

## Grace for Every Race

### Acts 9:32-11:18

Mahatma Gandhi shares in his autobiography that in his student days in England he was deeply touched by reading the Gospels and seriously considered becoming a convert to Christianity, which seemed to offer a real solution to the caste system that divided the people of India. One Sunday he attended church services and decided to ask the minister for enlightenment on salvation and other doctrines. But when Gandhi entered the sanctuary, the ushers refused to give him a seat and suggested that he go elsewhere to worship with his own people. He left and never came back. "If Christians have caste differences also," he said to himself, "I might as well remain a Hindu!" (Kent Hughes)

#### Scene #1: Introduction (9:32-10:8)

<sup>32</sup> As Peter was traveling from place to place, he also came down to the saints who lived in Lydda. <sup>33</sup> There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. <sup>34</sup> Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed," and immediately he got up. <sup>35</sup> So all who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

<sup>36</sup> In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. She was always doing good works and acts of charity. <sup>37</sup> In those days she became sick and died. After washing her, they placed her in a room upstairs. <sup>38</sup> Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples heard that Peter was there and sent two men to him who begged him, "Don't delay in coming with us." <sup>39</sup> So Peter got up and went with them. When he arrived, they led him to the room upstairs. And all the widows approached him, weeping and showing him the robes and clothes that Dorcas had made while she was with them. <sup>40</sup> Then Peter sent them all out of the room. He knelt down, prayed, and turning toward the body said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. <sup>41</sup> He gave her his hand and helped her stand up. Then he called the saints and widows and presented her alive. <sup>42</sup> This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup> And Peter stayed on many days in Joppa with Simon, a leather tanner.

**10** There was a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment. <sup>2</sup> He was a devout man and feared God along with his whole household. He did many charitable deeds for the Jewish people and always prayed to God.

#### Scene #2: Vision (10:3-16)

<sup>3</sup> About three in the afternoon he distinctly saw in a vision an angel of God who came in and said to him, "Cornelius!"

<sup>4</sup> Looking intently at him, he became afraid and said, "What is it, lord?"

The angel told him, "Your prayers and your acts of charity have come up as a memorial offering before God. <sup>5</sup> Now send men to Joppa and call for Simon, who is also named Peter. <sup>6</sup> He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea."

<sup>7</sup> When the angel who spoke to him had gone, he called two of his household slaves and a devout soldier, who was one of those who attended him. <sup>8</sup> After explaining everything to them, he

sent them to Joppa.

<sup>9</sup> The next day, as they were traveling and nearing the city, Peter went up to pray on the housetop about noon. <sup>10</sup> Then he became hungry and wanted to eat, but while they were preparing something, he went into a visionary state. <sup>11</sup> He saw heaven opened and an object that resembled a large sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners to the earth. <sup>12</sup> In it were all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth, and the birds of the sky. <sup>13</sup> Then a voice said to him, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat!”

<sup>14</sup> “No, Lord!” Peter said. “For I have never eaten anything common and ritually unclean!”

<sup>15</sup> Again, a second time, a voice said to him, “What God has made clean, you must not call common.” <sup>16</sup> This happened three times, and then the object was taken up into heaven.

### **Scene #3: Application (10:17-33)**

<sup>17</sup> While Peter was deeply perplexed about what the vision he had seen might mean, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions to Simon’s house, stood at the gate.

<sup>18</sup> They called out, asking if Simon, who was also named Peter, was lodging there.

<sup>19</sup> While Peter was thinking about the vision, the Spirit told him, “Three men are here looking for you. <sup>20</sup> Get up, go downstairs, and accompany them with no doubts at all, because I have sent them.”

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter went down to the men and said, “Here I am, the one you’re looking for. What is the reason you’re here?”

<sup>22</sup> They said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who has a good reputation with the whole Jewish nation, was divinely directed by a holy angel to call you to his house and to hear a message from you.” <sup>23</sup> Peter then invited them in and gave them lodging.

The next day he got up and set out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went with him. <sup>24</sup> The following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup> When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, fell at his feet, and worshiped him.

