Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Peter's Sermon: The Appeal and Results
Scripture: Acts 2:37-42
Code: 1708

Acts 2:37-42a

The question that is posed by the message this morning dealing from Acts 2:37 through the beginning of 42, is the question how is a man to be saved? By what act? By what method? Through what person? What is the operation? What is the channel of salvation. You know there have been saviors since the year one. There have always been those who were going to save the world and redeem man from all of his trials and problems and so forth and there are endless, endless solutions offered to man's problem. But still the question goes on, how is a man to be saved. How is a man to come into a knowledge that he is secure both for time and eternity? That there is a life of bliss not only here, but there wherever that there may be.

Biblically, the question comes repeatedly. How can I enter the kingdom? How can I be saved? What do I have to do to inherit eternal life? And there are answers coming from all over the place with the Scriptures as a reference. For example, the legalist says keep the law, that's how to be saved. The moralist says have your goodies outweigh your badies. And God's got scales. The racist says be one of God's chosen people. The universalist says don't sweat it, we'll all get in in the end. The ritualist says you've got to do the right ritual. Follow the right forms. And the strange part is that they all isolate Scripture to prove their point. The legalist for example may quote from James 2:21, which says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works." However, he will avoid Romans 3:20 which says "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

The moralist comes along and quotes from John 5:29, "They that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation, therefore it all depends on what you've done good or evil." He will avoid Ephesians 2:8-9 which says, "For by grace are you saved through faith that not of yourselves it is a gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast."

The racist may quote Romans 11:26 that says, "So all Israel shall be saved." And carefully avoid Romans 9:6 which says, "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel. The universalist will select Romans 5:18, "Therefore as by the offense of one," Adam, "judgment came upon all men so by the righteousness of one," Jesus Christ, "the free gift came upon all men." And he will say it's the same all men. Therefore all men will be saved. And he will carefully avoid Matthew 7:13-14 which says, "There is a broad road that leadeth to destruction and many there be that go in there at."

The ritualist will invariably find the Scripture that accommodates his ritual. And one of the dominate things in theology today is ritualistic baptism. There are some people who believe you're saved by water. Others would say it's a combination of faith plus H2O, but basically it comes down to the same thing. And invariably for proof text, they will find their way to Acts Chapter 2, verse 38, which is in the context of what we're going to say. And they will rejoice exceedingly over repent and be baptized. Assuming that those are the two things that bring about salvation. Without either one, salvation is impossible. They will carefully avoid Romans 10:9-10, which says, that "You're saved when you confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in your heart." And there's no water in Romans 10:9-10.

So it's very interesting, and incidentally, you can prove anything by the Bible if you're sure to take it out of context. And it's being done constantly. All of the people who espoused false doctrine from Scripture do that. That's why you have to compare the Scripture with the Scripture so that you be sure you're accurate. Now that makes this passage important because it is one that is used by ritualists to defend the baptismal regeneration viewpoint that to be saved you've got to be baptized. That salvation is not simply by faith. It's by faith and baptism in water. But there's much more to this passage than that, but that alone would be enough for us to study it so we would have an answer adequate to that problem.

Now in this passage, of course, we're dealing with the wrap up of Peter's sermon. And it's a very, very important thing to look at what happens in response to Peter's preaching, because we're gaining real principles here for our own witness, for our own evangelism, for our own preaching. Now let me paint the scene for you by way of review, especially for you who have not been here for some time or at all. We're studying the book of Acts and we've learned several things. From our study of John, we learn that Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to equip the church to finish what He didn't finish.

And on the day of Pentecost, beginning at the very first verse of Acts 2, the Spirit of God came. The Spirit of God then baptized all of those disciples gathered there in Jerusalem into the body of Christ indwelt all of them, then filled them with the Spirit. In the meantime, there was a sound like a mighty rushing wind which had gathered all of these people and there were several hundred thousand, between a half a million and a million wouldn't even be a conservative estimate, in Jerusalem and these masses of people began to gather at the sound of the hurricane, because there wasn't any wind, just the sound.

