

## LESSON 13

November 28, 2021

### Unit III. Visions Of Praise

#### No Difference

**DEVOTIONAL READING:** Acts 15:6-18

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:** Acts 10:34-47

**PRINT PASSAGE:** Acts 10:34-47

#### KEY VERSES

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. (Acts 10:34-35, KJV)

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Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.” (Acts 10:34-35, NIV)

#### LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Explore the gift of the Holy Spirit in your lives.
- Value the leadership of Peter in the early church and his relationship with Christ.
- Spread the good news that Christ is for all who want to know Him.

#### KEY TERMS

**Acceptable (verse 35)**—Greek: *dektos* (dek-tos’): welcome; “accepted” (KJV); “accepts” (NIV). **Anointed (verse 38)**—Greek: *chrió* (khree’-o): anointed; consecrated by anointing.

**Healing (verse 38)**—Greek: *iaomai* (ee-ah’-om-ahee): to heal.

**Peace (verse 36)**—Greek: *eiréné* (i-ray’-nay): one; peace; quietness; rest.

**Truth (verse 34)**—Greek: *alétheia* (al-ay’-thi-a): truth; divine truth revealed to humanity; “true” (NIV).

**Witnesses (verse 39)**—Greek: *martus* (mar’-toos): eyewitnesses or ear-witnesses.

#### PREPARING THE LESSON

- Refer to the *Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher’s Edition* for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week’s student assignments (“Your Life” and Your World!”).
- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.

#### WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

All types of barriers prevent people from coming together in unity. How are barriers removed? God reveals to Peter that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for all, and the power of the Holy Spirit is God’s gift to everyone who accepts Christ.

#### THE LESSON IN FOCUS

From childhood, most people become well acquainted with the differences and barriers that divide people. These barriers divide people by race, culture, religion, politics, money, as well as other differences that often seem more random and insignificant. People often find it easier to overcome their differences when they are united by a common cause. Moreover, those who have found the courage to move beyond the barriers that discourage unity are often surprised to find that they have more in common with the people they once shunned and avoided than they ever imagined.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus welcomed and engaged people regardless of their differences. Jesus prayed that His disciples would be united, just as He and the Father are one (see John 10:30). By the power of His Spirit, God continues to break barriers and build bridges between people.

### THE LESSON IN CONTEXT

In the days of the early church, the term Gentiles was a common phrase referring to anyone who was not Jewish. It literally means “nations” from the Greek word *ethnos* (as in Acts 10:35). Other words used of non-Jews in the New Testament are Greeks or Hellenes (see Romans 3:9), referring to those in the Greco-Roman world who were not Jewish and “the uncircumcision,” *akrobystía* (see Ephesians 2:11), which referred to those who did not enter into a covenant relationship with Yahweh by keeping Jewish Law. Paul would explain that Jesus has “broken down the dividing wall” between Jews and Gentiles by giving both groups “access in one Spirit to the Father” (see Ephesians 2:11-22). In other words, the way to unify warring factions of people is to first reunite both to God. Before Jews received the first Gentile believers into the church, God began breaking the barrier between Jews and Samaritans (see Acts 8:48). Samaritans were the product of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles and were shunned by the Jews (see John 4:9). Jesus’ promise to His apostles is that they would systematically break down barriers as they were filled with the Holy Spirit, being His “witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV). As these divisions were breached, they were accompanied by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:4; 8:14-17; 10:44). Peter was present in each case. The meeting between Cornelius’s household and Peter was facilitated by visions given to Cornelius and Peter, even though they were separated by many miles (see Acts 10:1-16).

### OPENING INQUIRY (Choose from the questions below.)

1. Share a time when you felt left out of a group.
2. How did it feel?
3. Share a time when you have been influential in either allowing or refusing to allow someone to join a group to which you belonged. How did you justify it?

### INSIGHTS

Jesus came for all people, not one specific group of people. We quench the Spirit (see 1 Thessalonians 5:19) and interfere with the move of God when we dare to determine some to be unworthy of worshipping with us based on any differences between us. As we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth and to shape our character, we will become more committed to drawing others to Christ rather than turning them away. During moments of true spiritual worship, God’s people should feel a genuine kinship with other believers and be drawn to them, regardless of their national origin, personal background, culture, or creed.

