Acts
OF THE APOSTLES

[12]

BREAKING BARRIERS



Our lives are limited by many boundaries or parameters. Our nation has borders that set it apart from its neighboring countries. Our properties have boundary lines that separate our space from our neighbor's. In athletics, the playing fields have boundaries to determine what is "out of bounds," "foul," etc.

God had established boundaries for His people during the days of the Old Testament. Jews are children of Abraham to whom God promised that "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Salvation from sin would come from the Jews through Christ, the Messiah, and would be a blessing to all nations. When God later formed the Jews into a nation as His "holy people" at Mt Sinai, he set boundaries for them. You know some of these boundaries as the Ten Commandments. God gave other boundaries to define how His chosen people, the Jews, should live and worship. These boundaries would set the Jews apart from the pagan nations and separate them (make them holy) to God.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN

When God set boundaries for His people at Mt. Sinai, He included parameters of what they could and couldn't eat. In Acts 10, Peter saw a vision of all sorts of animals descending from heaven. God commanded him to kill and eat. Peter replied that he would never eat "unclean" foods. His idea of some meat being "unclean" came from the rules given by God at the time of Moses.

The animals Peter saw included four-footed animals, birds, and crawling insects. These creatures were "unclean" according to the rules God had given in Leviticus 11. List two of each type of unclean animals below.

Unclean four-footed animals include: vv.4–7

_____ _____

Unclean birds include: vv.13–19

_____ _____

Unclean crawling creatures and insects include: vv.41–42

_____ _____

Why did God want the Israelites to observe these rules about food? Leviticus 11:44–45 _____

_____

_____



Through the centuries, the Jews became proud of who they were as God's chosen people and came to consider all other people (Gentiles) as worthless and unworthy of God's blessing. By the time of Christ, this separation of Jew and Gentile was firmly set in the Jewish mind. God had to show the Jews that both they and the Gentiles were unclean because of sin, and that both needed the Savior and Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Into THE WORD

Acts 10:1–23

Acts 10 opens by introducing us to Cornelius, a Roman centurion and a Gentile.

1. How is Cornelius described in verse 2?
   - _____
   - _____
   - _____
   - _____
2. Read verses 3–6. Cornelius had a vision of an angel. What did the angel tell Cornelius to do? _____
   _____
   _____
3. How did Cornelius respond? vv.7–8 _____
   _____



As the men sent by Cornelius were nearing Joppa, Peter went up to the housetop to pray. It was noon and Peter became hungry. While lunch was being prepared, Peter fell into a trance. He saw a large sheet coming down from the sky, lowered by the four corners touching the ground. The sheet was full of all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds.

4. A voice said, "_____ _____,
   Peter, _____ and _____ !" (v.13)

5. Peter objected because he had never eaten anything unholy and unclean. God answered Peter's objection in verse 15 by saying, " _____
   _____
   _____."

   This happened three times. Then the sheet was taken back up into the sky.

6. What was Peter's response to all this according to verse 17?
   _____
   _____

The men from Cornelius arrived just as Peter's vision had ended. Peter barely had time to think about it before these men came and asked for him. He didn't even have a chance to come down from the roof.



7. How did Peter know that it was all right to go with these three strangers? vv.19–20 _____
   _____
   _____

Peter went down and asked the men what they wanted. They explained why Cornelius had sent them. Peter invited them to stay for the night. The next day Peter would go to Caesarea and meet Cornelius. What was happening? What was God doing through all of this?



MEMORY VERSE

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. *Ephesians 2:14*

Extra Memory Challenge: Galatians 3:28–29

NEW IDEAS

Promise fulfilled

On the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted from the prophet Joel, where God says, "I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind" (Acts 2:17). In the story of Cornelius, we see that God wants all people—Jew and Gentile—to be saved (I Timothy 2:4–6) through faith in Jesus.

The Gentile Cornelius is called a devout man who fears God. Since he had lived among the Jews, Cornelius would have heard God's promise to send a Messiah who would save people from their sin. Cornelius believed that promise, and through faith he was righteous and devout. Since Jesus the promised Messiah had come, God sent Peter to proclaim that Jesus fulfilled God's promise.

Gentiles becoming believers was not unheard of. Several individuals in the Old Testament who were not descended from Abraham were saved through faith including Rahab, Ruth, and Naaman. God had promised Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him. Jesus brings this to fulfillment in Matthew 28:19, where He instructs His apostles to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching.

All who believe in Jesus, Jew or Gentile, are God's chosen people. "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:29).

discussion questions

As time allows, discuss one or more of the following:

1. Why would God erect the barrier between Jew and Gentile only to tear it down? Discuss the plan of salvation and how God was bringing the Gospel to both Jew and Gentile through the promised Savior, Jesus Christ.

2. Think about the rules and boundaries in your own life.

    a. What rules or boundaries in your home, school, and community do you consider restrictive? How can these benefit you?

    b. Think about some of the commandments God has given. Discuss some ways that you think of them as limiting your freedom and other ways in which they are meant to protect you.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Focus on Freedom in Christ

Sunday	Romans 3:21–26
Monday	Romans 6:4–14
Tuesday	Romans 6:15–18
Wednesday	Romans 8:1–8
Thursday	Romans 8:12–17
Friday	II Corinthians 3:12–18
Saturday	Galatians 5:1–15



The Lutheran Church

ITS CONFESSIONS, CREEDS, & CATECHISM

- *Luther's Small Catechism—Teaching the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments*

The third section of the Catechism is the Lord's Prayer. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He taught what we have come to know as "The Lord's Prayer." In this prayer, Jesus tells us exactly how to pray and summarizes for what we should pray.

1. First John 5:14 reminds us of what petition in the Lord's Prayer?

The final sections of the Catechism focus on the Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar, two timeless gifts from the Lord to the Christian Church. In Baptism, the Triune God adopts us into His family as His redeemed children. In the Lord's Supper, we receive the body and blood of Christ in and with the bread and cup. Through this Sacrament, God strengthens our faith and our love for one another.

2. How does Titus 3:5 describe Baptism?

3. What does Jesus give us in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Matthew 26:26–28