<sup>26</sup> But Peter helped him up and said, “Stand up! I myself am also a man.” <sup>27</sup> While talking with him, he went on in and found that many had come together there. <sup>28</sup> Peter said to them, “You know it’s forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with or visit a foreigner. But God has shown me that I must not call any person common or unclean. <sup>29</sup> That’s why I came without any objection when I was sent for. So I ask: Why did you send for me?”

<sup>30</sup> Cornelius replied, “Four days ago at this hour, at three in the afternoon, I was praying in my house. Just then a man in a dazzling robe stood before me <sup>31</sup> and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your acts of charity have been remembered in God’s sight.

<sup>32</sup> Therefore send someone to Joppa and invite Simon here, who is also named Peter. He is lodging in Simon the tanner’s house by the sea.’ <sup>33</sup> Therefore I immediately sent for you, and you did the right thing in coming. So we are all present before God, to hear everything you have been commanded by the Lord.”

### **Scene #4: Declaration (10:34-43)**

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak: “Now I really understand that God doesn’t show favoritism, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation the person who fears Him and does righteousness is acceptable to Him. <sup>36</sup> He sent the message to the Israelites, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ—He is

Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> You know the events that took place throughout Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John preached: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were under the tyranny of the Devil, because God was with Him. <sup>39</sup> We ourselves are witnesses of everything He did in both the Judean country and in Jerusalem, yet they killed Him by hanging Him on a tree. <sup>40</sup> God raised up this man on the third day and permitted Him to be seen, <sup>41</sup> not by all the people, but by us, witnesses appointed beforehand by God, who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to solemnly testify that He is the One appointed by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about Him that through His name everyone who believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins.”

### **Scene #5: Confirmation (10:44-48)**

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who heard the message. <sup>45</sup> The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. <sup>46</sup> For they heard them speaking in other languages and declaring the greatness of God.

Then Peter responded, <sup>47</sup> “Can anyone withhold water and prevent these people from being baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days.

### **Scene #6: Resolution (11:1-18)**

**11** The apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles had welcomed God’s message also. <sup>2</sup> When Peter went up to Jerusalem, those who stressed circumcision argued with him, <sup>3</sup> saying, “You visited uncircumcised men and ate with them!”

<sup>4</sup> Peter began to explain to them in an orderly sequence, saying: <sup>5</sup> “I was in the town of Joppa praying, and I saw, in a visionary state, an object that resembled a large sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners from heaven, and it came to me. <sup>6</sup> When I looked closely and considered it, I saw the four-footed animals of the earth, the wild beasts, the reptiles, and the birds of the sky. <sup>7</sup> Then I also heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat!’

<sup>8</sup> “‘No, Lord!’ I said. ‘For nothing common or ritually unclean has ever entered my mouth!’ <sup>9</sup> But a voice answered from heaven a second time, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call common.’

<sup>10</sup> “Now this happened three times, and then everything was drawn up again into heaven.

<sup>11</sup> At that very moment, three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were. <sup>12</sup> Then the Spirit told me to accompany them with no doubts at all. These six brothers accompanied me, and we went into the man’s house. <sup>13</sup> He reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa, and call for Simon, who is also named Peter. <sup>14</sup> He will speak a message to you that you and all your household will be saved by.’

<sup>15</sup> “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came down on them, just as on us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup> Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if God gave them the same gift that He also gave to us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, how could I possibly hinder God?”

<sup>18</sup> When they heard this they became silent. Then they glorified God, saying, “So God has

granted repentance resulting in life even to the Gentiles!”

### **Concluding Exhortations**

- Jesus overcomes disease and death – rely on Him!
- Jesus shows hospitality to all races – imitate Him!

So let us wash our minds and our mouths of all racial slurs and ethnic put-downs and be done with all alienating behaviors. And let's be the good Samaritan for some ethnic outcast, and let's be the Christ for some untouchable leper, and let's be the Peter for some waiting Cornelius. (John Piper)

- Jesus commands us to preach to everyone – proclaim Him!
- Jesus saves irreligious and religious people – worship Him!