also for our sins as Gentiles.
        - We see what God, in His rich mercy and grace has done!

### **III. And look at the beautiful meeting that takes place at the house of Cornelius!**

#### **A. Peter, representing the church, appears at his home!**

1. This is what we are to do my brothers and sisters, as the church of Jesus.
  - We have the precious gospel and we are to take the good news to our neighbours in every nation!
  - We are to take it to our next door neighbours, and we are to take it across the world.
    - What good news it is!
      - What a difference it will make to those who receive it!
2. Peter explains why he, being a Jew, has come to the house of a Gentile...
  - Look at verse 28 & 29
    - **(Act 10:28-29)<sup>28</sup> Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful [not proper is the idea] it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.<sup>29</sup> Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. "**
    - God has shown him that the laws of uncleanness no longer apply.
      - Gentiles who eat pork and do not ceremonially wash are no longer unclean and are not to be treated as such...
        - Now there will be warm fellowship and friendship.
3. But note well that Peter's statement **"God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean"** is not absolute...
  - He is certainly not saying by this, as some want to believe, that there is no such thing as an unclean person.

- There is no such thing as a ceremonially unclean person because of food ordinances,
  - but everyone is unclean apart from the cleansing of Jesus.
  - We all need to be cleansed from our sin by Him!
- Peter makes this qualification down in verse 34-35 where he says:
  - **(Act 10:34-35) "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.<sup>35</sup> But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him."**
  - You see that the message is not that everyone is accepted by God—
    - It is only those who fear God and work righteousness that are accepted.
      - And there is no one who does that apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ and the new birth of the Holy Spirit!
      - The point is that the distinction of clean and unclean is not drawn between one nation and other nations any more...
        - Now it is drawn between those who fear God and work righteousness and those who do not...
          - between those who have been cleansed by Jesus and those who go on in their sin.
      - How thankful we ought to be that Gentiles are now welcomed into the church when they repent and turn to Jesus!
        - Peter welcomes these Gentiles into the fold in the name of the Lord!

TRANS> And now see the other half of this beautiful meeting...

- We have welcoming Peter, but we also have...

#### B. Cornelius who represents Gentiles who are eager for the Lord!

- Look at what this man did in his zeal for the Lord!
- 1. Knowing that Peter was coming with a message from the Lord, we are told that Cornelius was waiting for him...
  - In verse 24 it says:
    - **(Act 10:24) Now Cornelius was waiting for them...**
  - God, by His grace, had prepared this man!
    - He had made him eager to have fellowship with His church!
    - And this symbolises the fact that He had prepared many other Gentiles who would also come.
      - It is a picture of the grace of God working in the Gentiles!
- 2. Secondly, knowing that Peter was coming with a message from the Lord, Cornelius gathers his family and friends together.
  - v. 24 continues:

- **Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.**
  - He gathered them because, again, he knew that Peter was bringing a message from God.
    - He wanted everyone he knew to hear the message!
  - Are you like that?
    - Perhaps you were once like that, but because of rejection, you are no longer so eager to get the word of the gospel out...
      - But you ought to be eager about it!
      - If your friends and relatives do not hear the gospel, they will be cast into the place of torment!
        - They will be excluded from the glorious salvation that God has for all who trust in Jesus.
          - Are you interested in gathering them?
3. Thirdly, we see that Cornelius shows his zeal in his welcome of Peter.
- In fact, he is so zealous that he overdoes it...
    - **Acts 10:25: As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*.**
    - Peter quickly grabs him up and tells him that he is only a man...
      - It is a good thing Peter was not really the first pope as some allege, else he would have been content to have Cornelius kiss his feet!
    - But as for Cornelius, he may have thought Peter was divine—
      - He knew that God had sent him to his house and he was delighted that he had come.
  - Most importantly, he was ready to hear the message from God.
    - Look at verse 33—
      - **(Act 10:33) "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."**
      - How happy Peter must have been to have such an audience before him!
        - This is every preacher's dream—
          - to have a whole crowd of people saying,
            - "We are all present before God to hear all the things commanded you by God!"
        - May this be the attitude of our congregation!
          - May this be the attitude of many congregations!
            - May this be your attitude!

**Conclusion:** What a beautiful meeting!

- Next week we will see what happened at this meeting...



- But this week, let us rejoice that God took down the wall of division so that such a meeting could happen!
- How kind of Him to do this!
- If He had never taken down the wall, all of us Gentiles would still be excluded from the church and from Jesus Christ...
  - And justly so, for we are unworthy of such a great blessing!
  - But we are not excluded!
    - God has taken down the wall of division!
      - He has come to us and He has called us!
        - Let us meet Him with eagerly and count it a privilege to have His word and to have His blessing!