

Jesus is For Everyone (Acts 9:32-11:18)

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[0 : 00] Cool. So starting from chapter 9, verses 32. As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord's people who lived in Lydda.

There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. Aeneas, Peter said to him, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat.

And Aeneas got up. All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. In Joppa, there was a disciple named Tabitha. She was always doing good and helping the poor.

About that time, she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Lydda was near Joppa, so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, Please come at once.

Peter went with them, and when he arrived, he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

[1 : 11] Peter sent them all out of the room. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning towards the dead woman, he said, Tabitha, get up. She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up.

He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon. At Caesarea, there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian regiment.

He and all his family were devout and God-fearing. He gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day, at about three in the afternoon, he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God who came to him and said, Cornelius! Cornelius stared at him in fear.

What is it, Lord? he asked. The angel answered, Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon, who is called Peter.

[2 : 23] He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea. When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and devout soldiers, who was one of his attendants.

He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa. About noon that following day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up to the roof to pray.

He became hungry and wanted something to eat. And while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large street being let down to earth by its four corners.

It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.

Surely not, Lord, Jesus replied. I have never eaten anything impure, unclean. The voice spoke to him a second time. Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.

[3 : 22] This happened three times, and immediately the sheep was taken back to heaven. While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate.

They called out, asking if Simon was known as Peter was staying there. While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, Simon, three men are looking for you.

So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them. Peter went down and said to the men, I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?

The men replied, We have come from Cornelius Centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man who is respected by all Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.

Then Peter invited the men to the house to be his guest. William. Thank you, Fran. Thank you for him seeing so well.

[4 : 24] I always love activities because they get me up and about. So, yeah, really a pleasure to open up the rest of this passage as well with you. So we will be looking not just at what we just read, but all the way up to Acts chapter 11, verse 18.

Now you might think this is a long passage, and yes, it is long. But it's actually all one story, right? This is all about Peter's experience as the word of God spreads. So it is important to look at it, I think, as one section.

But before we look at it, let's bow our heads. Let's pray. Ask God for help. Our gracious Father, we thank you so much for your word.

We thank you for what we've just heard. But do help us, Lord. Some of us are weary. Some of us are not sure why we're here today. But let your spirit fill us, Lord, today.

Remind us of this amazing reality that all of us can rise up to and embrace. Father, help us to celebrate that the good news of Jesus Christ is for everyone.

[5 : 30] Help us now as we hear from your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. All right, I've got a riddle for you. What does a sleeping uni student, a kite on a windy day, and a naughty prophet have in common?

Have a think about it. I'll give you like 20 seconds. What do they all have in common? Sleeping uni student, a kite on a windy day, and the prophet Jonah. What do they have in common?

Call out an answer if you feel like you're brave enough. Anything? No? Don't be shy. What do they all have in common?

Or is it just Pastor William being a bit silly this afternoon? They're all in trouble. Well, kind of. I don't know. Depends, you know, you could be sleeping in, you know, because you're tired and you need the rest, you know.

Jesus gives rest. Okay, the answer is this. They all get told to get up. They all get told to get up. That's it, really. They all get told to get up.

[6 : 43] All right. Yeah, when we fly our kite, we've been doing that with the kids. Get up, get up. You know, trying to get in the air. Look, I wonder, though, when you heard Fran read the passage, did you notice how often the author Luke puts in the narrative, get up, arise, rise up.

Actually, you know, even just in that half section of the whole passage, right? Litter, right? In litter, Peter calls the paralytic Aeneas to get up, to rise up.

And he does. In Joppa, he tells Tabitha to arise. Arise. And she does. Okay. Do you see a theme here? Okay. And later on, verse 13 of chapter 10 tells us, actually, a voice of Jesus calls out, get up, Peter.

Okay. What's the challenge that Peter and us need to rise up, to get up to? What boundaries does God want to break in Peter's life, but also in our lives, for the sake of Christ?

I think we look at this whole section of the Apostle Peter and his experience, and we see how the gospel destroys discrimination. The gospel offers repentance unto life for all nations.