### EXPLORATION

As Christians declaring faith in the power and love of God, we should continually strive for unity in the church—even among those with whom we have very much in common. Real unity is much deeper than outward similarities. Real unity may require engaging in awkward conversations with church members and others who do not believe, think, or act like us. Excellence in message, ministry, and mission is not possible when the church is sharply divided. We must come to embrace and appreciate diversity and the reality that the Good News of Jesus Christ is available to all as we rejoice with no difference in Christ Jesus.

## **ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER**

### **Commentary on Acts 10:34-40**

#### **KJV**

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

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.

39 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:

40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

#### **NIV**

34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism

35 "but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

36 "You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

37 "You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—

38 "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

39 "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross,

40 "but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen."

The apostle Peter immediately understood the significance of the vision God gave him on the rooftop. He realized that the distinction between clean and unclean animals did not apply to people, and that, contrary to Jewish belief, no people were to be thought of as unclean in the sight of God. Although unsaved, none were unclean or cast away by God as a defiled creation. This would contradict God's own words regarding His creation in that it was good by design (see Genesis 1) and thus destined to be good even in going astray. God shows no partiality to any one people or nation. God accepts those who fear Him and do what is right, whether Jew or Gentile. This was a great lesson for Jews to learn and marked a definite step in the expansion of the church from a Jewish sect to a universal fellowship. Peter went to the home of the centurion, Cornelius, and preached the Gospel to him, pointing out that although God sent His Word first to Israel, Jesus is indeed Lord of all. Peter's proclamation of Jesus included a summation of His earthly ministry in Judea and Galilee, His anointing as Messiah at baptism, and His good works including the healings and exorcism of demons. It is notable that Peter said little about the meaning of Christ's death, and that he proclaimed no doctrine of the atonement in this message. This could possibly be due to the fact that he was speaking to Gentiles who may have been limited in their grasp of certain theological connections between Judaism and Christianity. The Gospel consisted of the facts of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Peter wanted to proclaim to all the Gospel of Jesus as a Gospel for all people. Jesus' crucifixion and death were not publicly attested to as established facts, especially by religious leaders of the time. They likely figured that by not speaking of it or acting as if it did not happen, they could diminish public awareness and discussion of the fact that

they had crucified Jesus and that Jesus' body was missing from the grave. Despite the position of the religious leaders, Peter and the other disciples had a powerful testimony, experience, and now a new revelation from God that they refused to ignore: the message of the Gospel is for everyone.

## **DISCUSSION STARTERS**

*(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)*

### **Adult Question:**

Reflect on a time when you prejudged someone, only to realize later that you had judged the person wrongly. What lesson did you learn? Share.

### **Young Adult Questions:**

- (1) Are you like Peter? What have you done to help others find Christ? Are you hesitant to share your faith with people from other religious or racial backgrounds?
- (2) How would you begin to tell the story of Jesus to an unbeliever or someone who has never heard it? What part of the story would be most difficult for you to explain?

## **COMMENTARY ON ACTS 10:41-47**

### **KJV**

41 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.

42 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.

43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 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.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

### **NIV**

41 "He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

42 "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.

43 "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles.

46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said,

47 "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."

Rather than reciting Scripture, Peter chose to give personal testimony and account regarding Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. He stated that others had witnessed everything he had declared, including men (chosen by God) who ate and drank with Jesus after His resurrection from the dead. The Gospel included an announcement of the coming Judgment of both the living and the dead by the resurrected Jesus, and the offer of the forgiveness of sin to all who believed in Him. Peter's

