***“Eastering” at Pentecost***

**Acts 2:36-47 Pentecost, June 5, 2022**

***Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you,   
in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.  
And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.  
This promise is for you and your children   
and for all who are far off –   
for all whom the Lord our God will call.*Acts 2:38-39**

**First important question: What does this mean?**

*When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

*5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”*

Acts 2 (note: Peter’s answer refers back to Joel 2 and the GATDOTL!)

1. Once again, the disciples (all 120 of us!) are together

2. The arrival of the Holy Spirit should not be a secret

3. This is Babel in reverse – the curse is beginning to lose its power!

4. Important question: What sign of the Holy Spirit and the God’s GATDOTL program do we   
expect to see here in Anacortes?

**Which Jesus? (or, The essential element of every good sermon)**

*22 “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. 25 David said about him . . . .* [Psalm 16:8-11]

*29 “Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said . . . .* [Psalm 110:1]

*36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*

Acts 2 (Peter quotes from Psalm 16 and Psalm 110)

1. Get the right Jesus, not the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus (place your adjective there)

2. The “normal” way to meet Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**What God is doing while Peter is preaching**

*37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”*

*38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*

Acts 2

1. God is piercing hearts, so I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. God is giving gifts, so I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. God is calling, so I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. This is how God is at work during the GATDOTL!

**What to do when your heart is pierced**

1) The good news about repentance “Go east, young man” (with apologies to Horace Greely)

*17 “Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.*

Acts 3 (Peter’s next great sermon)

2) The next step is baptism

*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

Romans 6

3) Find a church that encourages you in the Word, in prayer, in fellowship and in service

*40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

*42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Acts 2

**Resources for studying Luke’s two part story of Jesus**

*Bible.org* has some wonderful resources at [*https://bible.org/book/Luke*](https://bible.org/book/Luke)

J. C. Ryle has an interesting commentary at [*https://gracegems.org/Ryle/l24.htm*](https://gracegems.org/Ryle/l24.htm) I have also included his classic article, “Repentance”, at [*https://www.monergism.com/repentance*](https://www.monergism.com/repentance)

Bob Deffinbaugh has a very interesting sermon series on Acts at <https://bible.org/series/studies-book-acts>  
which include his “What Must One Do?” sermon at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41*](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41)

Spurgeon has a wonderful Acts 2 repentance sermon at [*https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/2102.htm*](https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/2102.htm)and a “Far Reaching Promise” sermon at [*http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols43-45/chs2586.pdf*](http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols43-45/chs2586.pdf)

Kevin DeYoung has a good Ascension summary at [*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/theological-primer-the-ascension/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/theological-primer-the-ascension/)

F. F. Bruce’s helpful study of the Jerusalem church at [*http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/cbrfj/church-jerusalem\_bruce.pdf*](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/cbrfj/church-jerusalem_bruce.pdf)

Tim Keller has an important sermon on Acts 2:37-47 at [*https://www.monergism.com/signs-king-%E2%80%93-acts-237-47*](%20https:/www.monergism.com/signs-king-%E2%80%93-acts-237-47) He also has some very interesting comments on the mission of the church at [*https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/the-missional-church*](https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/the-missional-church) and a contemporary look at repentance at [*http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/All\_of\_Life\_Is\_Repentance-Keller.pdf*](http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/All_of_Life_Is_Repentance-Keller.pdf)

If you want to equip yourself to explain why we believe in resurrection, Michael Horton has a wonderful, if a bit heavy, article at [*https://whitehorseinn.org/resource-library/articles/risen-indeed-2/*](https://whitehorseinn.org/resource-library/articles/risen-indeed-2/)

Diagram

Description automatically generated

**Luke-Acts chronology**

Graphical user interface, application, table

Description automatically generated

***Pricked in Their Heart***

September 1st, 1889 by  
C. H. SPURGEON at [*https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/2102.htm*](https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/2102.htm)

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"—Acts 2:36-37.

This was the first public preaching of the gospel after our Lord was taken up into glory. It was thus a very memorable sermon, a kind of first-fruits of the great harvest of gospel testimony. It is very encouraging to those who are engaged in preaching that the first sermon should have been so successful. Three thousand made up a grand take of fish at that first cast of the net. We are serving a great and growing cause in the way chosen of God, and we hope in the future to see still larger results produced by that same undying and unchanging power which helped Peter to preach such a heart-piercing sermon.  
  
Peter's discourse was not distinguished by any special rhetorical display: he used not the words of man's wisdom or eloquence. It was not an oration, but it was a heart-moving argument, entreaty, and exhortation. He gave his hearers a simple, well-reasoned, Scriptural discourse, sustained by the facts of experience; and every passage of it pointed to the Lord Jesus. It was in these respects a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its contents. His plea was personally addressed to the people who stood before him, and it had a practical and pressing relation to them and to their conduct. It was aimed, not at the head, but at the heart. Every word of it was directed to the conscience and the affections, It was plain, practical, personal, and persuasive; and in this it was a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its aim and style. Yet Peter could not have spoken otherwise under the impression of the divine Spirit: his speech was as the oracles of God, a true product of a divine inspiration. Under the circumstances, any other kind of address would have been sadly out of place. A flashy, dazzling oration would have been a piece of horrible irreverence to the Holy Ghost; and Peter would have been guilty of the blood of souls if he had attempted it. In sober earnestness he kept to the plain facts of the case, setting them in the light of God's Word; and then with all his might he pressed home the truth upon those for whose salvation he was labouring. May it ever be the preacher's one desire to win men to repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! May no minister wish to be admired, but may he long that his Lord and Master may be sought after! May none bewilder their people with the clouds of theoretic philosophy, but refresh them with the rain of revealed truth? Oh, that we could so preach that our hearers should be at once pricked in their hearts, and so be led at once to believe in our Lord Jesus, and immediately to come forward and confess their faith in his name!  
  
We must not forget, however, to trace the special success of the sermon on the day of Pentecost to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, in which Peter had shared. This it is which is the making of the preacher. Immersed into the Holy Spirit, the preacher will think rightly, and speak wisely; his word will be with power to those who hear. We must not forget, also, that there had been a long season of earnest, united, believing prayer on the part of the whole church. Peter was not alone: he was the voice of a praying company, and the believers had been with one accord in one place crying for a blessing; and thus not only was the Spirit resting upon the preacher, but on all who were with him. What a difference this makes to a preacher of the gospel, when all his comrades are as much anointed of the Spirit as himself! His power is enhanced a hundredfold. We shall seldom see the very greatest wonders wrought when the preacher stands by himself; but when Peter is described as standing up *"with the eleven,"* then is there a twelve-man ministry concentrated in one; and when the inner circle is further sustained by a company of men end women who have entered into the same truth, and are of one heart and one soul, then is the power increased beyond measure. A lonely ministry may sometimes effect great things, as Jonah did in Nineveh; but if we look for the greatest and most desirable result of all, it must come from one who is not alone, but is the mouthpiece of many. Peter had the one hundred and twenty registered brethren for a loving body-guard, and this tended to make him strong for his Lord. How greatly I value the loving co-operation of the friends around me! I have no word, to express my gratitude to God for the army of true men and women who surround me with their love, and support me with their faith. I pray you, never cease to sustain me by your prayers, your sympathy, and your co-operation, until some other preacher shall take my place when increasing years shall warn me to stand aside.  
  
Yet much responsibility must rest with the preacher himself; and there was much about Peter's own self that is well worthy of imitation. The sermon was born of the occasion, and it used the event of the hour as God intended it to be used. It was earnest without a trace of passion, and prudent without a suspicion of fear. The preacher himself was self-collected, calm, courteous, and gentle. He aired no theories, but went on firm ground, stepping from fact to fact, from Scripture to Scripture, from plain truth to plain truth. He was patient at the beginning, argumentative all along, and conclusive at the end. He fought his way through the doubts and prejudices of his hearers; and when he came to the end, he stated the inevitable conclusion with clearness and certainty. All along he spake very boldly, without mincing the truth—Ye with wicked hands have crucified and slain him whom God has highly exalted. He boldly accused them of the murder of the Lord of glory, doing his duty in the sight of God, and for the good of their souls, with great firmness and fearlessness. Yet there is great tenderness in his discourse. Impulsive and hot-headed Peter, who, a little while before, had drawn his sword to fight for his Lord, does not, in this instance, use a harsh word; but speaks with great gentleness and meekness of spirit, using words and terms all through the address which indicate a desire to conciliate, and then to convince. Though he was as faithful us an Elijah, yet he used terms so courteous and kindly that, if men took offence, it would not be because of any offensiveness of tone on the speaker's part. Peter was gentle in his manner, but forceful in his matter. This art he had learned from his Lord; and we shall never have master-preachers among us till we see men who have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. Oh, that we could become partakers of our Lord's Spirit, and echoes of his tone! Then may we hope to attain to Pentecostal results, when we have preachers like Peter, surrounded by a band of earnest witnesses, and all baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.  
  