[7 : 57] And that is a challenge to us, to get up and share the peace of Christ to everyone. That's our big idea, I think. It's a large section, right?

Three chapters, or part of three chapters. And so I want to encourage you, if you've not read this section before, maybe you weren't in the Daily Bible Reading crew, read it tonight and the rest of it. I want you to see for yourself how important this story is.

How the challenge for all of us to rise up to the challenge, because the good news of Jesus Christ is for everyone. A bit of context, some of you weren't here last week.

So just a reminder that actually this is part of a mini-series, Acts 8 onwards, and I've called it Breaking Boundaries, because that's what these chapters have all been about, right? Right? Any of you play badminton here?

Please, half the church. Yep. Look, when you play badminton or tennis or whatever, you need to hit the shuttle inside the boundary lines, right? Okay? Well, you should, otherwise you don't get a point.

[8 : 56] At my old school, the teachers drilled into our heads, don't cross the boundary. Stay on, you know, don't get on the grass. Yep. Look, time and time again, we get told these things.

But I think the early church don't seem to listen, do they? It seems like right through chapter 8 onwards, they're not staying inside the boundary lines for them. It started with Philip and his persecuted friends.

What did they do? We just memorized that. They preached the word wherever they went, telling Samaritan half-bloods about King Jesus, making unlikely friendships of random people in chariots, even teaming up to welcome someone like Paul, of all people, welcoming them into the church. Boundary-breaking stuff. Every story Luke has chosen to highlight for us in this section is highlighting the boundary-breaking, disruptive power of the gospel.

Disruptive power of the gospel. One that the Holy Spirit is using to strengthen, to grow and transform the church, right?

[10 : 04] And that's where we get left at verse 31, what we heard last week from Pastor Albert. Do you see that? Do you see that?

And so it is at this point where Luke kind of shifts the camera and takes us back to the apostle Peter. And this whole section is us kind of handicapped following Peter around, right?

And what he experiences, what happens around him. And Peter, he's one of Jesus' first disciples, as most of you know. He's seen this boundary-breaking gospel move already, hasn't he?

All right? Remember, at the start of chapter 8, he got told and he met Samaritans who had received the word. He's seen with his own eyes. The Holy Spirit come on them. It's no longer just sons of Judah who are part of God's new kingdom and Jesus.

It's Samaritans too. And sometime later, we see from verse 32 onwards, Peter, he heads northeast, right? From Jerusalem where he was.

[11 : 06] And he heads up to visit some of the new believers in a town called Lydda. We see that from verse 32 to 35. And there in that town, in the name of Jesus, he miraculously heals Aeneas who had been paralyzed for eight years.

And we keep reading. When word spread that Peter was in Lydda, some believers from Joppa, a bit further up the road by the sea, they hear he's here and they pop down.

They're pleading with Peter. Carmen, can you help one of our sisters, Tabitha? What are we seeing here? Luke is leaving us in no doubt that Peter is empowered with the same authority that Jesus had when he was ministering on earth.

Some of you will know the gospel stories. Just as Jesus could call the paralyzed sinner to get up. And Jairus' 12-year-old daughter, right?

To rise up. Peter is given the same kind of power. Why? To prove that God's kingdom is fully and finally here in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[12 : 17] That's what's going on here. And the effect, right? Verse 35 and verse 44 tell us. 42. The effect is that people are turning to the Lord as they experience this miraculous transformation.

People are believing in the Lord Jesus. And in verse 43, we kind of see Peter, he's done a bit of hard work and now he has a bit of a break at his batch in Joppa.

Right? He's probably feeling pretty good, right? Many people believing in the Lord. Maybe he's staying there as he stays there with his mate Simon. He's feeling pretty content.

But he's about to get a big shock. Because, because God is preparing someone else. Cornelius. We see this in verse 1 of chapter 10, right?

Because meanwhile, while Peter's kind of here, up here in Joppa, Luke kind of pans the camera angle again. And actually goes up the coast to another seaside city called Caesarea.

