



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 10:23–48

“Peter Preaching Justification by Faith”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Today, we are turning to Acts chapter 10 in verse 23, and reading through verse 48, for the Scripture reading. We are in that part of the book of Acts, which contains the story of the ministry of the Apostle Peter to the house of Cornelius. And we have last Sunday looked at the first part of the chapter in which Cornelius receives his vision and is told that he should send to Simon Peter, who is in Joppa at the house of Simon the tanner. And that he should be brought back to Caesarea and he would tell Cornelius the things that he ought to do. And then Peter received his vision about the same time that the men arrived from Cornelius. And at the conclusion of the last hour, contact had been made between them and Peter and Simon the tanner had lodged the men from Cornelius. And we pick up now the story and read of their journey up to Caesarea and of the things that happened in the house of Cornelius when Peter told him the things that he ought to do. Or as he puts it later on, he is to tell them words whereby Cornelius and all his house should be saved. Beginning now, with verse 23, and Peter and the men are in Joppa.

“Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea.”

That was about thirty miles up the coast of the Mediterranean from Joppa.

“And Cornelius waited for them, and he had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshiped him. But Peter took him up, saying, ‘Stand up. I myself also am a man.’ And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, ‘Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or to come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.’”

Incidentally, this is nowhere forbidden Jewish individuals in the Pentateuch of Moses. When Peter says it’s an “unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or to come unto one of another nation” that is a Gentile that is tradition, not biblical. It was possible for them to have fellowship with others and it was possible, of course, for Gentiles to come to know the Lord. What led to this, so often, was the fact that Gentiles did have contact with things that were unclean according to the Mosaic Law. And so there arose the tradition that Jewish people should not have table fellowship with Gentiles because so often they were faced with the problem of meat that had been offered to idols, or unclean meat, meat that was forbidden them by the Law of Moses, being served. And the result was that the Jewish people did not normally eat with the Gentiles. And this came to be something of a matter of pride, also, because they had the revelation of God. That’s what Peter is talking about here. There was a legitimacy in it in that certain things were unclean and certain things were clean and Peter is, of course, in his vision told that now as a result of the saving work of Christ, God has cleansed many of those things that were unclean before. Now, verse 29:

“‘Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?’ And Cornelius said, ‘Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, ‘Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send

therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the seaside: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.’ Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.’ Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, ‘Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: He is Lord of all. That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached.’”

Incidentally, this expression “Ye know” is very interesting because one might say well, why is he going to Caesarea, when they know all of this? Well, they did know a great deal of the things that had happened from the historical standpoint and it’s in that sense that we are to understand those words. When Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, he said, “Ye men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.” Palestine was a small land; the news traveled fast and so they did know the historical facts of these matters. And even in Cornelius’ house, there was an acquaintance with a lot of the things concerning which Peter will speak. That’s the sense, I think, in which we are to understand the word, “Ye know.”

“That word, I say, ye know,” verse 37, “which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up the third day and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the

people, and to testify that it is he, which was ordained of God, to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.’ While Peter yet spake these words.”

The Greek text says, “While he was still speaking these words.”

“The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then answered Peter, ‘Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?’”

Will you notice, very carefully that “have received” is past and “the Holy Spirit has been received before water baptism has taken place. That indicates, very decisively and convincingly that water baptism is not essential to salvation. So “which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” But we should not think that water baptism is not important, as the next sentence states.

“And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord; then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his Word. Let’s bow together in a time of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we bring before Thee the concerns of our hearts. We particularly, Lord, ask Thy blessing upon those who are present in this auditorium. We know, Lord, that we have many concerns, many problems, many difficulties. Many have trials, many have experienced bereavements and other difficulties of life, and Lord we thank Thee that we are able to

appeal to Thee in nineteen hundred and eighty-five and know that Thou art with us through the Lord Jesus Christ. We give Thee thanks and praise, at the beginning of this year for the goodness that Thou hast shown us in the past and we look forward, Lord, to the experience of it in the future. And we pray for those whose names are mentioned in our Calendar of Concern, particularly, minister to them and meet the needs and desires of their hearts.