When we follow the run of Peter's argument, we do not wonder that his hearers were pricked in their hearts. We ascribe that deep compunction to the Spirit of God; and yet it was a very reasonable thing that it should be so. When it was clearly shown to them that they had really crucified the Messiah, the great hope of their nation, it was not wonderful that they should be smitten with horror. Looking as they were for Israel's King, and finding that he had been among them, and they had despitefully used him, and crucified him, they might well be smitten at the heart. Though for the result of our ministry we depend wholly upon the Spirit of God, yet we must adapt our discourse to the end we aim at; or, say rather, we must leave ourselves in the Spirit's hand as to the sermon itself as well as in reference to the result of the sermon. The Holy Ghost uses means which are adapted to the end designed. Because, beloved, I do desire beyond all things that many in this congregation may be pricked in the heart, I have taken this concluding part of Peter's discourse to be the text of my sermon this morning. Yet my trust is not in the Word itself, but in the quickening Spirit who works by it. May the Spirit of God use the rapier of his Word to pierce the hearts of my hearers!  
  
First, note that Peter speaks to his hearers upon *their evil conduct to the Lord Jesus;* and, secondly, he declares to them *the exaltation that God has bestowed upon him.* When we have dwelt on these two things, we will notice, in the third place, *the result of knowing this grand fact*—"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."  
  
I. First, then, Peter dwelt tenderly, but very plainly, upon THEIR EVIL CONDUCT TOWARDS THE LORD JESUS. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." As a nation, *Israel had rejected him whom God had sent.* The inhabitants of Jerusalem had gone further, and had consented unto his death; nay, had even clamoured for it, crying, "Crucify him, crucify him." Solemnly had the Jews exclaimed, "His blood be on us, and on our children." None of them had protested against the murder of the innocent One; but many of them had been eager to make an end of him. This Peter, in plain words, charged upon them, and they could not deny it; nor did they pretend to do so. It is well when a sense of guilt compels a man to stand silent under the rebuke of God. We then have hope of him that he will seek for pardon.  
  
Men and brethren, we are not in Jerusalem, and the death of our Lord happened more than eighteen hundred years ago; therefore we need not dwell upon the sin of those long since dead. It will be more profitable for us practically to consider how far *we* have been guilty of similar sins against the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look at home. Let each one consider his own case. I may be addressing some to-day who *have blasphemed the name of the Lord Jesus.* I do not suppose that you have been guilty of the vulgar language of blasphemy, which is coarse and revolting, as well as profane; but there are politer methods of committing the self-same crime. Some, with their elaborate criticisms of Christianity, wound it far more seriously than atheists with their profanities. In these days, wiseacres, with their philosophy, derogate from the glory of our Lord's nature, and, with their novel doctrines, undermine his gospel. Denying the atonement, or teaching it as something other than a substitutionary sacrifice, they try to make away with that which is the very heart and soul of the Redeemer's work. Men nowadays drink in opinions which lessen the guilt of sin, and, of course, lower the value of the atoning blood. The cross is still a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. Men do not now accept the words of the Bible as authoritative, nor the teaching of the apostles as final; they set themselves up to be teachers of the great Teacher, reformers of the divine gospel. They do not accept the teaching of the Lord Jesus one half so much as they criticize it. If any here present have been thus guilty, may the Holy Spirit convince them of their sin! Since the Lord God hath made this atoning Jesus both Lord and Christ, and set him on his right hand, any teaching which does despite to him, however learned, however advanced, however cultured it may seem to be, is a grievous sin against the Lord God himself. By such conduct we are, as far as in us lies, again putting the Lord Jesus to death; we are attempting to make away with that which is the very life and glory of Christ. O my hearer, if you have denied his Deity, rejected his atoning blood, ridiculed his imputed righteousness, or scoffed at salvation by faith in him, may you be pricked in the heart as you see that God hath made that same Jesus to be Lord of all!  
  
Much more common, however, is another sin against our Lord Jesus—namely, *neglecting him, ignoring his claims, and postponing the day of faith in him.* I trust that none here are willing to die unconverted, or would even dare to think of passing away without being washed in the precious blood; yet, my hearers, you have lived to manhood; to ripe years; perhaps even to old age, without yielding your hearts to the Lord Jesus, and accepting him as your Saviour. To say the least of it, this is a very sad piece of neglect. To ignore a man altogether is, in a certain sense, as far as you are concerned, to kill that man.  
  
If you put him out of your reckoning, if you treat him as if he were nothing, if your estimate of life is made as if he were a cipher, you have put your Lord out of existence in reference to yourself. You treat him with empty compliment by observing his day, and hearing his Word; but you have no real regard for him. Is not this a cruel fault? From morning till night your Lord is not in all your thoughts; he never affects your dealings with your fellow-men; you never endeavour to catch his spirit of love, and considerateness, and meekness; and thus, as a Leader and Exemplar, he is dead to you. You have never confessed your sin before him, nor sought for pardon at his hands, nor have you looked to see whether he hath borne your sins in his own body on the tree. O soul, this is base neglect—ungrateful contempt! God thinks so much of his Son that he cannot set him too high; he has placed him at his own right hand, and yet you will not spare him a thought! The great God thinks heaven and earth too little for him, and magnifies him exceedingly above all, as King of kings, and Lord of lords; and yet you treat him as if he were of no account, and might be safely made to wait your time and leisure. Is this right? Will you treat your Saviour thus? May this prick you in the heart, and may you cease from this base ingratitude!  
  
There are others who have done more than this, for they have *rejected Christ.* I now allude to those of you who have not been able to resist the appeals made to you by the Lord's ministers. You have felt a good deal—felt more than you would like to confess. You have been so inclined to seek the Saviour that you have almost done so; sin has flashed in your face like the flames of Tophet, and in alarm you have resolved to seek salvation; you have gone home to bend the knee in prayer, you have read the Scriptures to learn the way of eternal life; but, alas! an evil companion crossed your path, and the question came, "Shall it be this man or Christ?" You chose the man: I had almost said, you chose Barabbas, and rejected Jesus. A sinful pleasure came before you when you had begun to be serious, and the question arose, "Shall I give up this pleasure, or shall I renounce all hope of Christ?" You snatched at the pleasure, and you let your Saviour go. Do you not remember when you did violence to your conscience? There was an effort about it, as you stifled conviction. You had to put forth a decided act of the will to quench the Spirit of God, and to escape from the strivings of your awakened conscience. I know not to whom this may apply; but I am certain, as certain as Peter was when he spoke to the crucifiers of Christ, that I am speaking to some who have been rejecters of the Lord Jesus Christ, not once nor twice. Some of you have distinctly rejected him almost every Sabbath-day; but especially when the Word of the Lord has been with extraordinary power, and you have felt it shake you, as a lion shakes his prey. Thank God, you are not past feeling yet! I pray you, do not presume upon the continuance of your tenderness. You will not always feel as you have felt: the day may come when even the thunders of God may not be heard by your deafened ear, and the love of Christ will not affect the heart which you have made callous by willful obstinacy. Woe to the man when his heart is turned to stone! When flesh turns to stone, it is a conversion unto eternal death; just as the turning of stone to flesh is conversion to eternal life. God have mercy upon you, and prick you in the heart this morning, while you yet have tenderness enough to feel that you have rejected him whom you ought to embrace with all your heart!  
  