[13 : 21] Caesarea is where a man named Cornelius, verse 1 tells us, gets a vision. What do we know about this man Cornelius? Have a look at your Bibles. It tells us.

One, he's in Caesarea. This is a big city where the Roman Empire ruled the whole region from. What else do we learn? He's a centurion.

Right? A centurion is an officer that looked after maybe 80 to 100 soldiers. And they're from ancient Italy. Right? The Italian regiment is what it says here. And you know what?

Like other centurions in the gospel accounts, I think Luke highlights him because he is someone who is fairly well respected. Someone respected. Luke specifically says and tells us that Cornelius and his family were devout and God-fearing.

Right? Someone who gave generously to those in need. Someone who prayed to God regularly. So much like the Ethiopian we heard about in Acts 8, Cornelius would have worshipped or tried to worship the God of Israel.

[14:20] Maybe he would have tried to keep some of the laws of Moses like the people that he was serving and living with. Cornelius. And yet, by not being ethnically Jewish and not being circumcised physically, Cornelius and others like him would have remained under Jewish law unclean.

Unclean. Worshipping in the car park. Any serious Jew would have kept their distance from him at the time. Certainly, they would not enter Cornelius' house.

They would not join his bubble. But what happens next? Acts 10 continues. When Cornelius gets direct instructions from the Lord to grab Simon Peter from Joppa, he obeys.

He's devout. He immediately obeys. He sends his servants out to find him. Find Simon. It's just a reminder, isn't it? Sometimes God works in different ways to draw us to him.

It's important to know that it's different for different people. I don't know about you. Maybe today you feel like God is absent. Maybe you feel like you don't understand how he works.

[15:35] Why do you work so randomly, God? Maybe you even feel, God, do you even care about the little details of my life? Here, and through the rest of the story, we will see how God plans and orchestrates every event so that his will takes place.

He will oversee every encounter. He preps Peter to be in the right place. He preps Cornelius to want to go to the right place. This is a God that we worship. He is sovereign over every challenge in their lives and in your life.

Under his care, you can be sure that all the puzzle pieces will fit together. And we know this because just as Cornelius' servants are kind of en route to Joppa, the Lord, at the same time, is preparing Peter to receive him.

Right? Verse 9 to 12 tell us this. We're told, right? Verse 9. We're told that Peter's about to have a nice outside alfresco lunch. And then suddenly, he sees something descending from heaven.

It's not a kite. It's not a plane. It's a sheet full of animals. Reptiles. Birds of the air. I don't know.

[16:56] The description sounds like it's a huge soft toy collection, but except bigger. I don't know. I don't know what your house is like, how many soft toys you have. This is bigger. This is what Peter sees.

Right? And then it switches. Right? He sees this. Then verse 13 on. He hears something. What does he hear? A voice tells him, get up, Peter.

Kill and eat. How does Peter respond to this hallow fresh delivery? Verse 14. Surely not, Lord.

He replies. And at this point, I think, for those of us who know Peter still, we should probably be, Peter, Peter, Peter. But then some of us might be thinking, hang on, maybe Peter's got a point.

What is up with all these animals? Maybe you're here and you love animals and you're a little bit repulsed, actually. What? Eat all these animals? You might be even confused.

[18:00] Does God want us to eat more meat? Is that the point of Acts chapter 10? What does even eating animals have to do with God's kingdom, about the gospel? All right.

So this is where we, like good missionaries, want to be cross-cultural. Okay? We want to imagine what it's like to be in Peter's shoes, right? In the first century.

Have a think about this. Peter is Jewish, right? Jewish by birth. This means his whole life, what he eats, has been reflecting the law of Moses that he got brought up in.

And it includes Leviticus chapter 11, right? This is the graveyard of every Bible reading plan.

Leviticus chapter 11. This is a whole chapter, 46, 47 verses, where the Lord commands Israel to avoid certain specific kinds of animals.

