



Walking with the Spirit through the Book of Acts

Pastor Michael Cranford

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Schedule

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|----------|----------------------|---------|-----------------|
| April 7 | The Holy Spirit | Sept 8 | Acts 9:32-10:48 |
| April 14 | Acts 1:1-9 | Sept 16 | Acts 11:1-12:25 |
| April 21 | Acts 1:10-26 | | |
| April 28 | Acts 2:1-13 | | |
| May 5 | Acts 2:14-47 | | |
| May 12 | BREAK (Mother's Day) | | |
| May 19 | Acts 3:1-26 | | |
| May 26 | Acts 4:1-21 | | |
| June 2 | Acts 4:22-5:11 | | |
| June 9 | Acts 5:12-42 | | |
| June 16 | BREAK (Father's Day) | | |
| June 23 | Acts 6:1-15 | | |
| June 30 | Acts 7:2-60; 8:1-4 | | |
| July 7 | Acts 8:5-25 | | |
| July 14 | Acts 8:26-9:31 | | |



Hero #4 – Peter

The Traditional Jew Becomes the Bridge to the Gentiles

Recap: The Pattern.

A heart committed to God's purposes

- Someone who puts God's interests first
- Someone who gives glory to God
- Someone who fearlessly does what God sends them to do and does not turn back

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (2 Chron 16:9)

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Cor 11:1)





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1. Peter’s healing ministry reminds us of the one he follows—Jesus. (Compare Acts 9:32-43 with Luke 5:18-26 and Luke 8:40-56.) When you reach a moment when God controls the precedents and is about to work, follow the pattern of faith shown by others. God works the same as he always has.

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.**” Immediately Aeneas got up. All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. (Acts 9:32-35)



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But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, **get up, take your mat** and go home.” Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. (Luke 5:24-25)



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In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); 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.

Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward 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. (Acts 9:32-43)

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When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep." They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But **he took her by the hand** and said, "My child, **get up!**" Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. (Luke 8:51-55)



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2. The one who has been prepared by the Spirit in power (Peter) is used to further the expansion of the Spirit's plan. The Spirit's power advances his purpose. His purpose is to bring the Gentiles into the people of God.

A) The issue that needs to be solved for the Spirit's work to advance is concerning table fellowship. Can Jewish and Gentile Christians eat together? (See Acts 11:2-3)

So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." (Acts 11:2-3)



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B) The real issue behind it is much bigger. The boundaries of holiness include separation from people who are associated with sin. But this confuses the metaphor with the reality: God's purpose all along was to reconcile himself to the world. That means social boundaries were never intended to be moral absolutes.

“You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground—those that I have set apart as unclean for you. You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.” (Lev 20:25-26)



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Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

“Come out of her, my people,

so that you will not share in her sins,

so that you will not receive any of her plagues.” (Rev 18:4)



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C) The starting point for our perspective comes from recognizing that repentance is the context for mercy. Jesus made this abundantly clear through his ministry (Peter would have seen this over and over). See Matt 9:10-13.

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matt 9:10-13)



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3. When God is at work, he controls all conditions necessary to fulfill his purposes that are beyond the abilities of his servants. (Acts 10:1-23).

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.



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3. When God is at work, he controls all conditions necessary to fulfill his purposes that are beyond the abilities of his servants. (Acts 10:1-23)

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. 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 a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa. (Acts 10:1-7)



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A) God sometimes needs to change our perspective to conform our will to his purposes. (Acts 10:9-23, 28)

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on 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 sheet 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!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”

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The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

This happened three times, and immediately the sheet 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 who 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 the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the 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 into the house to be his guests. (Acts 10:9-23)

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The Law's Social Function: Boundary Marker

You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. But I said to you, “You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey.” I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations. You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground—those that I have set apart as unclean for you. You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own. (Lev 20:23-26)

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The Law's Social Function: Boundary Marker

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. (Eph 2:11-16)

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B) God’s plan makes sense of his purposes across salvation-history. The promise to Abraham was not invalidated by the ceremonial stipulations of the law. God’s plan is fluid in connection with our limitations, but his purposes are unchanging. God always intended to save the whole world.

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.”



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While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?”

Cornelius answered: “Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.” (Acts 10:23b-33)



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C) The antecedent to salvation is the message of the gospel. (Acts 10:34-43)

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



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C) The antecedent to salvation is the message of the gospel. (Acts 10:34-43)

“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, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. 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. 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. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” (Acts 10:34-43)



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D) The Spirit authenticates his purposes with his power (Acts 10:44-48)—the same as he did with the Jews (Acts 2:1-3) and Samaritans (Acts 8:14-16).

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. (Acts 10:44-48)