I must come a little closer to certain of you, *who have forsaken the Lord Jesus Christ.* There are a few unhappy persons here this morning, over whom I greatly grieve, because of their wanderings; and yet I am glad that they have not quite forsaken the courts of the Lord's house. These once professed to be disciples of Christ; but they have gone back, and walk no more with him. They were once numbered with us, and went in and out of our solemn assemblies for prayer and breaking of bread; but now we know them not. They were not backward to confess themselves Christians, But now they deny their Lord. In former days they were zealous, and apparently devout; they were quick in the service of God, and sound in their creed. But there came a day—I need not describe the circumstances, for they differ in different cases—when two roads were before them, and they must go either to the right or to the left; and they took the road by which they turned their back upon Christ, and upon the vitality of godliness. They went off into sin, and apostatized from the faith. We fear "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." They have gone aside unto crooked ways, and we fear that the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. O my backsliding hearer, I hope you are not a Judas; my trust is that you may be a Peter! You have denied your Master, but I hope you will yet weep bitterly, and be restored to your Lord's service. For your good I must bring home your wanderings to you; may the Lord prick you in the heart about them! Why have you left your Lord? Wherein has he wearied you? There may be present persons from the country, or friends from America, who were once glad to be numbered with the children of God, but now they care nothing for God, or his people. Alas! they take part with the adversaries of Christ, and the despisers of his precious blood! Friend, you are here this morning that I may bring your sin to remembrance, and ask you why you have done this thing! Were you a hypocrite? If not, why have you turned aside ? God has exalted to his throne the Saviour, on whom you have turned your back; have you not acted madly in what you have done? The Most High God is on the side of Jesus, and you are avowedly on the other side; is this right, or wise? It is painful to me to speak of these things. I hope it is far more painful for you to hear of them. I want you to feel as David did, when his heart smote him. What have you been doing? Has the Lord Jesus deserved this at your hands? Turn, I pray you, from your evil way, and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart.  
  
II. After Peter had dwelt upon the sin of his hearers in treating the Lord so ill, he declared to them THE EXALTATION BESTOWED ON HIM BY GOD. The great God loved, and honoured, and exalted that same Jesus whom they had crucified. O my hearers, whatever you may think of the Lord Jesus, God thinks everything of him! To you he may be dead and buried, but God hath raised him from the dead. To God he is the ever-living, the ever well-beloved Christ. You cannot destroy the Lord Jesus, or his cause. If you could do all that the most malicious heart could suggest, you could not really defeat him. Men wreaked their vengeance on him: once they put him to a felon's death, they laid him in the grave, and sealed the stone; but he rose again, for God was on his side. My hearer, whatever you do, you cannot shake the truth of the gospel, nor rob the Lord Jesus of a single beam of his glory. He lives and reigns, and he will live and reign, whatever becomes of you. You may refuse his salvation but he is still a Saviour, and a great one. His gospel chariot rolls on, and every stone which is placed to hinder it is crushed into the earth, and compelled to make a road for him. If you resist the Lord, you do it at your peril; but you do it in vain. You might as well hope to reverse the laws of nature, quench the sun, and snatch the moon from her orbit, as hope to overthrow the cause and kingdom of the Lord Jesus; for God is on his side, and his throne is established for ever. God hath raised his Son from the dead, and taken him up to sit at his right hand, and there he will remain while his enemies shall be made his footstool. By this you may see what evil you have done through rejecting Christ, and may know who he is whom you have neglected refused, and forsaken.  
  
Let me remind you that, when we read of our Lord as being at the right hand of God, we perceive that *he enjoys infinite felicity.* At the right hand of God there are pleasures for evermore; and David said, as the representative of our Lord, "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." He who was the Man of sorrows now overflows with gladness. All his work and warfare done, he rests in boundless blessedness. His priestly work being finished, he sits down. No more does be feel the cross and nails, no more does he endure the mockery of cruel eyes and ribald lips. He is full of joy, that joy which be bids his people share when he says, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." His portion is measureless, infinite, inconceivable delight. Can it be that you are opposed to him, and neglect him, while God lavishes upon him more than all the bliss of heaven, and makes him to be the fountain of unspeakable delight to all his redeemed ones? Grieve that you should grieve him whom God thus loads with blessedness.  
  
Moreover, remember that at the right hand of God *our Lord sits in infinite majesty.* Jesus, whom you think little of, Jesus, from whom you turn aside, is to-day adored of angels, obeyed by seraphs, worshipped by just men made perfect. He is the highest in the highest heavens. Do you not hear the blast of heaven's trumpets, which proclaims him head over principalities and powers? Do you not hear the song which ascribes to him honour, and glory, and power, and dominion, and might? My faith anticipates the happy day when I shall stand a courtier in his unrivalled. courts, and behold him, the Lamb upon the throne, reigning high over all, with every knee in heaven and in earth gladly bowing before him. Can it be that you have neglected him whom God hath exalted? Can it be that you have refused him, that you have done despite to him, that you have, as far as you could, put him to death whom Jehovah has made Lord of all?  
  
Nor is this all: for the place at the right hand of God, to which he is now exalted, is *the place of power.* There sits the Mediator, the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, while his enemies are being subdued under him. Do not believe it, O proudest of doubters, that thou canst take away from Christ any measure of his power! He overrules all mortal things; he directs the movements of the stars; he rules the armies of heaven. He restrains the rage of his adversaries, and what he suffers to be let loose he turns to his glory. All power is given to him in heaven and earth; he reigns in the three realms of nature, providence, and grace. His kingdom ruleth over all, and of his dominion there shall be no end. O sirs, what do our hearts suggest but that we bow at his feet? that we worship him with loving reverence? that we yield to that supreme power which is used for purposes of love? Yet it is this Christ, this mighty Christ, who is set at nought by some of you, so that you run the risk of perishing because you have no heart for him and his great salvation.  
  
Learn, next, that he is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, *seated as our Judge.* If we refuse him as a Saviour, we shall not be able to escape from him as Judge in the last great day. All the acts of men are being recorded, and in that day, when the great white throne shall be set in the heavens, all things shall be made manifest, and we must stand unveiled in his presence. You have often heard and sung of him whose face was more marred than that of any man, when he was here as a sacrifice for guilty men. If you refuse him, you will have to stand before his bar to answer for it. The most awful sight for the impenitent in the day of judgment will be the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not find that they cry, "Hide us from the tempest," nor "Hide us from the angel-guards," nor "Hide us from their swords of fire," but, "Hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Love, when once it turns to wrath, is terrible beyond compare. As oil when set on fire blazes with great force, so the meek and loving Jesus, when finally rejected, will exhibit a wrath more terrible than death.

"Ye sinners, seek his grace,  
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of his cross,  
And find salvation there."

Perhaps through ignorance you have rebelled; repent, and take another course. You supposed that when you kicked against a sermon, you had only put down the minister's words; but in reality you resisted the Saviour's love. You thought that when you turned away from Christ and his people, it was only leaving a church, and having your name crossed out of a book. Ah, sirs! take heed, for I fear you have left the Lamb of God, and renounced your part in his Book of Life! At the last it may turn out to have been an awful thing to have been put forth from the Church of Christ on earth; for when we, as a church, do our Lord's bidding, that which we bind on earth is bound in heaven. In refusing the Lord's Word, you refuse him who speaks from heaven: you refuse not only his words, but himself, and he shall be your Judge—your Judge most just, most holy. Oh, how will you bear it? How will you bear to stand at the bar of the despised Saviour?  
  
Peter also showed his hearers that the Lord was greatly exalted in heaven as the *Head over all things to his church,* for he had that day shed abroad the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes, he comes from Christ, and as the witness of his power. He proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and he bears witness with both. Christ's power was marvellously proved when, after he had been but a little while in heaven, he was able to bestow such gifts upon men, and specially to send the tongues of fire, and the rushing mighty wind, which betoken the energy of the Holy Ghost. He is such a Lord that he can save or destroy. The Christ that died upon the cross hath all things committed into his hands. He can this morning send forth salvation to the ends of the earth, so that multitudes shall believe and live; for him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. Or, he can turn the key the other way, and shut the door against this untoward generation; for he openeth, and no man shutteth; and he shutteth, and no man openeth. In any case, be ye sure of this, ye Gentiles, even as Peter would have the house of Israel be sure of it, that "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."  
  
I notice that, at this time, few writers or preachers use the expression, "Our Lord Jesus Christ." We have lives of *Christ,* and lives of *Jesus;* but, brethren, he is THE LORD. Jesus is both Lord and Christ: we need to acknowledge his Deity, his dominion, and his divine anointing. He is "God over all, blessed for ever," and we can never praise him too much. A great and grievous error of the times is a want of reverence for our Lord and his sacrifice. To sit in judgment on his sacred teaching, is to spit in his face; to deny his miracles, is to strip him of his own clothes; to make him out to be a mere teacher of ethics, is to mock him with a purple robe; and to deny his atonement, in philosophical phraseology, is to crown him with thorns, and crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame. Be not guilty of this, my hearers, for God hath made this same Jesus "both Lord and Christ"; let us worship him as Lord, and trust him as Christ.  
  