Every meal, you see, was to remind God's people that they were set apart for God. They were different to the surrounding nations. Imagine that three times a day you get reminded.

[19:05] You're different. Be holy because I'm holy. We don't have time to unpack in detail which animals God forbids and why. If we were going through Leviticus, I'd tell you.

But what Peter clearly sees in his vision includes all the animals, right? And that sheet are clean and unclean animals from his language.

It's a buffet spread of, as you see, animals, creeping things, and birds. That's what verse 13, 14 says. It's all fair game, says the Lord. And he's told, not just once, not twice, but three times, God has made them clean.

And what we also need to know is that actually Peter has been pretty selective so far in his clean, unclean Jewish life. I wonder if you noticed his story so far, okay?

Okay. Hanging out with a paralyzed man, okay? Technically, not supposed to do that. Touching a dead body, technically, right? Not okay. Unclean.

[20 : 14] Living with Simon the Tanner. Do you know what a tanner is? They kind of skin the meat of animals, right? Yeah. Also unclean, okay? So Peter is a little bit of a hypocritical Jew at this point, right?

Okay. Surely not. I've never eaten anything impure or unclean. Where are you staying again, Peter? Why does Peter need this vision, this reminder?

Because he is about to encounter a new kind of table fellowship. A new kind of house party. One where people from every nation shares in God's peace.

And this vision that Peter gets is reminding, is preparing him for this new reality. So much so, that actually when Cornelius' three men knock on the door, you notice how transformed Peter is.

He actually invites the men into the house to be his guests. You have to be in his shoes. Think how crazy that would have been. How counter-cultural.

[21 : 20] And at this point, can I say that not just for Peter, but for us, how we eat, what we eat, matters hugely to God too.

I know some of you, all right, long enough to know that you love to eat. All right? Don't lie. Don't lie.

It's church. You might think, okay, look, I'm not a Jew, right? So, look, I can eat whatever I want.

There's no restrictions, all right? I'm in a new age now. That's, you'd be wrong. You'd actually be wrong. Actually, look, it is true. Jesus declared all foods clean.

Mark's gospel. All right? So, yes, we enjoy barbecue, pork, and whatever else at the night market last night. It was great. But the New Testament actually gives Christians more restrictions, not less, on how we eat.

Do you believe me? Do you believe me? Think about it. Don't eat anything that causes a brother or sister to stumble. 1 Corinthians. Sorry, Romans 14. Do eat and drink to the glory of God.

[22 : 26] 1 Corinthians. Don't get drunk on wine. Ephesians 5, 17. Do wait for others before you chow down at the Lord's table. That's also Corinthians. Don't show favoritism with food.

That's the book of James. Do devote yourselves, Acts 2, to break bread regularly with prayer, fellowship, and the apostles' teaching. And then don't forget to show hospitality to strangers.

The book of Hebrews. None of that's Leviticus. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ changing how we chomp. Right? That's the gospel shaping our lives.

And so the question is, do your dining habits show you delight in God of the universe? Or delight in God that is your belly? Have a think about this.

Like our first parents, what we eat reflects who we worship. The gospel actually demands that we practice a new kind of table fellowship.

[23 : 28] One where we eat to not just exclude people, right? But to include people. Imagine that, church. If you want to break boundaries and really get to make progress with sharing the gospel with your next door neighbor, what can you do?

Offer them a meal. Grab a coffee with them. If we want newcomers here at PCBC to feel more included and loved or other parts of the church, grab their number.

Get a coffee with them. Organize a hot pot. If there's conflict with someone at church, you're not getting along right now. Don't just avoid them.

Have yum cha with them. Or a toasted sandwich. Two-minute noodles. It actually doesn't matter

what you eat, I don't think. It's the hospitality. It's the willingness for table fellowship in Christ, right?

This is a very different vision of food. I get it. We don't eat to exclude. We eat to include. And this is the kind of vision that prepares Peter, and hopefully us, for a boundary-breaking growth in God's kingdom.

