**Testify!**

**Acts 10:34-48 (ESV)**

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We’re in a series on Acts. We’re in Acts 10. Pastor Claude brought to us the very first part of that story last week, relating to Peter and Cornelius. Today we’re going to finish up a bit of that story in Acts 10. We’re going to be looking at verses 34-48 today as we open up God’s Word together. So if you have a Bible, Acts 10:34 is where we’re beginning.

You remember that God sent an angel to Cornelius and He sent a vision to Peter. He got these two folks together who would have never been together; a Jewish fisherman with a Roman centurion, a Gentile. God was breaking open that door that separated Jews and Gentiles. God was the one that created the door in the Old Testament. But God now is going to break that wall down with the Gospel. This is sort of the beginning of that. All those who are Gentile Christians rejoice in Acts 10 because it is the chapter where the Gospel breaks open among the Gentiles and the Gentile church begins.

***34*** *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.* ***36*** *As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),* ***37*** *you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed:* ***38*** *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.* ***39*** *And we 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.* ***42*** *And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.* ***43*** *To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*

***44*** *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. 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.*

Isn’t that awesome?! This is a story of the expansion of the Gospel and it’s a story that is continuing to this very day. It’s sure nice to have a bit of a breeze. I was told that as the breeze picks up my sermons can go longer. Is that right? Is that how it is? It is great to be able to be here and to talk about God’s plan of redemption.

This past Tuesday, if you’re a sports fan, you might have heard the story of a Pittsburg Pirates third baseman, Ke’Bryan Hayes. He smashed a pitch from the Los Angeles Dodger pitcher, Walker Buehler, over the right field wall for a home run. A home run is no small accomplishment in the Major Leagues, especially if you hit it off a 97 mph fastball. Furthermore, Ke’Bryan had just returned from a 60-day injured list, where he was not able to play. So that swing had to have tasted extra sweet. However, Hayes’ celebration was very short-lived. You see, replays showed that he missed tagging first base as he rounded the bases. Instead of giving his team a first inning run, he gave his team their second out of the inning.

Very few people could have hit that pitch that far. Yet, any little leaguer has learned to successfully run the bases. Hayes accomplished a most difficult thing in hitting the ball over the tall right field wall, but because he failed to do the simple thing, he and his team lost the reward of his accomplishment. How could a Major League baseball player miss tagging first base on a run around the bases after a home run? The answer simply is that Hayes became distracted. You see, as he approached first base, he was wondering whether the ball was going to stay inside the foul pole. So he was watching that ball with great intensity. He was not concerned with the bases at all. After all, those are too simple. Those are just too natural. His mind was consumed by the flight of his ball. Here’s the truth I want us to think about today as we look at Acts 10. Distractions often obscure our vision of the basics. When our vision of the basics is obscured, disaster follows.

Distractions come in all shapes and sizes in our life. Some distractions are very personal. There are distractions like problems in our job, conflicts in our family, diseases in our body. Other distractions are shared by our whole society. We’ve had so many of them this past year. We’ve had the pandemic of COVID, the varied and often angry responses flowing from our dealing with COVID, a contentious election, ideologies like Critical Race Theory, transgenderism, environmentalism, socialism. These consume the minds of many this past year. There have been problems related to policing and public safety, problems related to healthy immigration and secure borders. While not everyone is thinking about these matters, those who are, often become consumed with these matters. They are consumed with reading the latest books and blogs. So many distractions emerged into the circle of our lives over these past 15 months.

Now, I do not advocate ignoring distractions. In fact, we as a church set aside Wednesday nights at the beginning of the year to talk about some of these important social issues. We’re right to think with our Bibles open about a host of important matters. But friends, let us not be called out because we have taken our eyes off the bases. I urge us to fix our eyes upon the essentials of the Christian life constantly. Regardless of what else we are thinking about, whatever else consumes our conversations and our minds, let us not forget the essentials. Let us make sure that those essentials of the Christian life are absolutely basic and fundamental and foundational to every other thing that we do.We have to find a way to look at the flight of the ball and to tag all the bases. Failure to attend to the basics, changes a homerun into an out, a celebration into an embarrassment, a positive impact into an injury. As we experience distractions of many kinds, let us always remember the basics of discipleship.