III. Now I come to my closing point, which is, THE RESULT OF KNOWING THIS ASSUREDLY. May I here pause to ask—do you know this assuredly? I hope all of you believe that God hath made Jesus Christ, the Mediator, in his complex person, as God-and-man, to be " both Lord and Christ." He was Lord, as God, always; but as God-and-man, he is now Lord and Christ. Manhood and Godhead are in him united in one wondrous Parson, and this Person is "both Lord and Christ." You believe it. But do you so believe it that it is a fact of the utmost importance to you? Will you assuredly believe it, that the man of Nazareth, who died on Calvary, is to-day both Lord and Christ? If you do now believe this, what are your feelings as you review your past misconduct towards him? Does not your past neglect prick you in the heart? If you do not so believe, it is of little use for me to describe what the result of such belief would be, for that result will not take place in you; but if you have so believed, and Jesus is to you Lord and Christ, you will look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn for him. As you recollect your negligence of him, your rejection of him, your backsliding from him, and all your ungrateful acts which show contempt of him, your heart will be ready to break, and you will be seized with a great sorrow, and a hearty repentance. The Lord work it in you, for his Son's sake!  
  
Observe, that as the result of Peter's sermon, *his hearers felt a mortal sting.* "They were pricked in their heart." The truth had pierced their souls. When a man rinds out that he has done a fearful wrong to one who loved him, he grows sick at heart, and views his own conduct with abhorrence. We all remember the story of Llewellyn and his faithful dog. The prince came back from the hunt, and missed his infant child, but saw marks of blood everywhere. Suspecting his dog Gelert of having killed the child he drove his vengeful sword into the faithful hound, which had been bravely defending his child against a huge wolf, which lay there, all torn and dead, "tremendous still in death." Yes, he had slain the faithful creature which had preserved his child. Poor Gelert's dying yell pierced the prince to the heart; and well it might. If such emotions fitly arise when we discover that we have, in error, been ungenerous and cruel to a dog, how ought we to feel towards the Lord Jesus, who laid down his life that we, who were his enemies, might live?  
  
I recall an awfully tragic story of an evil couple, who kept an inn of base repute. A young man called one night to lodge. They noticed that he had gold in his purse, and they murdered him in the night. It was their own son, who had come back to gladden their old age, and wished to see whether his parents would remember him. Oh, the bitterness of their lamentation when they found that through the lust of gold they had murdered their own son!  
  
Take out of such amazing grief its better portion, and then add to it a spiritual conviction of the sin of evil—entreating the Son of God, the perfect One, the Lover of our souls, and you come near the meaning of being "pricked in the heart." Oh, to think that we should despise him who loved us, and gave himself for us, and should rebel against him that bought us with his own blood while we were his enemies! I would to God everyone here, that has not come to Christ, would feel a sting in his conscience now; and would mourn that he has done this exceeding evil thing against the ever-blessed Son of God, who became man, and died for love of guilty men.  
  
When we read "they were pricked in their heart," we may see in it the meaning, that *they felt a movement of love to him*—a relenting of heart, a stirring of emotion towards him. They said to themselves, "Have we treated him thus? What can we do to show our horror of our own conduct?" They were not merely convinced of their fault so as to be grieved, but their desires and affections went out towards the offended One, and they cried, "What shall we do? In what way can we acknowledge our wrong? Is there any way of undoing this ill towards him whom we now love?" To this point I would have you all come. I would have you know the meaning of Newton's hymn:—

"I saw One hanging on a tree,  
in agonies and blood,  
Who fix'd his languid eyes on me,  
As near his cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath  
Can I forget that look;  
It seem'd to charge me with his death,  
Though not a word he spoke.

My conscience felt and own'd the guilt,  
And plunged me in despair;  
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,  
And help'd to nail him there.

Alas! I knew not what I did;  
But now my tears are vain;  
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?  
For I the Lord have slain."

Let us tearfully enquire how we can end our opposition, and prove ourselves to be his friends and humble servants.  
  
As a consequence of Peter's sermon, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, these people exhibited *obedient faith.* They were roused to action, and they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They believed that the same Jesus whom they had crucified was now Lord of all, and they hastened to be obedient unto him. When Peter said, "Repent!" they did indeed repent. If repentance be grief, they grieved at their hearts. If repentance be a change of mind and life, they were indeed altered men. Then Peter said, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Take the open and decisive step: stand forth as believers in Jesus, and confess him by that outward and visible sign which he has ordained. Be buried with him in whom your sin is buried. You slew him in error; be buried with him in truth. They did it gladly, they repented of the sin; they were baptized into the sacred name. And then Peter could tell them—"You have remission of sins: the wrong you have done to your Lord is cancelled: the Lord hath put away your sin for ever. Remission of sins comes to you through Jesus, whom you slew, whom the Father has raised up. You shall not be summoned before the bar of God to account even for the hideous crime of murdering the Lord, for by his death you are forgiven. In proof of forgiveness you shall now be made partakers of the great gift which marks his ascending power. The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, even upon you his murderers, and you shall go forth, and be witnesses for him."  
  
O my hearers, to what a place have I brought you now! If indeed the Holy Spirit has helped you to follow me in my discourse, see where we have climbed! However black your crime, however vile your character, if you have seen the wrong that you have done, if you have repented of having done it because you see that you have sinned against your loving Lord, and if you will now come to him repenting and believing, and will confess him as he bids you confess him in baptism; then you have full remission, and you shall be partakers of the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit, and henceforth you shall be chosen witnesses for the Christ whom God hath raised from the dead. Beloved, you need no choice speech from me: pure gold needs no gilding, and as I have told you the most wonderful of all facts in heaven or in earth, I let it remain in all its simple grandeur.  
  
May God write out this old, old story on your hearts! Oh, that he would issue a new edition of his gospel of love, printed on your hearts! Every man's conversion is a freshly-printed copy of the poem of salvation. May the Lord issue you hot from the press this morning, a living epistle to be known and read of all men; and specially to be read by your children at home, and your neighbours in the same street! The Lord grant that hearts may be pricked by this sermon, for his name's sake! Amen.

# What Must One Do To Be Saved? (Acts 2:37-41)

Bob Deffinbaugh at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41*](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41 )

37 Now when they heard this, they were acutely distressed and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “What should we do, brothers?” 38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.” 40 With many other words he testified and exhorted them saying, “Save yourselves from this perverse generation!” 41 So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added.[1](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P9_781)

### Introduction[2](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P11_1685)

For forty days after His resurrection Jesus continued to appear to His disciples and others, giving convincing proof that He had risen from the dead. During this time Jesus and His disciples talked about the kingdom of God. The disciples pressed Jesus to tell them the precise time of His return, but He refused. This was the Father’s business, and the disciples didn’t really need to know this information. Jesus had not appointed them to conduct prophecy conferences, speaking of events that would take place in the distant future, after their death; He appointed them to bear testimony to what they had personally experienced with Jesus. That’s what a witness is supposed to do.

To facilitate their witness the Lord Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit. Thus, the apostles were instructed not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait until after the promised Holy Spirit had been given. The apostles and a number of other believers (totaling 120; see 1:15) waited for those remaining ten days[3](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P14_3288) until the Spirit was given at Pentecost. During these days they spent time at the temple ([Luke 24:52-53](javascript:%7b%7d)) and in the upper room ([Acts 1:13](javascript:%7b%7d)). Luke informs us that it was during this time that a 12th apostle – a replacement for Judas – was designated.

The first verses of Acts chapter two describe the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (2:1-13). Many devout Jews, originally from distant places,[4](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P16_3962) had been living in Jerusalem and were drawn by the loud noise that accompanied the appearance of the Holy Spirit. The Hellenistic Jews heard the apostles declaring the praises of God in their native tongue and wanted to know what this meant. Others (who seem to be native Hebrews) thought that this was merely the ravings of men who had drunk too much new wine (see 2:12-13). In verses 14-36 Peter explained the meaning of what had just happened, concluding with these words:

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know beyond a doubt that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ” ([Acts 2:36](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Our text takes up at this point, beginning with this question from the crowd:

“What should we do, brothers?”