[24 : 37] And in the rest of chapter 10, that's exactly what we see happen. And so that's what we see from verse 23 all the way up to 11, 18. I really think this is it.

It's all one section. Peter preaches to the Gentiles, and then he kind of responds to all the consequences about it as God moves. Sometimes, like this morning, I was at another church, I have the joy of being a guest preacher.

Usually when you show up as a guest, you're meant to be polite, right? You're meant to say something nice. Thanks for inviting me. I'm really glad to be here. But have a look at verse 27.

I think Peter's not a very good guest speaker. Think about what he's saying here in verse 27 to 29, right? This is his first words to a group of people ready to listen to him. And he says this, You know I'm not supposed to be hanging out with you guys.

Peter, Peter, Peter. Really warming himself up, right, as a guest speaker. And did you see what he says, right? You're well aware it's against our law. But God has shown me I shouldn't call anyone impure or unclean.

[25 : 49] So that's where God, I think, is doing a gentle, gracious work. Peter's going from a man who just sees culture to a man who sees a kingdom opportunity, right?

And so he has the courage to ask, May I ask why you sent for me? Verse 29. And so Cornelius, verse 30 to 33, He repeats his story.

He tells Peter exactly what happened. This vision, this call that God had to him, and how he told him to go meet Peter, right, and get someone so that Peter could come over.

And at this point, it's when Peter hears the story of Cornelius' experience. He finally gets it. And he says, right, God welcomes those who seek him from every nation.

He says, verse 34, I now realize how true it is that God does not show partiality, but accepts people from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

[26 : 55] There's no favoritism anymore. Peter gets this. And this seems to unlock Peter's courage. And he does what he's been doing since Pentecost.

He tells others about the good news of Jesus. And that's what we see. And in this next section, from verse 36 through to verse 43, we hear Peter give a three-part sermon.

You can have a look in your Bibles. From verse 36 to 38, first, he retells to Cornelius and his household the incredible life of Jesus. Jesus, the waymaker.

Jesus, the miracle worker, who is God in the flesh, who is unstoppable in what he does. And Peter says, we saw it all.

We saw it all. We were there. We were there. Secondly, in his sermon, Peter then stresses to them, from verse 39 to 41, how Jesus was crucified and raised to life again.

[28 : 03] And, again, that Peter and his friends were witnesses of this. And actually, significantly in this section, you notice verse 41, he emphasized that they ate and drank with him.

They had table fellowship with Jesus, right? It's a recurring theme. Jesus is alive is not just a rumor, not just a second-hand tale. Jesus is alive is something they are as sure of as the fact that they ate dinner with him.

Right? Jesus was not just a fairy tale to the disciples. Jesus was a household contact. He was sharing bread with them to the max. You see that.

And then, finally, Peter, verse 42, 43, then emphasizes this. Because Jesus really did rise again, and we saw this, he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

And that, verse 43, everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through his name. Everyone. Everyone.

[29 : 06] Who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. Everyone. And now here, I think it's good to ask the question, why didn't Peter just say, all right, you think about Cornelius, how godly he was, how pious, why didn't he just say, well done, Cornelius.

You give to charity, and you pray lots, you probably pack out an Operation, you know, Samaritan's Purse Box ten times over, well done. You're really religious. Carry on. Peter didn't say that, though, did he?

He didn't. Because Cornelius, as God-fearing, as respectable, as generous as he was, is still not truly right with God.

Cornelius, like many people who do good, still need to cross into the next stage of salvation history and say, Jesus is the one who makes me do good.

Cornelius needs to experience peace through Jesus. And so, friends, we can't be blinded by the fact that our friends and family, all right, they seem good and kind and respectable, many of them, and so therefore, they don't need a savior.

[30 : 20] We can't think that. Peter doesn't let Cornelius off the hook. Neither should we. Some of us, of course, hide our badness with goodness, right? We just cover it up, okay?

Like perfume on a dead corpse. But Peter knows, and we should know, that the gospel is for everyone. Everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins.