Our Bibles are open to Acts 10:34-48. In this story, we are reminded of three of those basics that we’re going to talk about this morning. These are three most basic elements to following Jesus as our Savior and Lord. If you’re taking notes, you might just jot them down.

Basic #1: God works to create His church.

Basic #2: Jesus is the Gospel. The Man is the Message.

Basic #3: The Holy Spirit unites us into one family.

Let’s consider this first basic. These are not the only basics. There are just three of them, so this is not a comprehensive list, to be sure. But they are the ones that are drawn out from our text this morning.

**Basic #1: God works to create His church.**

The story in front of us is a story of God working to create a people for His own possession. As we study the book of Acts we have watched God work to create the church in Jerusalem and in Judea, haven’t we? Remember Acts 2 and following. Then we saw God work to create His church in Samaria, a place that was close to the Jews, but still separate from them. In Acts 8 we saw God create the church in Samaria in remarkable ways. Now in Acts 10, God works to create His church in the first Gentile community.

We just sang this wonderful song, *Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery*. There is a line in there. Sometimes we fail to think theologically or think deeply about the lines we sing. But there is a line that caught me as I sung it with you all. “See the price of our redemption, see the Father’s plan unfold, bringing many sons to glory, grace unmeasured, love untold.” So what we’re seeing is the Father’s plan unfolding not only for the individual salvation of those who come to Christ, but the Father’s plan at its center is a church of people set apart for God’s pleasure, for God’s own possession.

So we see God working first in this story by sending an angel to a Roman centurion named Cornelius. God tells Cornelius to send some men from his hometown of Caesarea to a little town of Joppa in order to meet a man by the name of Simon Peter. Then these men, as they’re sent, there are three of them, they meet Peter. These men tell Peter that he needs to come back with them to Caesarea so that Peter can proclaim Jesus to Cornelius and to his family.

Keep in mind that Cornelius is very religious. He is God-fearing, the text tells us. That tells us that he’s already decided the Roman pantheon is not for him. He’s living in Caesarea. That’s a city that is named after Caesar. That’s a city filled with idol worship. Here is a Roman centurion, a man of great esteem and great position who says, “I know that’s not true. I don’t know what is true. But here’s one thing I know. These idols aren’t real.” He’s already rejected the Roman pantheon. But he doesn’t know God yet because he hasn’t heard of Jesus. So God sees that Cornelius’ heart is soft. It’s prepared by God. He says, “I’m going to send a man to tell him about Jesus so that he can be saved, so that he can have eternal life.” At this point, Cornelius is very religious, but he is lost. He doesn’t have his sins forgiven. If he died at this point, he would die in his sins, under the judgment of God.

In the meantime, as these three messengers are on this 30 mile walk between Caesarea to Joppa, God gives Peter a vision because Peter isn’t ready to receive Gentile visitors. Here is this vision. It’s a blanket that has all these unclean animals. A voice from God said, “Take and eat. Rise, take and eat.” Now, Peter isn’t used to eating pigs in a blanket, but here we have the first pig in a blanket. God says, “You have to eat this.” Peter says, “No! I have never eaten anything that is unclean. What are you talking about? That would be in defiance of your law against my life.” God says, “No, take at eat.” A voice comes back to Peter in his arguments and He says, “What God has made clean, do not call common. Do not call it unclean.” This vision is given to Peter three times because the problem is Peter just has such a hard time believing it. It is really one of the most surprising things Peter could have ever possibly imagined hearing God tell him. So just as Peter is having this vision, these three guys knock on Peter’s door. What timing!

Do you see God’s hand behind all of this? Do you see that God Himself is working? This is not Cornelius saying, “Oh, I need to hear more message.” This is God saying, “Cornelius, you need to hear more message and I want you to send for a messenger. This is not Peter saying, “Oh, you know what? I need to start a church in a Gentile town.” Peter is very content being in Joppa. He’s very content not starting a Gentile church. He’s very content not having fellowship with the Gentiles. This is God’s hand working all throughout. Let’s pick up the story in verse 24.