It is a question that sounds a great deal like that of the Philippian jailor, later in the Book of Acts:

Then he [the Philippian jailor] brought them outside and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ([Acts 16:30](javascript:%7b%7d))

Our text, then, along with the previous verses in [Acts 2:14-36](javascript:%7b%7d), are the first example of the apostolic preaching of the gospel. We should be reminded of these words, spoken by our Lord to His apostles:

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven” ([Matthew 16:19](javascript:%7b%7d)).

“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven” ([Matthew 18:18](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Among other things, I believe Jesus is telling His apostles that they are the ones who are given the task of defining the gospel. This is consistent with what we read in Hebrews chapter two:

1 Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. 2 For if the message spoken through angels proved to be so firm that every violation or disobedience received its just penalty, 3 **how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was first communicated through the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him, 4 while God confirmed their witness with signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will** ([Hebrews 2:1-4](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

This is the gospel by which we must be saved ([Romans 1:16](javascript:%7b%7d)). It is the gospel that we dare not change or set aside ([Galatians 1:8-9](javascript:%7b%7d)). It is the gospel that we must proclaim to the lost, so that they may be saved ([Romans 10:14-17](javascript:%7b%7d)). Let us listen well, then, to the gospel as Peter first proclaimed it at Pentecost. Let those rejoice who have received it, and let those who have not take heed to its warnings.

In this lesson I will seek to accomplish several things. First, I want to draw attention to the radical changes that we see demonstrated in the second chapter of Acts. Second, I will seek to identify those elements of our account which are unique to that period of time. Third, I will focus on what one must do (and what one must not do) in order to be saved.

### Radical Changes

When compared to the gospel accounts of events that had occurred in the recent past, the events of Acts chapter two reveal that a radical change has occurred. There is a dramatic change in Peter, as with all of the apostles. And, there is a radical change in the response of several thousand of the crowd who have gathered to hear Peter’s sermon. We have become so familiar with the events described in this great chapter of Acts that we have become accustomed to what we read. But when we take the trouble to place these events – in some cases just months apart in time – we see how great the change has been.

#### The Change in Peter

Two months earlier Peter was asked if he was a follower of Jesus:

69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A slave girl came to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” 70 But he denied it in front of them all: “I don’t know what you’re talking about!” 71 When he went out to the gateway, another slave girl saw him and said to the people there, “This man was with Jesus the Nazarene.” 72 He denied it again with an oath, “I do not know the man!” 73 After a little while, those standing there came up to Peter and said, “You really are one of them too—even your accent gives you away!” 74 At that he began to curse, and he swore with an oath, “I do not know the man!” At that moment a rooster crowed ([Matthew 26:69-74](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Compare this with Peter’s words in [Acts 2:14-36](javascript:%7b%7d), not to one powerless slave girl, but to the very mob that cried out for the death of Jesus. Now, Peter boldly looks this crowd in the eye and informs them: “You have murdered the Messiah. You called for His death; God raised Him from the dead. You would not submit to His leadership; God has made Him Lord. He is the only means by which your sins may be forgiven, and you sinned by rejecting Him as the Savior. Worse yet, the events of Pentecost which you have witnessed were meant to inform you that the Day of the Lord is drawing near. It is a day of blessing for God’s people (those who have repented), but it is a day of judgment for the enemies of God who have mistreated the Jews. What do you think your fate will be when He comes to place His foot on the neck of His enemies?

The dramatic change in Peter is not simply in the boldness with which he speaks (though it is certainly that); it is also evident in his understanding of what Jesus’ life and ministry was all about, and in his grasp and use of the Old Testament Scriptures.

In Matthew chapter 16 we find Peter rebuking Jesus for merely speaking of His sacrificial death for sinners:

21 From that time on Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 So Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him: “God forbid, Lord! This must not happen to you!” ([Matthew 16:21-22](javascript:%7b%7d))

Now, in Acts, the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the central theme of Peter’s preaching, the very heart of the gospel.

#### The Change in the Crowd

From what Luke tells us,[5](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P42_10211) we must conclude that the crowd that now stands before Peter at Pentecost is composed of those who were a part of the crowd that called for the blood of Jesus:

19 As he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent a message to him: “Have nothing to do with that innocent man; I have suffered greatly as a result of a dream about him today.” 20 **But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed**. 21 The governor asked them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” **And they said, “Barabbas!**” 22 Pilate said to them, “**Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?” They all said, “Crucify him!**” 23 He asked, “Why? What wrong has he done?” **But they shouted more insistently, “Crucify him!**” 24 When Pilate saw that **he could do nothing, but that instead a riot was starting**, he took some water, washed his hands before the crowd and said, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. You take care of it yourselves!” 25 In reply **all the people said, “Let his blood be on us and on our children!**” ([Matthew 27:19-25](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine)

The response of many in this crowd to Peter’s preaching should be considered in the light of other instances in Acts where the gospel is powerfully preached to an unbelieving crowd that needs to repent concerning their response to Jesus. Not all preaching – even Spirit-filled preaching – was received with repentant hearts. For example, consider the response of the Sanhedrin to the apostolic preaching of the cross:

31 “God exalted him to his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses of these events, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” 33 Now when they heard this, they became furious and wanted to execute them ([Acts 5:31-33](javascript:%7b%7d)).

54 When they heard these things, **they became furious [literally cut in their hearts] and ground their teeth at him**. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently toward heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 “Look!” he said. “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” 57 **But they covered their ears, shouting out with a loud voice, and rushed at him with one intent**. 58 When they had driven him out of the city, **they began to stone him**, and the witnesses laid their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 They continued to stone Stephen while he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” ([Acts 7:54-59](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine)

So, too, we see the reaction of the mob that believed the false accusation that Paul had defiled the temple precincts by bringing Gentiles into forbidden places.

22 The crowd was listening to him until he said this. **Then they raised their voices and shouted, “Away with this man from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live!**” 23 While they were screaming and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust in the air ([Acts 22:22-23](javascript:%7b%7d); see also 21:31).

The response of the crowd in Acts chapter two is unique, or at least rare, even in the Book of Acts, which leads us to ask, “What did Luke intend to convey to his readers when he wrote Acts chapter two? I believe that we are expected to grasp the fact that the only explanation for what we read is the powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit, who has just been sent to indwell and empower the church. The spectacular display of God’s power (including the resurrection of Jesus and now Pentecost), clearly predicted by Old Testament prophecy, now forcefully proclaimed by the apostles is powerfully driven home by the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus had promised:

8 And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong concerning sin and righteousness and judgment— 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned ([John 16:8-11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

We are meant to see why Jesus told His apostles (disciples) to wait for the promise of the Father. The Great Commission can never be fulfilled in the power of the flesh. It is the coming of the Spirit that precedes the miraculous growth of the gospel in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and among the Gentiles.

We should also note that conversion is not the only result of Spirit-empowered preaching. Sometimes the gospel does not result in revival, but in revolt and rebellion. Such was the case in [Acts 5:33](javascript:%7b%7d), in Acts chapter 7, and Acts chapter 22. Conviction of sin, it would seem, does not always result in conversion. That is because men love darkness, rather than light:

9 The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was created by him, but the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God’s children 13 —children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God ([John 1:9-13](javascript:%7b%7d)).

### The Unique Elements in our Text

I remember hearing the story of a man who was seeking guidance from God by means of his Bible. He decided to close his eyes, open his Bible, and put his finger at a certain place. He would then read the words under his finger and take that to be God’s will for him. The first text he pointed to read like this,

Then he went out and hanged himself ([Matthew 27:5](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The fellow was sure this wasn’t the right guidance, so he tried again. This time he read,

"Go and do the same" ([Luke 10:37](javascript:%7b%7d)).

In desperation he made one last try, to find these words,

“What you are about to do, do quickly" ([John 13:27](javascript:%7b%7d)).

We should all recognize that we cannot always make a direct application of what we read to our own actions. The Scriptures were written to particular people and a certain point in time. Any accurate interpretation and application of God’s Word must take the original setting and readers into consideration. When we come to the Book of Acts we must be careful not to take everything we read as a pattern for us to follow mechanically. I would like to point out some unique elements in our text in Acts chapter 2.