That means everyone, as good as they seem, needs forgiveness. Even you. Even you. Even you. For Cornelius, to live was to perform good deeds, it seems.

To be acceptable to the Jews that he lived amongst. What about you? What is your purpose in life? Is it to live for money?

Is it to live for pleasure? Is it to live for the approval of others around you? How worthless if it's without Christ.

[31 : 27] Only he, the Lord Jesus, can outlast all the games you clock, all the girls you chase, all the grades you get. Only Jesus. And only Jesus offers peace that is as permanent and as proven as his nail-scarred hands.

The fact that he raised from the dead and that his Holy Spirit truly lives in everyone who calls him Lord and Savior. And we can see this. God makes no distinctions.

No one is too unclean to come to Jesus for a fresh start. No one is too nice that they don't need Jesus for a fresh start. So if you haven't done this, put your trust in Jesus.

Receive forgiveness for your sins in his name. What happens next? Verse 44 to 48. What happens next in Cornelius' place is actually amazing, isn't it?

It's actually unbelievable. While Peter was still speaking, while he was still giving his three-point sermon, he probably didn't even finish. Didn't even get to say, hey, repent and believe. He actually was in mid-sermon and the Holy Spirit comes on those who heard the message.

[32 : 44] The same miracle that we saw in Acts chapter 2, right, that Peter himself experienced at Pentecost among the Jews, it happens here not among Jews but among Gentiles, among people who weren't Jewish, right?

And Luke emphasizes this. Verse 45, he says, the circumcised believers, i.e. Jewish believers, they were astonished. They could not believe what was going on. They couldn't believe it.

And remember this, right? In the book of Acts, we need to remember this. What's described isn't always prescribed. And so actually, we've already seen some differences of the way in the Holy Spirit has been at work, right?

What's going on here is different to Acts 2. Acts 2, the Holy Spirit actually came before Peter preached. Acts 8, the Holy Spirit seems to come sometime after with the Samaritans, right?

And then here, Luke tells us it's mid-sermon that the Holy Spirit's come. So we don't want to hang our hats and say, all right, now I know how the Holy Spirit's going to work every single time. This is a very transitional time.

[33 : 51] What we can know is that the Lord can do whatever He wants. He can break boundaries for Jesus for the gospel's sake. And there's, I think what's going on here is that this, there's almost an urgency, right?

It's almost like, wow, I need to show you, Peter, right? Perhaps this is God trying to show Peter. These new followers of Jesus, Cornelius, his household, you need to include them in God's family.

You need to include them in my family right now. So much so that don't finish your sermon. I'm going to send the Holy Spirit right now. It's this urgent. And actually, Peter gets this, right?

Because what does he do? He doesn't finish a sermon. He responds, huh, okay, all right, I'll just stop my sermon. No one can stand in their way of being baptized, folks. I'm going to ask you, please, could you baptize them in the name of Jesus?

And they do. Isn't that amazing? This is the first time that the Gentiles, non-Jews, are welcomed into God's church. Some people see these chapters, actually, as the most important chapters in the whole book of Acts.

[35 : 00] And I can believe them. For the first time, the Holy Spirit has fallen upon those who have not been circumcised. For the first time, God's kingdom is no longer distinguished by old rituals and boundary markers.

For the first time, Jews and Gentiles, people from different nations, are praising God together, and they're still Jews and Gentiles. This is groundbreaking stuff.

For the first time, they are sharing a meal together, right? When it says Peter, you know, they ask Peter to stay with them for a few days, they would have eaten together. They would have slept together in the same house.

They would have shared and been flatmates together. This is amazing. And look, we're not told what's on the menu when they hang out and eat together, but I know what's not on the menu.

It's not racism. It's not favoritism. It's people from different races united in Christ. That is groundbreaking stuff. And in chapter 11, even after word spreads among the Jews back home, hey guys, I heard that Peter ate with uncircumcised people.

[36 : 12] In chapter 11, Peter actually is bold enough to say, yeah, that's right, I did. I did. Just as he defended himself against the Sanhedrin in chapter 4, Peter defends himself.