**Acts 10:24-25** And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

So here is this Roman soldier worshiping a Jewish fisherman.

**Acts 10:26** But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.”

Worship belongs only to God.

**Acts 10:27-29** And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.”

So Cornelius is now in his house. He has gathered a bunch of his relatives and his friends. Peter arrives and then goes to meet Cornelius. Then we read

**Acts 10:30-33** And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

Peter then preaches the good news of peace to Cornelius, to his family, and to Cornelius’ Gentile friends. What happens as the result of a single sermon?

***44*** *While Peter was still saying these things,*

Before he even finished his sermon, what happened?

*the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.*

You see, their hearts were ready to receive the Word not as the word of man, but they understood that what Peter was saying was a word from God to tell them how they could have eternal life, how they could know the living God. The Holy Spirit falls upon the whole group, and as He does so, the church in Caesarea is planted. It is established.

Please see the hand of God working to create His church among the Gentile world. The Gospel is about a man named Jesus who is born a Jew, who lives all His life as a Jew and who dies as a Jew. How would any powerful Roman soldier bow his knee to a Jewish King, a Jewish Savior? The answer is it has to be a miracle from God, a miracle of God’s sovereign grace. The story shows us that God is active in creating His church. He’s activein saving individuals. But here, it’s not just the individual Cornelius. It’s Cornelius’ family. It’s Cornelius’ friends. It’s a big group of people in Caesarea that start a church.

Why is it so important to our life of following Jesus to recognize that God Himself creates the church? God loves the church. The church is His precious possession. Why is that so terribly important? Because the church is God’s work, we realize it is precious to be part of her. I didn’t become part of a church because I just decided that’s going to be a good thing to be part of. I didn’t have any entrance requirements, at least not to the true church, apart from the Holy Spirit working. What happened is God is creating His church and God worked in my heart to cause me to become a part of it. That’s a precious thing. It is an amazing thing to be part of God’s people, to be part of God’s family.

Because the church is God’s work, it’s necessary to commit ourselves to her. God is working and I want to work where God is working in this world. Because the church is God’s work, it’s meaningful to strengthen her. There is nothing more eternally purposeful that we can do with our energy and our times and our giftings than to strengthen the church of Jesus so that the church of Jesus can proclaim the Gospel, so that the church of Jesus can help others, help one another as brothers and sisters to follow the Lord and worship Him.

Because the church is God’s work, it is our joy to love her forever. This is not a family that is here for a short amount of time and then has an end date. This is a family, a church, that is forever. Because of that, it’s a joy to love her even as Christ loved her and gave Himself up for her. God uses the circumstances of this story to impress upon Peter himself, the preciousness of His church, the Jew and Gentile church alike. Later, in Peter’s first letter he’s going to write this about the church.

**1 Peter 2:9** But you are a chosen race,

Think of that. It’s no longer Jew and Gentile. You, the church, are one chosen race. You’re bound together by Christ. In fact, you are

**1 Peter 2:9** …a royal priesthood,

You’re kingly. You are

**1 Peter 2:9-10** …a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people,

In other words, you were part of that which is going to have a moment in time and then be no more. You weren’t really a people.

**1 Peter 2:10** …but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

He says this is all about the preciousness of Jesus’ church.

Now, I believe that the distractions of the last year and a half have not served to strengthen the church. It requires God’s people to have a greater intensity of focus upon the basics if the church is going to go forward and be strengthened and have an impact upon our world. This past year, a Gallup poll tells us it’s the first time in the United States that church attendance has fallen below 50% of the population. Think of some statistics for a moment. Between 1937 and 1976, consistently, over 70% of Americans said they attended a church or some religious body, like a synagogue. From 1976 to 1990, that wasn’t too long ago for many of us, anyway, that 70% dropped only slightly up until 1990. It dropped to 68%. So think about that. Even up to 1999, it only dropped to about 68%. Since the year 2000, church attendance has declined by 20 percentage points. From 1937 to 1999, church attendance declined by less than 5%. In the last twenty years, church attendance has dropped 20% in our communities.