We should recognize that our text focuses on the apostles, their preaching, and the signs and wonders which they perform in the power of the Spirit.

Now when they heard this, they were acutely distressed and said **to Peter and the rest of the apostles**, “What should we do, brothers?” ([Acts 2:37](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine)

42 They were devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Reverential awe came over everyone, and **many wonders and miraculous signs came about by the apostles** ([Acts 2:42-43](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

The apostles are singled out by Luke, our author, as having extraordinary power and authority from the Holy Spirit. This is consistent with what we read in the New Testament epistles:

1 Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. 2 For if the message spoken through angels proved to be so firm that every violation or disobedience received its just penalty, 3 how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was first communicated through the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him, 4 while God confirmed their witness with signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will ([Hebrews 2:1-4](javascript:%7b%7d)).

11 I have become a fool. You yourselves forced me to do it, for I should have been commended by you. For I lack nothing in comparison to those “super-apostles,” even though I am nothing. 12 Indeed, the signs of an apostle were performed among you with great perseverance by signs and wonders and powerful deeds ([2 Corinthians 12:11-12](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The Holy Spirit designated the apostles as those who acted and spoke with the authority of Jesus, as those who proclaimed the gospel whereby men must be saved. It was not every believer who was performing mighty acts of healing, or impressive signs and wonders. This is what set the apostles apart.[6](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P69_18433)

13 When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and discovered that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized these men had been with Jesus. 14 And because they saw the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say against this ([Acts 4:13-14](javascript:%7b%7d)).

We should also recognize that there was something unique about that generation that sets them apart from others. This was the generation who heard the preaching of John the Baptist, as well as the preaching of Jesus. They had witnessed some of the miracles He had performed, by which God accredited Jesus as the promised Messiah:

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man clearly attested to you by God with powerful deeds, wonders, and miraculous signs that God performed among you through him, just as you yourselves know” ([Acts 2:22](javascript:%7b%7d)).

In spite of these powerful proofs this generation rejected Jesus as Messiah and demanded that He be crucified:

This man, who was handed over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you executed by nailing him to a cross at the hands of Gentiles ([Acts 2:23](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Consequently, this generation has a unique and greater degree of guilt, for they saw and heard Jesus. They were, so to speak, without excuse.[7](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P76_20094)

16 “To what should I compare **this generation**? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to one another, 17 ‘We played the flute for you, yet you did not dance; we wailed in mourning, yet you did not weep.’ 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon!’ 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him, a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” ([Matthew 11:16-19](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

41 The people of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with **this generation** and condemn it, because they repented when Jonah preached to them—and now, something greater than Jonah is here! 42 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with **this generation** and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon—and now, something greater than Solomon is here! 43 “When an unclean spirit goes out of a person, it passes through waterless places looking for rest but does not find it. 44 Then it says, ‘I will return to the home I left.’ When it returns, it finds the house empty, swept clean, and put in order. 45 Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there, **so the last state of that person is worse than the first. It will be that way for this evil generation as well**!” ([Matthew 12:41-45](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine)

34 “For this reason I am sending you prophets and wise men and experts in the law, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, 35 so that on you will come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 I tell you the truth, **this generation will be held responsible for all these things**! 37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would have none of it! 38 Look, your house is left to you desolate! 39 For I tell you, you will not see me from now until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!’” ([Matthew 23:34-39](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine)

There was a special judgment awaiting that generation that rejected Jesus. This judgment was soon to come in the form of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. Thus, Peter’s sermon not only calls upon these Jews to confess their sins and be saved from eternal torment in hell; it calls upon them to repent and be saved from the judgment that will soon fall on that generation:

40 With many other words he testified and exhorted them saying, “**Save yourselves from this perverse generation!**” ([Acts 2:40](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine)

Having emphasized the uniqueness of Peter’s warnings and exhortations to that generation, let us also note the application of Peter’s words to us (even if less direct). When Peter calls upon his audience to “save themselves from this perverse generation” there is still an application to other, later, generations. Is it not true that every sinner needs to repent and be saved from the evil generation in which he lives?

1 And although you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you formerly lived according to this world’s present path, according to the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom all of us also formerly lived out our lives in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest… 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8 Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he captured captives; he gave gifts to men” ([Ephesians 2:1-8](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

17 So I say this, and insist in the Lord, that you no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their hearts. 19 Because they are callous, they have given themselves over to indecency for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn about Christ like this, 21 if indeed you heard about him and were taught in him, just as the truth is in Jesus. 22 You were taught with reference to your former way of life to lay aside the old man who is being corrupted in accordance with deceitful desires, 23 to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and to put on the new man who has been created in God’s image—in righteousness and holiness that comes from truth ([Ephesians 4:17-24](javascript:%7b%7d)).

3 Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory forever and ever! Amen ([Galatians 1:3-5](javascript:%7b%7d); see also [1 Peter 4:1-6](javascript:%7b%7d)).

No matter when men have lived, the gospel has called upon them to identify with Christ, rather than with the evil age in which they live.

We should also note that signs and wonders do not, in and of themselves, convince or convert lost sinners. Peter has clearly stated that his audience had witnessed some of the miracles Jesus performed, but they were neither convinced nor converted by them.[8](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P88_26032) The same could be said of the miracles performed by the apostles through the power of the Holy Spirit. The reason why lost sinners came to faith in Jesus was because the Holy Spirit convinced, convicted, and converted them:

8 And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong concerning sin and righteousness and judgment— 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned ([John 16:8-11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

5 In that our gospel did not come to you merely in words, but in power and in the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (surely you recall the character we displayed when we came among you to help you). 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, when you received the message with joy that comes from the Holy Spirit, despite great affliction ([1 Thessalonians 1:5-6](javascript:%7b%7d)).

He saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit ([Titus 3:5](javascript:%7b%7d)).

4 My conversation and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power ([1 Corinthians 2:4](javascript:%7b%7d)).

While we most likely will not perform breath-taking works like the apostles did, we have been promised that the Spirit of God will empower our words, enlightening darkened minds, convicting and convincing men regarding the gospel, and giving life to those who are dead. It is clear in Acts that those who are saved come to faith because God has drawn them:

“For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself” ([Acts 2:39](javascript:%7b%7d)).

When the Gentiles heard this, they began to rejoice and praise the word of the Lord, and all who had been appointed for eternal life believed ([Acts 13:48](javascript:%7b%7d)).

A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a God-fearing woman, listened to us. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying ([Acts 16:14](javascript:%7b%7d)).

### The Gospel According to Peter

Finally, I want to focus on the gospel that Peter preached at Pentecost: What must men do to be saved? This is the most important matter of all. What is the gospel? What must we do in order to be saved? Some have said that one must be baptized in order to be saved, and they would point to our text to prove it. Is baptism necessary in order for one to be saved?

Dr. A. T. Robertson, now deceased, was probably the greatest Greek scholar of his day. He authored a large Greek Grammar, as well as a six volume series entitled, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. In his comments on [Acts 2:38](javascript:%7b%7d) he shows how the grammar of this verse can be used to support more than one interpretation of this text. He then reaches this conclusion:

“One will decide the use here according as he believes that baptism is essential to the remission of sins or not. My view is decidedly against the idea that Peter, Paul, or any one in the New Testament taught baptism as essential to the remission of sins or the means of securing such remission. So I understand Peter to be urging baptism on each of them who had already turned (repented) and for it to be done in the name of Jesus Christ on the basis of the forgiveness of sins which they had already received.”[9](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P101_29425)

Since the grammar of the Greek text is not definitive or conclusive, one’s interpretation of [Acts 2:38](javascript:%7b%7d) will ultimately be dictated by his theology. I would suggest that the overwhelming evidence of the New Testament rules against baptismal regeneration, the doctrine that teaches that baptism is the means by which one is saved. Or, to say it another way, baptismal regeneration teaches that one cannot be saved unless they are baptized.

Consider the evidence of these New Testament texts:

So **those who accepted his message were baptized**, and that day about three thousand people were added ([Acts 2:41](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

Here, baptism occurs after acceptance of the gospel. We might say that here baptism is the effect of belief and salvation, not the cause.

19 “Therefore **repent and turn back so that your sins may be wiped out**, 20 so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and so that he may send the Messiah appointed for you—that is, Jesus” ([Acts 3:19-20](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

Baptism is not mentioned here as a condition for salvation.