And as they came together to the location here were all these disciples going about speaking the wonderful works of God in the native languages of all these people who had pilgrimaged to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. And they were astounded. So the Spirit of God had done a great job of publicity. He had gotten the crowd there. He had done it by advertising a sound like a wind. And then He did it by a sign, the miracle of speaking the wonderful works of God. And that was only a sign to

point to the sermon that was coming. I told you before signs aren't the end. They're only telling you where the end is. You don't crawl up on the sign and say I've arrived. The sign's pointing somewhere else.

And the sign of the wonderful works of God was directing their attention to what Peter was going to say. But the Spirit of God had gathered the crowd, had opened their minds by the sign and the fact that they were speaking the wonderful works of God that means reciting the historic deeds of God that every Jew knew, made it hard for the Jew to admit anything but that this was of God, because there are only two supernatural sources in the mind of the Jew, God and Satan. And it's for sure that Satan wouldn't be extolling the wonderful works of God.

So they had to cope with the miracle and then the fact that these disciples were stating the wonderful works of God. And so they were confounded and immediately at that point Peter stands up and explains to them what's going on. And you can see how in such a fantastic way the way Spirit of God has prepared their ears to hear the message. And by the time Peter opens his mouth they're hanging on every word. What is this that we're seeing? They cannot deny the phenomena and now they're about to get the explanation.

Peter begins his sermon, verse 14 begins the passage that talks about his sermon. There are four parts, the introduction, the theme, the appeal, and the results. The introduction is explaining Pentecost. Peter bounces right off the living illustration that the Holy Spirit has provided for him. The second is the theme exalting Jesus. The third is the appeal exhorting the people, and fourth is the results examining the effect.

Now we saw to begin with the introduction several weeks ago. Incidentally, I timed this sermon to see how long it would have taken Peter to preach it and if he talks a little bit slower than I talk, which would certainly be to his advantage, it would take about two and a half minutes. Now I realize that nobody could preach an effective sermon in two and a half minutes. I mean, I have to believe that. You understand why. But I struggled with that and I'll show you a little while later that I believe that what you have here is just a very small portion of Peter's sermon. Why it must have gone hour after hour, praise the Lord. But anyway, we'll get to that.

But Peter begins to preach and first of all, he bounces off this illustration that the Spirit has provided, a beautiful illustration, explains to them that what they are seeing is the beginning of Messianic times in terms of fulfillment. Joel said that in the last days you would pour out the Spirit. They're beginning to see what I call the prefillment of the ultimate fulfillment which will come in the kingdom.

They're beginning to see the outpouring of the Spirit. It is Messianic times. Verse 17 says, "it is the last days." Now we know that eschatological the last days has already lasted 2,000 years. The last days is a Jewish term referring to the time of Messiah. And Messiah came once and everything in

between til His second coming still embodies Messianic times. So he's saying you're seeing the beginning of the end. This is Messianic times. They all knew the meaning of the term the last days. They knew that was a Messianic reference. Their Messiah had arrived. Their Savior had come. Their Redeemer had come. Their deliverer was there. Their anointed king had arrived.

And so he says this is Messianic times. Well, if it's Messianic times, there's got to be a Messiah, right? So he moves immediately into the theme of his sermon in verse 22 which introduces the Messiah as Jesus of Nazareth. Now that's a startling thing, because they've just gotten through executing Jesus of Nazareth as a blasphemer. And what a shock it must be to realize that that hope of their hearts for which they had waited all those centuries was now crucified by their own design. They had actually killed the one they had been waiting for. And this is what Peter convicts them of. This great sin. And first of all, beginning in verse 22, he wants to prove to them that Jesus is the Messiah and he does it by taking first of all, the life of Christ in verse 22 and say that because He did miracles, wonders, and signs, He was being accredited by God as the Messiah.