Now, I know that church attendance is not everything. Church attendance doesn’t mean a person is saved. I know that church attendance decline mostly can be explained by spiritual apostasy, that is to say, fewer and fewer believers in God. Fewer and fewer are willing to even hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But some of this decline, and this is my concern for us today. It’s not so much what is happening in the world, because whatever happens in the world is just going to happen. God is in charge of that. But our concern is within the family, within God’s own chosen race, His holy nation, His people who are called out for His own possession to worship Him. That’s our concern. That’s every one of our concerns as members of the church of Jesus Christ.

Some of this decline, I believe, is happening among people who with great conviction say “I believe in Jesus Christ. I just am not interested in committing myself to God’s church or to the church. I understand that there is some disillusionment because the church is not perfect. It’s far from it. The church has many problems. But I want to encourage you for a moment. You’re obviously here. Perhaps though, you’re one of those who began to wonder whether or not the commitment to the local church really is that essential. In 1 Peter chapter 2, he says

**1 Peter 2:5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house,

I love that analogy. It says you yourselves. Here is what God is doing. He is building you up into a spiritual house, into a spiritual family. Behind us, we have a church building. I love this church building, but not like I love the church. The church building is a building. The church is here, out in front of me. The church building is behind me. Here, we have bricks that are not living. We don’t have to water them. We don’t have to feed them. We don’t have to take them to the brick vet. We don’t have to do anything with these bricks. These bricks are dead. Here in front of me are living stones, living bricks, real people with real souls and real bodies, set apart for God. God has done something in you all if you have come to faith in Jesus Christ. Now, if I grab a single dead brick and say, “Is this impressive?” a single dead brick is not impressive. In fact, it has almost no function whatsoever, unless you want to break a window with it. A single brick has no positive function. Bricks have to be laid in together and then they create something meaningful. It’s meaningful because this is where we can worship God and where as it gets hotter, we can have services indoors in the cool.

I want you to know that as an individual living stone, you’re precious to God, but your purpose is not tied to being an individual living stone before God. Your purpose is tied to having God use you as a living stone, to be joined together. That’s what He does. He joins them together so that He is building a spiritual house, a dwelling place fit for God. Isn’t that remarkable to think about that? But our refusal to participate in what God is doing is disastrous to our soul. It is hitting the home run and it is rounding the bases and not tagging first base. It is absolutely fundamental, it is absolutely foundational that God would have us with willing hearts say “it is precious to be a living stone, a brick in your spiritual house. Place me wherever you want me to be. Let me serve as a living stone, a living organism in every way to feed the life of that thing, to feed the life of that family, so that you might be glorified because you are worthy.” So I ask you, is there anything distracting you from seeing the preciousness of Jesus’ church? Is anything tempting you to withdraw your love from her, to withdraw your commitment to her? Again, this is basic Christianity.

**Basic #2: Jesus is the Gospel. The Man is the Message.**

***34*** *So Peter opened his mouth*

He is telling now the message of the Gospel.

*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.* ***36*** *As for the word that he sent to Israel,*

Here’s what He sent. Here’s the message.

*preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),* ***37*** *you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed:*

Peter is delivering a sermon. It’s the first sermon to this Gentile congregation. That sermon is entitled “Good News of Peace.” This good news of peace is through Jesus Christ, who he says is Lord of all.Without this message there is no peace with God. These folks didn’t have peace. That’s why they needed to hear the good news of peace, that peace with God was possible. Cornelius and his family were still separated from God because of their sin. They didn’t know Jesus Christ as Savior. Without Him there would be no peace with God. There would be no forgiveness. There would be no eternal life.They needed to hear this message, so God made sure that they would hear the message.

Friends, let me ask you, are you distracted from this central message? It’s a message that is so clear and so focused and centered upon Jesus Christ.Do other thoughts take the center place of your heart and mind? With all that’s happening in this world and all the ideas that are being proclaimed, do those things begin to consume you and take center place? This message, the message of good news of peace must maintain the center. This message explains the heart of God’s concern of God’s priority, of God’s glory. This message from God is the foundation of life to everyone who would believe in Christ.