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, **the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the message**. 45 The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were greatly astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, 46 for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 47 “**No one can withhold the water for these people to be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?” 48 So he gave orders to have them baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**. Then they asked him to stay for several days ([Acts 10:44-48](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

With much prompting and preparation by God, Peter went to the home of Cornelius, a Gentile, and there he preached the gospel. These people were ready to believe, and so they quickly embraced the gospel as Peter presented it. The Spirit came upon them, baptizing them just as He did the Jews at Pentecost ([Acts 2:1-4; 10:47](javascript:%7b%7d)). Since water baptism is a symbol or a picture of what has taken place in Spirit baptism, there was no way that Peter could refuse water baptism to those whom God had saved. The important thing to see here is that the reality (Spirit baptism) precedes water baptism (the symbol). If salvation precedes water baptism then it (baptism) must be the result of salvation, and not the cause of salvation.

[Acts 16:30-34](javascript:%7b%7d)

30 Then he brought them outside and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him, along with all those who were in his house. 33 At that hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and all his family were baptized right away. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set food before them, and he rejoiced greatly that he had come to believe in God, together with his entire household.

The Philippian jailor is “shaken” by the earthquake that has opened all the cells, yet without to loss of one prisoner. He asks Paul and Silas what he must do to be saved. The question is clear and direct, “What must ***I do*** to be saved.” If there was ever a time to include baptism as a requirement for salvation, this would be it. But Paul requires faith (belief) alone. The man and his family were baptized but it seems clear that this is as a result of his salvation.

### Circumcision and Baptism

There are certain parallels between circumcision and baptism.[10](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P115_33029) Just as some insist that one must be baptized in order to be saved, so some Judaisers insisted that Gentile converts must be circumcised to be saved:

1 Now some men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” 2 When Paul and Barnabas had a major argument and debate with them, the church appointed Paul and Barnabas and some others from among them to go up to meet with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this point of disagreement ([Acts 15:1-2](javascript:%7b%7d)).

This precipitated what has become known as the Jerusalem Council, which is described in [Acts 15](javascript:%7b%7d). The question about circumcision was not a minor matter, because those who insisted that the Gentile converts be baptized were really adding works to faith as the basis for salvation. The apostles were clear in their rejection of such teaching, as we can see from Peter’s words in [Acts 15:10-11](javascript:%7b%7d):

10 “So now why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? 11 On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they are.”

Works was the yoke which no one could bear ([Romans 3:1-20](javascript:%7b%7d)), for only faith in Jesus could save, faith alone ([Romans 3:21-26](javascript:%7b%7d)). Circumcision was only a symbol, and unless the reality were there, it would not save (see [Romans 2:25-29](javascript:%7b%7d)).

In Romans chapter 4 Paul demonstrates that salvation by faith in Christ Jesus alone, apart from works, is what saves men. He goes all the way back to Abraham to show that this was true in the Old Testament, just as it is in the New:

9 Is this blessedness then for the circumcision or also for the uncircumcision? For we say, “faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.” 10 How then was it credited to him? **Was he circumcised at the time, or not? No, he was not circumcised but uncircumcised**! 11 And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised, so that he would become the father of all those who believe but have never been circumcised, that they too could have righteousness credited to them. 12 And he is also the father of the circumcised, who are not only circumcised, but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham possessed when he was still uncircumcised ([Romans 4:9-12](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

God pronounced Abraham righteous when he believed in God ([Genesis 15:6](javascript:%7b%7d)). This was two chapters[11](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P123_35666) and several years before Abraham was circumcised. Abraham was justified before he was circumcised. His circumcision was a symbol of what had already happened at his salvation.

No wonder Paul reacts so strongly to those who would impose circumcision on the Gentiles:

2 Listen! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all! 3 And I testify again to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4 You who are trying to be declared righteous by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace! 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait expectantly for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight—the only thing that matters is faith working through love ([Galatians 5:2-6](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The only “washing” that saves us is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit:

4 But “when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 5 he saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us in full measure through Jesus Christ our Savior. 7 And so, since we have been justified by his grace, we become heirs with the confident expectation of eternal life” ([Titus 3:4-7](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Baptism is necessary because we have been saved; baptism is not necessary in order to be saved. Some have overreacted to baptismal regeneration by minimizing its importance, and even its necessity. If the Great Commission included the command to baptize, then it should not surprise us that the apostles commanded men and women to believe and to be baptized. The line between baptism as an act of obedience on the part of a believer and between baptism as one’s attempt to add works to faith alone is sometimes blurred by those who distort the truth one way or the another. We must strive to keep the line clear, especially for those to whom we preach the gospel.

But what if some of the early church fathers and even some of the Reformers held that baptism is necessary for salvation? A little research will show that baptismal regeneration was held by some folks who are otherwise highly regarded. I would remind you that in the case of the Reformers they were coming out of a period of doctrinal darkness. The truth had been greatly distorted. The Reformers were moving toward the truth. They had a great start in their foundational creed: the Scriptures alone; Christ alone; by grace alone; through faith alone; to the glory of God alone. But they brought with them some of the baggage (errors) of the past, including baptismal regeneration.

I do not wish to throw stones at such great men, men who risked (and sometimes sacrificed) their lives for the gospel. But they were mere mortals, and thus they were subject to error, just as we are. Their writings are not on the level of Scripture; they are not inerrant and infallible. To their credit, these men were moving from error toward the truth. Some have not been as noble, moving from truth to error. In the final analysis, we must always ask, “What saith the Scriptures?”, not “What saith man?”

Some folks today may lean too heavily on the ancients (church fathers) and Reformers, based upon a faulty (in my opinion) premise. The premise could be stated something like this:

Older is better.

Or perhaps,

The closer we get to New Testament times the closer we get to the truth.

Some tend to view the primitive church in early Acts as they would Adam and Even in the garden of Eden, before the fall. In other words, they would look upon the primitive church as perfect, only to be progressively flawed or corrupted over time. The problem is that the church came after the fall, and thus it is not flawlessly perfect. In the next lesson I intend to show that the church at the end of Acts chapter two was not the perfect pattern for all that the church is to be or to do today. More on this later.

I would suggest that error quickly cropped up in the churches of the New Testament, as the book of 1 Corinthians clearly demonstrates. Error quickly appeared in the post-apostolic church as well. The church fathers have something to contribute to us, but they were not infallible. In fact, it took time for doctrinal questions to arise, and for important doctrines to be clarified and articulated.[12](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P137_40191)

I believe that Paul’s words in Ephesians chapter four may challenge the “older is better” point of view (unless by “older” we are referring to Scripture):

11 It was he who gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God—a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ’s full stature.

As I read Paul’s words here, the church is corporately growing up. Spiritual gifts have been given to the church to facilitate that growth. The impression left is that the church is maturing. This would challenge the view that the purest and most complete insight into the doctrines of the faith all came to us very early.

### Other Variations of the Same Error

How often we throw error out the front door, and welcome it at the back. Jay Adams has written an excellent booklet entitled, “Decisional Regeneration.”[13](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P143_41351) Adams points out that while we renounce the teaching that one must submit to baptism in order to be saved, we often replace baptism with some other work. For example, a well-meaning evangelist may insist that you “come to Christ” by walking the aisle, signing a card, repeating a certain prayer, or by raising your hand. Too much emphasis is placed on a specific response on the part of one seeking salvation. I have heard a well-known teacher say something like this: “If you have any doubts about your salvation, I want you to drive a stake tonight. Then, if you ever have another doubt, just look back to this night, look back to this stake, and know that you are saved.” The problem is that we would be looking at the wrong “stake.” It is the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary that saves us, not our works. In order to be saved we simply need to trust in what Christ has already done at Calvary. And if we ever have a doubt, we go back to His stake, the cross. We should not find assurance in what we have done, but rather in what He has done.