sermon was the first biblical example of preaching to the Gentiles. It contained very little reflection upon the meaning of the person of Christ, and no emphasis upon His pre-existence, incarnation, and deity, or on the atoning character of His deity. It was indeed a sermon one could call a “primitive Christology,” consisting primarily of the proclamation of the facts of Jesus’ life, death, burial, and resurrection, and the appeal to believe on Him for the forgiveness of sins. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter had exhorted his hearers to repent, to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, and to receive the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:38). At Caesarea, this order of events was changed, and the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his family before they were baptized. This was not a new Pentecost, but an extension of Pentecost to include the Gentiles. When Peter referred to the “believers of the circumcision,” he was referring to the Jewish Christians who had accompanied Peter from Joppa. Their astonishment was due to the fact that they had not understood that the Gospel was to be extended to the Gentiles. Although they were Christians, they were still Jews and their Jewish prejudices had to be broken. The gift of tongues was given on this occasion that there might be no doubt that whatsoever God had given to the Gentiles in the form of the gift of the Holy Spirit was the same gift He had bestowed upon Jewish believers. Peter immediately recognized that the Gentiles should be brought into the fellowship of the church, and therefore commanded that Cornelius and his family be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (see verse 48a, not in today’s lesson). In this occasion, please note, baptism in water followed baptism in the Spirit. Peter did not immediately return to Jerusalem but remained with Cornelius for some time, likely instructing him in the things of the Lord (see verse 48b, not in today’s lesson).

## **DISCUSSION STARTERS**

*(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)*

### **Adult Question:**

Can you think of some creative ways to share the Gospel in your community?

### **Young Adult Questions:**

How do you feel when God shows you something that contradicts something you have always believed to be right? Are you more inclined to share the Gospel with some people rather than others? God can save anyone. Why, then, are we often surprised when those we call “unlikely” respond to the Word?

## **LIFE APPLICATION**

### **Refer to Adult Book**

*(See student lesson’s “Your Life” section.)*

—This week, pause and pray for Holy Spirit’s guidance to reveal people to whom you can share the Gospel. Pray for boldness to overcome any fear or anxiety you feel as you share with others outside your comfort zone.

*(See student lesson’s “Your World!” section.)*

—Connect with a small group of believers and discuss any previous witnessing efforts. Share openly the details of what did and did not work. Instead of attempting to stage a big public evangelism effort, challenge the group to reach out to people in their own family and circle of friends who are still unsaved.

### **Refer to Young Adult Book**

*(See student lesson’s “Your Life” section.)*

—God expects every believer to draw others to Jesus Christ not only through their words but also through their deeds. Everything about you—your words, attitude, and deeds toward others—should present Christ as welcoming rather than excluding of others. Without looking down on anyone or watering down your witness and the message of the Gospel, you should be able to draw someone in your life to a closer relationship with God.

*(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)*

—People in this world are divided by an endless list of barriers—cultural, language, racial, political, and socioeconomic, just to name a few. Real Christians know that no barrier can divide those who truly know Jesus.

### **NEXT WEEK'S LESSON**

The lesson topic for Sunday, December 5, 2021, is "The Protection of Justice." The Devotional Reading text is Matthew 22:36-40, the Background Scripture text is Deuteronomy 5; 10; 27; 28:12, and the Printed Text is Deuteronomy 5:1b-3; 10:12-13; 27:1-10.

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Dear Lord, empower us with Your Holy Spirit to boldly proclaim You to the world. Send people our way who need to hear of the goodness of Jesus. Guide our words and actions so that the lost may see and hear the plan of salvation and repent, turning to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

## **HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS JUSTICE AND OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW**

*(November 29–December 5, 2021)*

**MONDAY, November 29: "The Law of Justice" (Deuteronomy 5:6-21)**

**TUESDAY, November 30: "Follow the Path of God's Law" (Deuteronomy 5:23-33)**

**WEDNESDAY, December 1: "Discern the Good, Acceptable, and Perfect" (Romans 12:1-2, 9-21)**

**THURSDAY, December 2: "The Written Law and the Ark of Wood" (Deuteronomy 10:1-11)**

**FRIDAY, December 3: "Jesus Fulfills the Law" (Matthew 5:17-20)**

**SATURDAY, December 4: "Curses upon Disobedience" (Deuteronomy 27:14-26)**

**SUNDAY, December 5: "Obey the Statutes and Ordinances" (Deuteronomy 5:1-3; 10:12-13; 28:1-2)**