Now I understand, please, it is good for believers to read books and to read good blogs of so many sorts. But this message roots our thoughts into everything. It becomes an anchor for every other thought in our thinking about the pandemic, our thinking about ethnicities and race, our thinking about politics and economics and international conflicts and sexual identity. We must not look so intently at the ball flying in the air that we fail to touch the bases of the Gospel message. Let us be careful to look to judge our opinions by the Word of God, by this Gospel, and not merely to look to God’s Word to confirm our opinions. Let us look to say, “God, your Gospel message is good and whatever you say is true. I’m going to bow and submit my mind and my thoughts to you, not asking you to submit to me.”

What is this Gospel message? Here it’s explained. There are six irreducible claims that Peter makes, here. I think this is the clearest message of the Gospel that the New Testament brings to us, provides for us. Look at what he says.

***38*** *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.*

God did that, the Father. Jesus

*He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.* ***39*** *And we 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.* ***42*** *And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.* ***43*** *To him all the prophets bear witness*

Peter is saying that everything that God has said up to this point has been about Christ. They’ve all witnessed to Christ.

*that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*

The most basic need of our lives is the forgiveness of sins through His name. Again, there are six irreducible claims of the Gospel that Peter presents. First, God testifies that Jesus is Lord of all. He’s not just a local, Jewish deity. He’s Lord of all. In the Roman world that Cornelius was part of, it was required that people occasionally stand up and say, “kurios kyser.” That means “Caesar is Lord.” It was required by many Caesars that citizens would say that under threat of imprisonment or death if they refused to say it; kurios kyser. And here is Peter saying to this Gentile family that is very connected in the Roman world among the Roman military, Jesus is Lord of all. He is God of very God.

The second claim is Jesus proved His claims to be Lord of all by His miraculous works and His righteous life. He says, “We saw everything He did.” These miracles weren’t just for sort of crowd interest, to draw people’s attention. These miracles testified that Jesus is who He claimed to be.

The third claim is that Jesus died upon the cross as a substitute for sin. In other words, Peter says we needed someone to bear the punishment that our sins deserve. Without Jesus’ death on the cross, we would still be left in our sins. We would die in our sins and we will be judged for our sins. Jesus became cursed on a tree so that we would be loved by God forever.

The fourth claim is that Jesus bodily rose from the dead to show His victory over sin and death. Jesus’ bodily resurrection is a real thing. He says, “We were with Him. We saw Him. We ate with Him in His resurrected body.” Our focus upon the resurrection is the fundamental evidence, the foundation of our faith. It’s an historic event. God guaranteed through the resurrection of Jesus, the resurrection of all who believe in Him.

The fifth claim is that Jesus will return to be the judge of the living and the dead. I love that! It’s amazing that Peter sort of goes there in Acts 10. This is the one. Jesus will be the judge of the living and the dead. In other words, Jesus is the one to whom you’re going to give an account at the end of time for everything you said, everything you did. Jesus is the one you’re going to stand before. When you stand before Him, He is either going to be your Advocate because you’ve believed in Him, or He will have a righteous response to your sin as Judge of all the earth. So believe in Him now so that your sins can be forgiven, so that when you stand before him as Judge, your sins have already been removed from your soul and you would have nothing to fear.

The sixth claim is Jesus invites us to receive the blessing of His work by believing in Him as our own personal Savior and our own Lord. Look at verse 43. Here’s the crux.

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

Touching first base simply means that we listen to the Gospel often. It means that we think of the Gospel message often and that we tell others of the Gospel message often. The basics of following Jesus, the bases that we must tag, the first base is God works to create the church. The second base is Jesus is the Gospel. The Man is the Message. Here are the irreducible claims of Christ. If you don’t believe these things, then you don’t believe the Gospel. So it’s vital that this message becomes crystal clear in our hearts and our minds. Eternity weighs in the balance. The last basic is

**Basic #3: The Holy Spirit unites us into one family.**

I love this because when this family and friends believed

***44*** *While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.*

They heard the Word with faith.

***45*** *And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter*

I think there are about six of them now who came 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.*

God showed through an external sign that the Gentiles have the Spirit just as much as the Jewish believers have the Spirit.