In verse 23, he takes the death of Christ and says the death of Christ was no accident, it was no...Jesus was no victim, but rather this was ordained by God fulfilling prophecy explicitly. Then he takes the resurrection of Christ, verses 24-32 and he says, Jesus Christ is the Messiah because of His resurrection. And He shows how the Old Testament prophet David, who was a prophet, it even says he was a prophet right here in this passage. Verse 30, that David predicted Messiah would be a resurrected individual. And Jesus had done that fulfilling David's prophecy so He is Messiah by life, death, resurrection.

Then he goes on to show that He is Messiah by virtue of ascension in verses 33 to 35. He is the Messiah because He was exalted to the right hand of the Father, they stood there, were eyewitnesses and saw Him go. The conclusion then of his theme is in verse 36. Listen to it, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ or Messiah in the Hebrew." In other words, he has proven Christ to be Messiah. So the introduction explaining Pentecost and the theme exalting Jesus.

Now he has really indicted them as executioners of their own Messiah. And he hasn't pulled any punches. He doesn't play around in the periphery. He goes right to the core of the problem. You see the most blatant sin that a man commits is not lying or cheating or committing adultery or this or that. The blatant sin in which every sinner lives is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ. And that's the cardinal sin of which the Spirit convicts. That's John 16:8-9, "When the Spirit of truth has come He will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment," verse 9, "of sin because they believe not," what, "on me."

In other words, the dominant thing that a man must recognize is that he is a rebel against God's plan and against God's Savior Jesus Christ. And so Peter shows them that they have executed their own

Messiah and their own Savior. Now I want you to see his appeal beginning in verse 37. And it's exhorting the people. He exhorts them. Verse 40 says, "with many words." We'll get to that in a minute.

Now whenever you go into any kind of sale, some of you are probably in sales, you're told that when you go to sell your product, be sure that you don't just tell them about it and leave. The whole idea is get them to sign on the dotted line, right? And you never have a salesman come to your door and show you the product and then say isn't that a nice product. I'll call you some time if you're interested. Oh you'll never have a salesman do that. They want to get in there and get that little paper out, get that little pen out and here we go. Well, this doesn't mean anything. You're just signing here and you're in hock for the rest of your life, see.

The object of any kind of sales is when the promotion's going on, that's when you want to clinch the deal. Anyone knows that. So Peter doesn't just say that and say you're all dismissed. He doesn't wrap up with verse 36, powerful thing and say all right everybody that's it. If you'd like to know anything more call the office or there will be literature distributed. You know, he wants to clinch the deal obviously. Now watch what happens in verse 37. "And when they heard this," when they heard his sermon, "powerful sermon, they were pricked in their heart and said unto to Peter and the rest of the apostles, men, brethren, what shall we do?"

They call them brethren because that's a term used among Jews. Doesn't necessarily mean Christians, it means Jews. They were brothers in terms of Abrahamic ancestry. What shall we do? Oh I like that question. That's good. They're in the right spot, they're desperate. That's where the Spirit of God wants to take every man in terms of conviction. To the place of being desperate. Now notice it says they were pricked in their heart. The word that is used for pricked there is the only place it's ever used in the New Testament, interesting word, it means to pierce or to penetrate with a needle or a sharp instrument like a knife. It's a...it carries the idea of suddenness. It's like jamming a dagger into somebody. It's a very piercing sudden grief.

In other words, the idea is of them going along complacently, you know, in the traditions of Judaism and they were just doing what they always did and Christ came along and they executed Christ and they continued to go along and all of a sudden, wham, the knife came in on the day of Pentecost and they were just cut to the heart. And grief came as a result of it suddenly. You say well, what was it that messed them up so much. What was it that got to them? Well, I think there were several things. Let me suggest them. Number one, the sorrow that the Messiah had been put to death. I mean, that's a terrible thing. They'd been waiting for the Messiah for centuries and finally when the Messiah gets there, they have put Him to death through the hands of the Romans.