And for those of us, Lord, who also have desires and needs and problems and trials, we ask that Thou wilt minister to us, as well. We thank Thee for the great promises of the Word of God, the promise of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, the promise of the blessings of life, of the presence of God, of the gift of the Holy Spirit, of the assurance of eternal life, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the fellowship and communion that we have with the Lord and with the body of Christ, the body of true believers who have committed themselves to Him. We thank Thee, Lord, for the hope that we have, as we think of the marvelous promises of the Word of God. O God, we give Thee thanks. And may we be ministered to in special ways, in this coming year, by those promises. And we ask, as the apostles asked, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

We thank Thee for this assembly of believers and friends. And we ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon the Chapel, its elders, its deacons, its staff, those who work in the tape ministry who make it possible for many to have the privilege of hearing the Word of God when they might not otherwise have that privilege. We are grateful for the sacrificial service, which they have rendered, free of charge, out of gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are grateful, Lord, for each one of them and for that ministry and the way that Thou hast pleased to use it.

We pray, Lord, that this next year may be a year in which that ministry is blessed by the fruitful work of the Holy Spirit through it. And we pray for the Bible classes and the radio ministry and other forms of outreach and, especially, for the outreach of the individuals in the Chapel. Give us, Lord, courage, give us boldness, and give us humility to preach the Lord Jesus Christ in a way that will be pleasing to Thee and fruitful. We commit the ministry for this year to Thee. And we ask that this particular service, as we sing, as we listen to the Word, may be blessed by the convicting work of

the Holy Spirit, the convincing work of the Holy Spirit, and the edification which He so marvelously provides.

We pray, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] This past week, I reread a quotation from an old friend of mine, whose writings I have read for a long time, but who is now in the presence of the Lord. He was professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary some years ago and in one of his books, he comments upon some dapper preachers who claim that the age has outgrown doctrine. He said, “They have advanced around the circle to the place from which they started, and hope they are ready, again, to enter the kingdom of heaven like little children, as far as ignorance is concerned. Let it be remembered,” he said, “that systematic theology,” and you can put in parenthesis, biblical doctrine, for that’s the meaning of the term in this context. “Let it be remembered that systematic theology or biblical doctrine has its essence in clear thinking and clear speaking on the subject of that religion, which is revealed in the Scriptures. A man can outgrow systematic theology, therefore, either by ceasing to be clear headed or by ceasing to be religious and in no other way. I suppose some escape in their haste by both ways at once.” [Laughter]

Well, we are living in a day in which the dapper preachers are still around, and it’s not uncommon for people to begin their messages like this, “I am no theologian. I’m no real expert in dogmatic theology, but this morning I would like to speak to you about a practical problem in your life and you don’t really need to know biblical doctrine to be helped by what I’m going to say.”

Now, preachers often say those words, not apologizing for them but rather often speaking with a smile of sophistication; perhaps thinking that they’re a little bit clever. And, surprisingly, when the message is over, people go out and they refer to that individual as “Dr. So-and-So,” which is a strange contradiction because the term “doctor” as you probably know is derived from the Latin word *doceo*, which means “to teach.” So that the one who is doctor is the one who has a system of teaching, which he is to give to others. Imagine a doctor with no doctrine then. He wouldn’t really be

a doctor. Imagine a physician who had no science. A lawyer, who had no law. Or a politician with no principles. Now, I [roaring laughter] I take that back, because we can all imagine that. But, ideally, politicians should have their principles. Imagine a quarterback with no football. Or a golfer with no golf clubs. So a preacher or a doctor with no doctrine. And, in fact, the apostles were nothing more than teachers of biblical doctrine. And one of the things that emerges from this incident that we are looking at this morning is that the apostles preached just this biblical doctrine. And it's not surprising then that we should refer to them as teachers or doctors of biblical doctrine.

Cornelius is an interesting man because Cornelius is a Roman centurion and, evidently, an admirable one. He has received common grace. He knows certain things about the Lord God, which are very important. He knows that there is a God. He fears this God. He, evidently, has been attached to Judaism and had come to understand the oneness of the Lord God. And, as a result of that, he has been giving alms to people and helping them. He constantly prays to the God that he does not yet know fully. And, in fact, he is a man who has a good report, even among the nation of the Jews. All of these things we are told in this account.