We need to be careful that we don’t set aside baptism as an illicit “work,” only to replace it with “repentance” *as a work*. After preaching this message a friend reminded me of the danger of a distorted view of repentance. Repentance may thus become the “work” that one does in order to be saved. Repentance may be defined as “giving up smoking,” or going to church, or some other work on our part. Repentance here in our text is a change, a change of mind. Those who rejected Jesus as the Messiah must change their mind about Jesus and embrace Him as Messiah. Repentance is therefore a synonym for “belief” or for “faith.” That is why Peter can tell his audience to believe in Jesus in Acts chapter 10, instead of calling them to “repent” as he did in Acts chapter 2:

“About him all the prophets testify, that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” ([Acts 10:43](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

To repent is to acknowledge our previous rejection of Jesus as sin, and to trust in His saving work on the cross as the only means by which we can be saved. And just to make this matter clear, let us not forget that belief is not something we produce; it is something God produces in us:

8 For by grace you are saved through faith, and this [faith] is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 it is not from works, so that no one can boast ([Ephesians 2:8-9](javascript:%7b%7d)).

### The Lord’s Table, An Example of Salvation By Faith Alone

The Bible has a lot to say about the dinner table. For example, we read this in [Psalm 23](javascript:%7b%7d):

You prepare a feast [literally, a table] before me in plain sight of my enemies.

You refresh my head with oil; my cup is full of wine ([Psalm 23:5](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Heaven is symbolized by a feast. God sets the table filled with of all kinds of delicious food. In the Gospel of Luke we even find our Lord serving those who sit at His table.

“Blessed are those slaves whom their master finds alert when he returns! I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, have them take their place at the table, and will come and wait on them!” ([Luke 12:37](javascript:%7b%7d))

When you are invited to the home of a wealthy and gracious hostess, it is clearly understood that she is providing the entire meal. You don’t bring a bowl of salad, or a dessert. In this setting, it would be an insult to do so. This morning, as every Sunday morning, we have come to observe the Lord’s Table. I want you to notice that this meal (the bread and the wine) is not a potluck. We do not bring anything to the table, because God in His grace has provided it all. There is nothing we could bring, for God has provided the sinless body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. God provided this meal because we had nothing to offer Him.

When we observe communion there is an offering plate on the communion table. Let it be clearly understood that this is not a “contribution” on our part toward the salvation which our Lord alone has provided. The offering is to be the grateful and joyful response of one who has found salvation, full and free, in Jesus. It does not contribute toward our salvation in any way. The Bible instructs us to give, and thus we should give, but only in response to God’s grace. The same is true of baptism. Baptism is commanded ([Matthew 28:19](javascript:%7b%7d)), and this command should be obeyed. But it does not contribute to the work of our Lord; it is the response of one who has experienced God’s grace in Christ Jesus.

### So What Must We Do to Be Saved?

The key word for Peter’s audience is not baptism, but belief. From the events of this Day of Pentecost they should believe that the Day of the Lord is fast approaching. They should believe that this is a day of salvation for “all who call upon the name of the Lord” ([Acts 2:21](javascript:%7b%7d)). They should believe that it is also a day of judgment for those who have rejected God’s salvation. Most importantly, they must change their minds (repent) about Jesus, whom they rejected and called for His crucifixion. They should believe that He is God’s Messiah, God’s only provision for their salvation. They must believe that God raised Him from the dead and that He is coming again to bring blessing to His own and eternal judgment on those who are His enemies. They must cling to Jesus as the One who bore their judgment and who provides them with His righteousness. As a result of believing, and as a declaration of their faith, they should be baptized. In this way they are identifying with Jesus. Likewise, baptism is an indication that they no longer identify with that wicked generation that rejected and crucified Jesus the Messiah. In this way they will not only be saved from divine wrath when He returns, they will also escape the wrath of God on that generation that rejected Christ (the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 A.D.).

Aside from a few distinctives of that generation, the message is the same for men today. We must acknowledge our sin, and the fact that we are guilty of rejecting Jesus, as well as failing to live according to His standard of righteousness. We must believe in Jesus as God’s Messiah, and as God’s only provision for our sins. We must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, and that He is coming again to judge His enemies and to bless His saints. We must cling to Him alone, trusting only in what He has done on the cross of Calvary in our place, and not in anything we might add to His work. In response to His salvation, we should identify with Jesus publicly by being baptized.

### Conclusion

My friend, there is nothing more important than for you and I to get this right. The gospel is the “power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” ([Romans 1:16](javascript:%7b%7d)). Have you trusted in Jesus as God’s only means of your salvation? If you have not, do so today. The Day of the Lord is ever more near and time is short.

Someone might possibly say, “I am not worthy of God’s forgiveness.” You’re right! You are not worthy. That is why salvation is by grace, and not by our worth or works. If Peter could promise his audience God’s forgiveness and salvation, then God’s saving work in Jesus can surely save you. Peter’s audience was made up of those who saw Jesus and heard His teaching. They witnessed the miracles He performed in the power of the Spirit. By these miracles, and surely by the resurrection of Jesus, God accredited Jesus as His Son. Nevertheless, they rejected Him and demanded that He die. It is for such sinners that Jesus came to die, so that they might be saved from the judgment to come. Your sin will not surpass theirs. No one is too sinful to save because nothing is greater than the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus. To focus on your sin is to magnify yourself and to minimize the person and work of God in Jesus.

This gospel is the gospel that we must believe, and it is the gospel that we must proclaim, so that others may believe and be saved.

9 Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with the mouth one confesses and thus has salvation. 11 For the scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, who richly blesses all who call on him. 13 For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. 14 How are they to call on one they have not believed in? And how are they to believe in one they have not heard of? And how are they to hear without someone preaching to them? ([Romans 10:9-14](javascript:%7b%7d))

May this gospel be upon our lips, to the praise of our glorious God, and to the salvation and blessing of lost men and women.

[1](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P9_782) Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the NET Bible. The NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION, also known as THE NET BIBLE, is a completely new translation of the Bible, not a revision or an update of a previous English version. It was completed by more than twenty biblical scholars who worked directly from the best currently available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. The translation project originally started as an attempt to provide an electronic version of a modern translation for electronic distribution over the Internet and on CD (compact disk). Anyone anywhere in the world with an Internet connection will be able to use and print out the NET Bible without cost for personal study. In addition, anyone who wants to share the Bible with others can print unlimited copies and give them away free to others. It is available on the Internet at: [www.netbible.org](http://www.netbible.org).

[2](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P11_1686) This is the edited manuscript of a message delivered by Robert L. Deffinbaugh, teacher and elder at Community Bible Chapel, on November 6, 2005. Anyone is at liberty to use this edited manuscript for educational purposes only, with or without credit. The Chapel believes the material presented herein to be true to the teaching of Scripture, and desires to further, not restrict, its potential use as an aid in the study of God’s Word. The publication of this material is a grace ministry of Community Bible Chapel. Copyright 2005 by Community Bible Chapel, 418 E. Main Street, Richardson, TX 75081.

[3](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P14_3289) Pentecost was fifty days after the first fruits were offered (during the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, following Passover). Since Jesus appeared to the apostles forty days after His resurrection (1:3), they must have waited ten days until Pentecost.

[4](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P16_3963) We would call these “Hellenistic Jews,” as opposed to the “native Hebrews” who were born in Israel (see [Acts 6:1](javascript:%7b%7d)).

[5](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P42_10212) See [Acts 2:5, 22](javascript:%7b%7d)-23.

[6](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P69_18434) Someone might point out that in Joel’s prophecy, the Spirit was to be poured out on “all flesh” (see [Acts 2:17-18](javascript:%7b%7d), citing [Joel 2:28-29](javascript:%7b%7d)). I would respond that we should expect this in the last days, but (like other elements of this prophecy) we do not see the complete and ultimate fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy here. As I understand it this is the firstfruits of the fulfillment of [Joel 2](javascript:%7b%7d).

[7](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P76_20095) This expression is found in [Romans 1:20](javascript:%7b%7d), referring to the Gentile heathen who have rejected the revelation of God in nature. In Romans chapter 2 Paul shows the greater guilt of the Jews, who have been given much greater revelation, and yet rejected it.

[8](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P88_26033) [Acts 2:22-23](javascript:%7b%7d).

[9](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P101_29426) A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931).

[10](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P115_33030) Indeed, those who practice infant baptism would use circumcision as a basis for their practice.

[11](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P123_35667) Abraham was circumcised in [Genesis 17:9-27](javascript:%7b%7d).

[12](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P137_40192) For example, the “Five Points of Calvinism” were a response to five points or objections previously spelled out by Jacob Arminius.

[13](https://bible.org/seriespage/5-what-must-one-do-be-saved-acts-237-41" \l "P143_41352) <http://www.the-highway.com/Decisional_Regeneration.html>