

Acts 10:34-35 & 43

Dear Friends in Christ,

You might be asking yourself, “Why did we sing ‘Abide With Me’ for the sermon hymn this morning? Eventide is some hours away!” Well, listen to this:

“Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847) was an Anglican clergyman who served nearly half his life as vicar of a church at Brixham, a fishing village in Devonshire, on the southwest coast of England (he died at the age of 54, and served that congregation for 24 years).

“During the last years of his life, Lyte suffered from tuberculosis, the disease that would eventually take his life. A few weeks before his death, he preached his last sermon at Brixham. He rested that afternoon, and upon arising took a walk on the beach. He then retired to his study, and emerged with his poem, ‘Abide with Me,’ in his hand.

“It seems clear that death was on his mind as he took his walk that afternoon...”. (Lectionary.org)

That’s why I chose that hymn. We can run and run from the realities of what this world is. We can run and play and ignore, but....well....you knew it was coming: We can’t hide. We’re considering . . .

## **UNCHANGABLE TRUTHS FOR VERY DARK AND UNCERTAIN TIMES**

### **I. No Partiality.**

First, I want to look at the 34<sup>th</sup> verse of this text with you: “So Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘Truly I understand that God shows no partiality...’”. Peter, a Jew by background, had been summoned by God to enter the home of a Gentile by the name of Cornelius. Unthinkable. Because Cornelius was a Gentile Peter would have had difficulty entering his home. And the truth hits: “God shows no partiality.”

The reality of that is dramatic throughout all human history. Instead of choosing the ancient Egyptian world power to be the bearer of the Gospel during the Old Testament times, God chose an unlikely people called the Hebrews. Instead of Christ being born in Rome, the child of noted Roman parents, He was born in an unknown town called Bethlehem, the child of unknown parents. Instead of Christ calling the most learned, articulate and worldly wise men to be His first disciples, He chose fishermen, a tax collector and a physician. Instead of God calling the financially and politically powerful people to be His main bearers of the Word, He called everyday ordinary people - such as shepherds and us.

Every world power that has existed has made intense attacks against the church - Old Testament and New Testament. The Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and the ancient Romans have come and gone. And the present powers will confront the same end either in the near future or on the Last Day.

In every way, God defies human wisdom. And the clarity of that is found in these familiar words:

God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (I Cor. 1:27-29)

And there’s this Word to a world that worships its worldly wisdom; God says: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart” (I Cor. 1:19, as found in Isaiah 29:14).

You see, before God it doesn't make any difference who you think you are, what you have or what you do. Finally, God is no respecter of persons. As our text says, "God shows no partiality", regardless of how any human sees the issue.

## II. Does What Is Right.

Our text goes on to say, "but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (vs. 35)

To fear God is to have inestimable respect for Him with the understanding that He is subject to no-one, regardless of circumstances. It's that "does what is right" part we want to clarify because, from the standpoint of keeping God's Law, we consistently miss the mark.

To do what is right is tied into the words of Jesus, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." (Jn. 3:18) Though we are sinful and still sin - though we do not do perfectly what God commands us to do - for the sake of Christ doing everything necessary for us and suffering the punishment for our sin, God forgives us. Whoever believes is not condemned.

We have the familiar scene from the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel when Jesus, speaking to a crowd of people, said, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life..." (Jn. 6:27) If you're going to do something, then **do what is right** by working for the food that endures to eternal life. And we're told:

Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"  
Jesus answered them, "this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (Jn. 6:28-29)

You see? This is to do what is right. In that same chapter of John Jesus said, "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." (Jn. 3:40)

Most of you are familiar with these words of God: "he (God) chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ..." (Eph. 1:4-5) And why? Why would God want or choose any of us? Because we were impressive, wonderful, outstanding, talented beyond measure? No. Why did He choose us? Because, as Scriptures say, it was "according to the purpose of his will". (Eph. 4:5b) How about this: Because He wanted to. Because He loved us.

To do what is right is to believe in Christ Jesus. In a world that is losing its sensibilities when it comes to right and wrong, good and bad, moral and immoral, what God gives us in Christ is without change!

## III. Do You Know the Old Testament?

And so, our last thought, the 43<sup>rd</sup> verse of Acts 10: "To him (Christ Jesus) all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

It's the consistent truth of Scripture from beginning to end: "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." And what makes this part of our text so outstanding and powerful are the words, "all the prophets bear witness." Do you understand the significance of this? There were no New Testament Scriptures at that moment. We are drawn back to the reality of salvation by grace through faith in Christ as taught throughout the Old Testament!

Do you grasp the significance of this? We live in a world of faulty, liberal theology that works itself into a sweat to demonstrate that the Gospel isn't that clear in the Old Testament. It's the same sweat that labors to disprove so much of the New Testament.

Do you remember that moment after Christ's resurrection when He walked the road to Emmaus with two disciples. And there came that point in time when we're told, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." (Lk. 24:27) "Interpreted to them in all the Scriptures...". That's Old Testament.

Later, in another appearance to the disciples Jesus said, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...". (Lk. 24:44-45) Old Testament.

And the point? The Bible – all of it - testifies to the presence, power and love of God in our lives through Jesus Christ. Without it, we have nothing but whatever this world offers, and that's death. Everything God gives us in Scripture is hope, comfort, strength, encouragement and warning; all leading to eternal life in Christ! All of it - unchanging truths for very dark and uncertain times.

It is as the Psalmist wrote, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Ps. 119:105) So....how's the light in your life? How strong is the certainty of God's love and design for you?

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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*Acts 10:34-35 & 43: “**Unchangeable Truths  
for Very Dark and Uncertain Times**”*

*I. No Partiality.*

*II. Does What Is Right.*

*III. Do You Know the Old Testament?*

*Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
2155 North Oakland Avenue  
Decatur, Illinois 62526*