But Cornelius has one other thing that is very important and that is that he is seeking to know God. And having been the recipient of common grace and having responded to it, he still would like a further knowledge of the Lord God. And the Lord Jesus said, “The person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness shall be filled.” And so the Holy Spirit has put in his heart a longing to know more of the true God. And now we see how God answers the desire, which he has placed in the heart of Cornelius by giving him that further revelation through the Apostle Peter.

Peter as an itinerant apostle; that is, he moved about from place to place, preaching the Word of God. He came to the Joppa area. He administered in Lydda, and he had done a mighty work there. And now, he's in Joppa staying at the house of a man called Simon who was a tanner.

Now, we know the events that transpired. Cornelius had a vision from an angel who instructed him to send men to a man named Peter, who was with Simon the tanner, and that this man would tell him words whereby he should be saved. And Cornelius made preparations to do that.

And then, at the same time, when those men arrived, Peter received a vision from the Lord God. A sheet let down from heaven, in which were all manner of beasts and creeping things, unclean things, which Jewish people by the Law of Moses, were not supposed to eat. And then Peter was told to rise and to slay those animals and eat them and he had said, “Not so, Lord.” Three times this happened. The sheet was let down. Peter was told what to do and he responded negatively, until finally the Lord said to him, “What God hath cleansed, that call not that thou common.”

And just about that time, there was a knock on the front door of Simon the tanner’s house and the men had come from Cornelius, in the providence of God, arriving at that particular point. And the Spirit who was there with Peter had said to him, “Behold, three men seek thee. Arise, get down, go with them. Do not doubt, for I have sent them.” And so, Peter went down and the men told him something about that which had happened. They made preparations to leave the next day. They traveled all day long. It was about a thirty-mile trip. And, evidently, Peter had planned to say quite a bit, because later after he had said his opening words, and the Holy Spirit had fallen upon Cornelius and those that were with him, the text of Scripture says, “While he was still speaking.” And later when he tells about it in Jerusalem, he said, “As I began to speak, these things happened.” So like so many of us who are preachers, Peter was taught that it is not simply the Word of God that is important, but it is the Word of God as ministered through the Holy Spirit. And so in the midst of the introduction, the Holy Spirit spoke using that word and Peter’s message whatever it may have been is lost for this present life. When we get to heaven, maybe we can ask Peter and say, “Peter, what were you going to say after you gave your introduction?” Well, it’s an interesting story. And when Peter arrived in Caesarea, he met Cornelius. Cornelius fell down to worship him. Peter said, “Stand up, Cornelius. I’m just a man.”

You know, there’s an interesting thing here that when Cornelius fell down before Peter and Peter said, “Get up on your feet, Cornelius, I’m just a man.” He refused the worship of Cornelius. When men fell down before the Lord Jesus Christ and worshiped Him, he didn’t say, “Get up, because I’m only a man,” because he was more than a man. And the very fact that he received the

worship of men is an evidence of the supreme dignity and uniqueness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Well when Peter told him to get up, they began to talk and they walked in toward the room in the house where the gathering was that had come to hear Peter preach. Cornelius had believed that God’s words would be answered, that there would be a meeting, that this man, Simon, would come and so, he had got his family together and he’d got his neighbors and friends together, and he’d brought them in to hear the Word of God.

What a beautiful illustration of what we ought to do with our friends and family, so far as the Word of God is concerned. How can we really talk about knowing our Lord, and appreciating the things of God, and realizing how important they are for human life and existence, and make no effort to bring the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ to our friends and to our family.

Well, they were all gathered there and Cornelius introduced Peter to them. And he said, “Peter, we are all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.” What a marvelous spirit for a meeting. That’s why we’re here this morning. We are here to hear all things that are commanded by the Lord God. Now, you don’t have as nice an instrumentality as Cornelius had. You don’t have an apostle. You don’t have a man like Peter. But you do have an instrumentality, weak though he may be. When we come to any kind of meeting, this is the spirit with which we should come. We are gathered here to hear all the things that are commanded us through that individual; but commanded us of God, that is, by the Lord God.