He tells all these whispering, gossipy people, hey look, I'm going to tell you exactly what happened. You listen and you tell me, could I have withheld baptism from them? The Holy Spirit fell on them just like they fell on us at Pentecost.

And it's the final conclusion that brings us to praise God. Verse 18, they praise God, they have no further objections and they say, so then, even to Gentiles, God has granted repentance that leads to life.

What is the TLDR version of these chapters? It is this, who is the gospel for? Anyone. Who is the gospel for?

Anyone. Anyone. And you know what, if it took a vision, if it took a crazy turn of events to change Peter's mind and his prejudices about who the gospel is for, I wonder if we here at PCBC English need a vision to, to change our prejudices.

[37 : 30] Because let's be honest, let's be honest, our church may be 30 years old, but sometimes we do week by week like we're a teenager with an identity crisis.

I don't know, when I chat with people, I get all these questions. Are we one church family? Are we three churches? Are we a Chinese Baptist church? How can a Chinese Baptist church offer the gospel to everyone, even non-Chinese people?

Should we even keep calling ourselves a Chinese Baptist church? I don't know, you tell me. Hang on, English service, great, we have an English service. Are we an English service for everyone? Or are we really just an English service for the parents who want to send their kids here?

What's going on here? How about church? When we do church, what languages should we use? How should our meetings be run? Which missionaries do we get behind? On and on the discussions go.

We have a bit of a question mark around so many things, don't we? But maybe, like Peter, we need a new vision to break through some of our prejudices.

[38 : 37] I want you to consider this. Christianity is the only religion where you do not need a cultural marker of some kind to become a follower. Christianity is the only religion where you don't have to do something culturally, okay, so that you can be a follower.

You just need to follow Jesus as your king. If you want to be a Muslim, all right, you need to use Arabic to read the Bible, I mean the Quran, otherwise it's not really the Quran.

To be a true Jew, you need to observe a lot of customs, including circumcision, right? Even the atheist has to enter a culture, right, adopt certain assumptions and worldviews to truly belong. But only Jesus says, follow me, leave your sin behind. And by the way, your culture may enrich us, so don't leave it all behind. Right?

Whatever honors God from your culture, your background, your tikanga, is welcome. Let's redeem it for Jesus. Only Christ says, take up your cross, friend.

[39 : 41] And then he says, and here's a cloud of faithful witnesses who will partner with you, who will cheer you on. They could be worshipping Jesus from the bomb shelters in Ukraine, the house churches in China, they are part of the family.

They could be in the hills of Myanmar, they are part of the family. They could be in the favelas in Rio, in Brazil, they are part of our family. Only Christianity can do this. And only the Lord invites us to come and eat and drink.

Have table fellowship one day, the vision of revelation, at a banquet in heaven where we celebrate the best wedding ever. And it's going to have brothers and sisters from Africa, from Asia, from the Middle East, Europe, all around the world.

That's a vision that could change us. So can I share my vision for PCBC English? For me, it looks like people from different ages, stages of life, worshipping Jesus together, sharing meals together, opening God's word in small groups together, inviting anyone, anyone, to hear about the good news of Jesus, to respond with repentance that brings true life.

PCBC, I see a church where brothers and sisters with differences and with conflicts can not avoid each other, but will sit down together, pray together, eat together, work it out together.

[41 : 15] where we break boundaries, we cancel all the clickiness, we show the world a better family, we show the world a better city, we show the world a better kingdom because it's ruled by a better king, Jesus.

I hope that's your vision too. So friends, let's rise up to this challenge. Let's not run from what God wants for us today and into the future, a house of prayer for all nations.

Let's become that family that's from everywhere, preaching the gospel to people from everywhere because his good news, his good news, his good news is for everyone.

Let's pray. Lord, have your way with us. Remind us how wonderful this vision of a global church is and work in us so that we can be part of it.

Forgive us our sins, our prejudice, and work in us so that we can proclaim your gospel here and among the nations. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.