*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.*

Baptism is the identification of a person into God’s family. You see, God’s plan for His church is to unify all peoples into one family It’s a family whose purpose is to worship God. I know that many things work against the unity of the church. Many things divide us. Friends, I want to press us that the only thing that should divide us is if there is a refusal to believe the Gospel. In the past year and a half, I have seen things like masks dividing God’s people. I have seen things like a vaccine dividing God’s people. I have seen ideologies of various kinds dividing God’s people. I have seen opinions about President Trump and about President Biden dividing God’s people.

I’m not saying that disagreement is always trivial. I’m not saying that at all. I’m not saying that disagreement should never happen in the church. I believe these matters are really important and we ought to discuss them with one another. That’s how we bring one another along. I’m not even saying that sometimes a break of fellowship isn’t necessary when the disagreement is so fundamental to the basics that a break of fellowship requires us to honor Christ more than we honor a fellowship. But before we break fellowship over important matters with other brothers and sisters who profess Jesus as Lord, I think at least three things have to happen.

First, have many long, long conversations about the disagreement with our Bibles open. God is working to unify a people. We are so quick to say, “I heard that person has a different view,” and write them off, not wanting to be around them. I’m saying that’s just hitting a homerun and then not tagging base. Terrible things happen! If there is disagreement and we’re going to break fellowship, let’s have many, many long, long conversations with our Bibles open, to see if we’re all looking at the same book, the same truth.

Secondly, let’s then in those conversations, submit all of our thoughts to Scripture. Let us commit that wherever Scripture leads, that’s where I follow, regardless of my own personal opinions. And finally, when there is a break of fellowship, let us love that person enough to tell them that there is a break of fellowship and to tell them why. Our unity in Christ makes it unthinkable to break fellowship by ghosting our brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul writes this.

**Ephesians 4:1-3** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The Holy Spirit unites us into one family. That’s what He does. Paul says

**Ephesians 4:4-6** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

These are the basics of the Gospel. These are the basics of God’s work among His people. My concern is that Christians are stepping right over the first base of the unity that the Spirit creates in His church. Thus, instead of joy and a celebration, there is sorrow and damage. Let us exult in the work of the Holy Spirit. What a precious thing God did in Acts 10. What a precious thing He continues to do in the year 2021, right here in our own family. It is the Holy Spirit that creates the unity. It’s ours to work hard to maintain it. But it’s the Holy Spirit’s work. Let us join in with what the Holy Spirit is doing.

Why is that so important? Because if the church was divided here in Acts 10, the church would have been divided. There wouldn’t have been one body. There wouldn’t have been one family. There wouldn’t have been one testimony. There wouldn’t have been one message going to all the world. Churches wouldn’t have been able to send people like Rachel out to Nigeria with the same message and there would have been disaster. There would have been a corruption of the ministry of God in this world. That’s why God says, “I’m not going to leave it up to men to create the unity of the church. It’s My Spirit that is going to create unity in the church. Now as I give this gift to you, the unity of the Spirit to you, work to maintain it.” Live lives worthy. Make sure that as you round the bases, your feet hit every one of the bases so that at the end, there is a joyful victory, there is a joyful win, there is a joyful celebration.

I close by asking you a more personal question. Do you personally believe in the Good News of Peace? That’s what Peter called it. This is the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ. You see, our peace with God is available to us not through our own exertions toward God to make ourselves acceptable. But peace with God is offered to us as a gift through the exertions of Christ, the one who died upon the cross for us in our place, the one who rose on the third day. If you believe in Him, God says, “I’ll take those sins,” and we have all sinned in thought, in word, in deed, in attitude. We are all sinners and all of us have fallen short of God’s glory. That sin creates a break between our relationship, our fellowship with God. If the sin remains upon our soul, there is no possibility of us having peace with God because God will look at sin and He will always have a righteous response to sin wherever He sees it.

So here is the good news of peace. Jesus Christ came to die for you, to take your sin upon Himself. He will remove it as far as the east is from the west from your soul so that when you stand before God, there is no sin for Him to righteously respond to. There is only Christ. You are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. So I close by asking you very personally again, have you believed in Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. Eternity weighs in the balance for you. Trust in Him today to receive forgiveness, to receive a real relationship with Him, to be joined to Him and to His people. That joining is a forever bond. Praise God!