What will God have me to hear through this individual? They were not there to hear the church choir sing. They were not there to display the new clothes that they had bought over the Christmas holidays or in the sales that followed. They are not there to make friends. They are not there to get religion. They are not there, even, to hear a man. They are there to hear the things that God has commanded them through a human instrumentality. They are not there to find some personality adjustment, to discover self-esteem, to minister to one another or to share. They are there to hear the things that God has commanded them. I don’t think there is any better spirit in which we

should come to a meeting than that expressed there. “Now, therefore, are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.” And if you’re observant, you’ll notice on our bulletin in Believers Chapel, that’s the little text that we put on the left side of the page, because it so beautifully expresses, it seems to me, the attitude that we all should have when we meet in meetings like this.

Well when Peter began to preach, as you might expect, he had either a sermon of three points or seven points. And so since we have twenty minutes or so, why not seven. So we will take a look at seven things that Peter said and I’m not going to say much about them, except when we get to the final one, which is a little bit more important. You’ll notice a Gentile flavor to what he says, throughout, because he’s speaking to Gentiles. And, remember, to this point, the Gospel has been largely confined to Jewish believing people. The early church was a Jewish church not a Gentile church. It was composed of people who might be called, in biblical language, the Israel of God. On the Day of Pentecost, most of those who responded were Jewish people. Most of those who were in the early church were Jewish people. So when we think of the church, we should think of that.

But, now, Israel as a nation had failed to respond to the message, and in the light of that, the divine program is, as one might expect, to be worked out now. The Gospel is to go out to the Gentiles. Abraham’s promises included this blessing. Abraham was told that his name should be great, he would have a land, he would have a seed and in his descendants there would be spiritual blessing. But, further, he was told, “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” So, in the Abrahamic promises and all of the promises of the messiah, in the Old Testament, the Gentiles were to be included, were included. And now, because the nation as a nation has failed to respond, the message goes out to the Gentiles. And as we go through the book of Acts, we will note how more and more that message goes out to Gentiles because the nation as a nation is not responding. Individuals are responding, and the church is largely a Jewish church, still. But now, here is a climactic moment in the history of the church and the Gospel clearly will go out to the Gentiles. The

Holy Spirit will fall upon the Gentiles in Cornelius’ house, indicating a new movement in the purpose of God.

Now, notice, when Peter preaches, he preaches biblical doctrine. As a matter of fact, the first part of his message is largely a recital of facts. And, I’d like for you to notice them. The first point in his message concerns John the Baptist. It is stated in verse 36 and verse 37, “The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all, that word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached.”

In other words, the first step in the movement was the baptizing, the ministry of John the Baptist in his preaching and in his baptizing. He was the forerunner of the Messiah. But after John’s ministry is over, the Lord Jesus Christ’s ministry begins and it begins with a ministry to Israel. As he said, “He was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” “He was a minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made unto the fathers,” Paul said. But Paul also added, “And that the Gentiles should receive mercy.” So the first point in Peter’s message is the baptism of John signified the beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. John’s preparational ministry is over. Now, our Lord’s ministry begins with the publication of the Word of God through him.

The second point that Peter makes follows in verse 38. “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.” So the second point is that the Lord Jesus has been inaugurated into his Messianic office, by the coming of the Holy Spirit at his baptism, and he has carried out his Messianic ministry. That’s particularly important. He went about doing good, as the great itinerate. He performed miracles, which were designed to authenticate his ministry.

One looks at the ministry of the Lord Jesus. It was filled with moral good. It was filled with spiritual good. Never a man spake like he spake, Peter might have said. And, never a man did those mighty miracles which he did, which so marked him out as God’s Messiah.

One might ask, in the light of this, if he went about doing good, is that not still the desire of the Lord Jesus? To do good to men. And if he did good to men when he was here in the flesh, will he not do good, still, at the right hand of the Father? Will he not do good to me? Why should there not be someone in this audience who should reason in just this way? The Lord Jesus Christ went about doing good, spiritual good, physical good. He did that form of ministry. He is ascended to the right hand of the Father. Has he changed? Is he different? Is he not the same person? May I not appeal to him? Why should I not be able to say to him, “Lord, save me?” “Do good for me?” If God the Holy Spirit has worked in your heart to that extent, you have the perfect and beautiful opportunity to call up him, right at this very moment, and ask him to save you, to do good to you, as he did good in his Messianic ministry here on the earth. Peter says, “And we are witnesses of these things which He did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem.” So we [have] not only known that you know, we have seen him too. We have observed his death and we know about his resurrection. And he says these things because he would like to establish the facts.

The third point is given us in verse 39, “Whom they slew and hanged on a tree.” Peter would like to lay stress upon the fact that it was a disgraceful death. It not simply was a death, it was a disgraceful death because he was hanged upon a tree. Cursed is everyone that hangs upon a tree, the Scriptures had set out. He died like a common criminal. Now, if you look at our Lord’s life, there is one thing that is plain in turn is this; that he was not a criminal. And if he is not a criminal and yet he died as a criminal, how can you explain it? Well, I think, if you realize that God controls all things, you’ll recognize that he died by the purpose God, as a common criminal. And, sooner or later, it will break in upon your understanding, he made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made accursed for us, as it is written, “Cursed is every one that hangs upon a tree.” So he died on a cross as an accursed sacrifice because he was dying for us. He is a substitutionary sacrifice. They slew him. They hanged him upon the tree.

Now, the fourth point is given in verse 40. There Peter says, “Him God raised up the third day.” This is the thing that marks out our Lord’s death as different from every other death that has ever been died. The Lord Jesus Christ’s resurrection illuminates his cross. No other man has ever had a resurrection to this point. No individual to this point has ever been resurrected. Now, I know what you’re thinking. Were not there men that our Lord brought from the grave? Yes, there were. But they were not resurrected. When I use the term resurrection, I’m talking about the bodily resurrection; that is, a person who is given a glorified body.

Now, Paul and I both believe this, because the apostle says, remember, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, that Christ is the “first fruits” of the resurrection. Then those who are Christ’s at his coming. So we await the resurrection. The Lord Jesus is the only individual who has ever been resurrected to this point and that resurrection illuminates his cross and proves it to be of God. That’s the thing that distinguishes the Lord Jesus from every other religious leader. Mohammed had no resurrection. Buddha had no resurrection. Russell had no resurrection. Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy had no resurrection. All of the other leaders of false religions have had no resurrection. Everyone who ever made any religious claim other than our Lord Jesus Christ surrendered, ultimately, to mortality, and the remains are here in the earth. Only the Lord Jesus has been raised from the dead. They slew him. They hanged him upon a tree. But God raised him up on the third day and shewed him openly. What an important point that is! That authenticates all that he did. It authenticates all that he said and every other claim, not consonant with the claims of Jesus Christ is thereby proved to be false. And anyone who follows after the leaders of today, who deny the teaching of the New Testament, have no ultimate authority for what they are following. Follow the Word of God. Follow the Lord Jesus Christ. His claims have been authenticated by his resurrection from the dead.

God showed him openly. That’s the fifth point. He showed him to believers; not to all the people, Peter says, “But unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after He rose from the dead.” It’s natural that he should appear to believers, since

unbelievers would not admit it or believe it. Like Paul, for so long. And our Lord, Jesus Christ, was raised from the dead and he was shown to be alive.

This is one of the characteristic claims of Christianity, which has made a great impression upon a number of people who are not even Christians. A candid Jewish Rabbi, Rabbi Solomon Freehof, of Chicago, in a book written called *Stormers of Heaven*, some years ago wrote concerning the Lord Jesus: “The consciousness of the presence of God has come to millions of men through Jesus, that it is personality, which is the essence of his power, should be evident to every objective student of Christian literature. The significant fact is that time has not faded the vividness of his image. Poetry still sings his praise. He is still the living comrade of countless lives. No Moslem ever sings, “Mohammed, lover of my soul.” Nor does any Jew say of Moses the teacher, “I need thee every hour.” The genius of Jesus is not one of doctrine, nor of organization. It is distinctly one of direct influence. He brought God near to men through his presence. He made the divine personal, for myriads of worshipers and posterity and gratitude has made his personality divine.” I’m sorry, Rabbi. It’s not posterity that has made his personality divine. Posterity has no power to make our Lord Jesus Christ other than what he was; it has only discovered the fact of the divine uniqueness and singularity of the Lord Jesus Christ. So God raised him up. He showed him openly to believers.

And then, the sixth point of Peter’s message in verse 42 is, “And He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.” In other words, he’s to be the Messianic King who, ultimately, is to have the sovereign authority over all life; for the Father has given all judgment into the hands of the Son, Jesus claimed. And that claim that all judgment has been placed in his hands has been authenticated by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus by the power of God the Father.

Heinrich Vogel once said, “Whoever thinks that he can smile at God’s wrath, will never praise Him eternally for His grace.” And James Denney said, “Do not preach mainly about the historical Christ; preach about the living sovereign Christ, for he is the one with whom we ultimately have to do.”

Now, I know you're surprised; but we're at the seventh point. And the seventh point is found in verse 43, “To him,” Peter says, ‘Give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.’” Facts need interpretation and this is the interpretation. The prophets of the Old Testament have witnessed to the truth that is to be revealed in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the biography of the Messiah to come has now become gospel. And here, sin's burden is met in the universal yet exclusive message, concerning the Messiah. He is Lord of all. Not simply Jews, but Jews and Gentiles. Lord of All!

Now, when he says here in verse 43, that “Through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins,” he says some important things. He, of course, says that it is through Christ and through Christ alone that we have salvation.

One of the old evangelists was B. R. Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln lived a couple of generations ago, in the twentieth century, and he told the story of a man who came to him once and said, “You can't get to heaven outside of the church.” And Mr. Lincoln said, “Why?” He said, “Well, because Peter has the keys.” Mr. Lincoln replied, “Let Peter keep the keys. I've got the door.” [Laughter] And referring to the fact that Jesus said, “I am the door and by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” So salvation is through Christ. And will you also notice that it is through faith alone? It's not through anything else. It's not through something that we do. So often we think that we get to heaven by the things that we do. But Peter stresses that whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

There is a remarkable story about George Whitefield, which I've referred to once before, not too long ago. But, I think, maybe I overlooked one of the statements that he made. If I didn't, then it won't hurt you to hear it again because whenever I read it, I thank God for George Whitefield, the greatest Evangelist that has ever evangelized in the United States of America. In Exeter, Massachusetts, where he was when he died, he had been asked to preach. And, though he was a very sick man and a dying man, really, he agreed to preach. Someone has recorded the impression that they had of Mr. Whitefield's preaching, in his last sermon. And this person said, “Sentence after sentence was thrown off in rough, disjointed portions, without much regard to point or beauty.” Mr.

Whitefield, incidentally, was a man who had a magnificent voice. It was so magnificent that even men like Benjamin Franklin became attached to him. And people made statements like, “I just love to hear Mr. Whitefield preach. I love to hear him pronounce a word Mesopotamia.” [Laughter] Well, I guess, you can get a blessing from the way someone pronounces the word Mesopotamia, if he has a Southern accent. But [Laughter] it’s difficult for me to see how that is of great spiritual benefit to you. But he had a magnificent voice and this individual is recording his last sermon. And he said, “Sentence after sentence was thrown off in rough, disjointed portions, without much regard to point or beauty. At length, his mind kindled over a single idea,” and you can see the old man, who has preached all over the world, the Western world, the Gospel of Christ, and he’s about ready to be put in the grave. But he has still this great burden. And this man says, “In an explosion of his lion-like voice, roared to the extremities of the vast audience. He was speaking of the inefficiency of works to merit salvation. And he suddenly cried out, in a tone of thunder, ‘Works! Works, a man get to heaven by works? I would as soon think of climbing up to the moon on a rope of sand.’”

Well, when Peter says, “To Him give all the prophets’ witness that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” He was saying that salvation, the remission of sins, does not come by what we do but as a free gift from God, as in faith we receive it from the hands of God. Now, that is, of course, the climax of what Peter has to say in his introduction. But in his introduction, he’s given the Gospel.

Incidentally, you’ll notice, that he lays great stress upon the fact that not only was the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus, but he did something of significance. And what he did made an important difference in everything, because he came to accomplish an atonement. The Bible reads, “The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many.” Christ died for the ungodly. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He is the propitiation, for the sins of the world. “I beheld, and lo, it was a lamb, as it had been slain.” We do not have an adequate view of Jesus Christ, if we do not include in it his atoning work. That’s what we mean and what Peter means, when he says, “Through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins,” and as Peter is talking, I can just see

him, [gasps] he’s getting ready now to say, “And my first point of my seven point message today is.” And the Holy Spirit has fallen on the crowd as a vast movement in that room where they were. And individuals suddenly break out in speaking in tongues and the meeting is in an uproar. While he was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on them, which heard the word. “And they of the circumcision which believed.” You can see these people who have come with Peter, the brethren from the church in Joppa, they are astonished. Their mouths are open at what is transpiring right before them because Gentiles are obviously experiencing the same thing that happened on the Day of Pentecost that the Jewish believers experienced at that time.

As Luke records it, he says they were astonished, “As many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.” You’ll notice that they were speaking in “known” tongues because they heard them “magnify God.” So they were speaking in tongues that were known by those that were there; tongues they had not known before but which others knew. So, this was a magnificent miracle on the part of God. And then Peter speaks and says, “Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” Way back on the Day of Pentecost, Peter had said, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Many people read that text as if Peter were saying “Be baptized, for the remission of sins. Repent, confess, believe, be baptized, and this is the Gospel message. And you cannot be saved if you are not baptized by water.” But listen, the text says, “Repent. Be baptized.” Two things will happen remission of sins, gift of the Holy Spirit.” One might ask which of the two things repent or be baptized, is the significant term? Which secures the spiritual blessing? Someone might say baptism. It’s disproved by chapter 10. They hadn’t been baptized yet, yet they had received the spiritual blessing of the coming of the Holy Spirit. It’s evident from what happened in Cornelius’ house that the key term is “repent” included in belief.

When a person believes, he repents, biblically, and commits himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. So the key term is “repent.” Baptism should follow, of course, but it doesn’t secure the blessing, it’s a testimony to the blessing. And what happened in Cornelius’ house is clear evidence of that. So Peter says, “What doth hinder us from baptizing these people? They have received the Holy Ghost as well as we.”

And then, you know, there are some who like to say, Baptism, therefore, is not very important. And it really doesn’t make a whole lot of difference. And, I think, I can understand one reason why an individual might say that. He’s been in a church, perhaps, where baptism is said to be the means of salvation, necessary to salvation, when he discovers that that’s not true, biblically, he tends then to think, we’ve been misled. Baptism is not important. I also may not want to confuse people by laying stress upon it. But the fact that people have misused baptism, misemphasized it, should not make us give it an improper place in our ministry. Notice, Peter commanded them to be baptized. He didn’t say, it’s a matter of the leading of the Holy Spirit, and if the Holy Spirit leads you to be baptized, be baptized. If the Holy Spirit doesn’t lead you, then wait until he does. No. You see, the Holy Spirit always leads in accordance with the Word of God. It’s written plainly in the Word of God. That’s the leading of the Holy Spirit. And if a person has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, he doesn’t have the freedom to say, “I’ll wait until the Holy Spirit convinces me I ought to be baptized.” Because he’s rebelling, all of that time. The Scriptures say be baptized and he commanded them to be baptized.

And so when an individual has come to faith in Christ and has received the forgiveness of his sins, he is to be baptized. And to be baptized immediately is the best time. In fact, if two or three of you would like to get saved right now, maybe we could arrange to have a little baptism up here. I could put off, I could put off a noon meal, if there were two or three of you who would respond to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and wish to be baptized immediately. It’s that important. He commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. And they, “Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.” And no wonder for Peter had brought them the Word of God.

If you are here this morning, and you’ve never believed in the Lord Jesus, we remind you of the atoning work that he has accomplished on the cross at Calvary. And we remind you of the fact that he is Lord of all, both Jews and Gentiles. And if you as a Jew or if you as a Gentile desire to know the forgiveness of your sins, come to Christ. Believe in him! And the arms of our great Savior are open to all who come, whether Jew or Gentile to receive the forgiveness of sins from him. Come to Christ! Believe in him! Don’t leave this auditorium without the assurance of life through Christ. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We are grateful to Thee, Lord, for these marvelous words, spoken by the Apostle Peter. We know, Lord, we have not in any measure plumbed the depths of them, but we thank Thee for the forgiveness of sins, which comes through His Name. O God, may we each, at this moment, reflect upon our relationship to Thee, through Christ. And for those who do not know Him, may there be a word of thanksgiving for that which Christ has done now. And may there be the assurance of the reception of the forgiveness of sins through Christ. We give Thee thanks. We pray Thy blessing upon us as we part from this meeting.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.