And that's a terrible thing for them to have to realize. And I think that cut them deeply. Those that were convicted were convicted because they saw the Messiah had come and they had executed the

Messiah. Horrible thing, but on top of that secondly, I think that they were cut to the heart because they had a deep sense of guilt that they themselves had done it. Not only had the eliminated Messiah, but they had eliminated Messiah. See? They had actually done it. It would have been terrible to have lost Messiah had somebody else done it, but they had done it. And so there was a horrible sense of guilt.

And then thirdly, this, Peter had announced to them in no uncertain terms and there were multiplied witnesses to prove it that this same Jesus who had been crucified was now alive. And so they were afraid of His wrath. Why Peter had said down in verse 35 that some day He was going to make His enemies His what? His footstool. And that's the picture of the heel on the neck. There was going to be judgment on the enemies of the Messiah. And here they were realizing not only were they...had they lost their Messiah, but they had done the execution themselves and they were heaped with guilt because of that, and then they were of the tremendous response of God toward His enemies. We have killed the Messiah. What could be a worse sin in all the universe than that? Nothing in their minds.

Those who were really convicted, were convicted that they had done the worst thing imaginable. They were right, of course, and the fear of His wrath, they were scared of His vengeance. He was alive again and He was going to make His enemies is footstool. They were scared. Fourthly, I think they were grieved to the heart because they couldn't undo what they did. They couldn't do a thing about it. It was done and they were cut. And they made the right answer. Look at in verse 37. "Men, brethren, what shall we do?" See. Boy that's the spot to be in.

To avoid the wrath, to make rightof wrong, what do we do? They were desperate. They had no where to go. They had nothing to turn to. They were stuck. What shall we do? Well, that's a beautiful thing, because it's just that kind of hopelessness that Jesus Christ can meet, you see. And as long as man thinks he can do it on his own, he can never the experience of real salvation. As long as a man brings any of his own works or his own thoughts or his own ideas to add to what he thinks is salvation, there's no way. It's all of grace, Paul said. It's not until a man is desperate and says what do I do? He has no where to turn and no answer that at that point God intervenes with saving grace.

The apostle Paul came to that point on the road to Damascus in Chapter 9 of Acts in verse 6, Paul was really breathing out threatening and slaughterings verse 1 says. On the way the Lord stopped him. And verse 5 says, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Oh boy can't you read what's going on in Paul's head? The next verse says "And he trembling and astonished." You know he must have shook from top to bottom. A voice out of heaven, he's blinded and this voice says, "I am Jesus whom thou persecuted." You know what Paul said? "Lord, what will Thou have me to do?" See, what do I right? He was scared as well as convicted. He had fear. But perhaps even a more graphic illustration is the illustration of the Philippian jailer.

In the 16th Chapter of Acts, you remember they were having a great time there in prison singing away and praising God and just having a lot of fun praying and the prisoners heard them and suddenly there's a great earthquake. And the foundations of the prison were shaking, immediately all the doors were open and everyone's bands were loosed. The prison started shaking, doors flipped open, everybody was loose. The keeper of the prison knowing he'd have to pay with the loss of prisoners by his own life, waken out of his sleep seeing the prison doors open drew out his sword and would have killed himself supposing the prisoners had been fled.

Paul walks up and says "Do thyself no harm. We're all here." And this guy shocked. And it says in the next verse, "He called for light and sprang in, and came trembling." Again he's scared, he is scared. And fell down before Paul and Silas and brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" You see God exercised fear. He allowed fear to bring that man to a trembling place. He brought a measure of fear into the heart of Paul. He brought a measure of fear into the heart of these Jews over what they had done in rebelling against their own Messiah. And they came to that point where they had a deep sense of evil, a deep guilt where they feared the justice of God and the retribution of His Messiah. A desire to be saved from that judgment brought them to the place where they said to Peter what do we do.

And it is just that state in which the soul is prepared to receive the Savior. It is just that state which is ready to yield to Jesus Christ. Their guilt is fully exposed. They are feeling the pain of the apostles' words. Their consciences are stung by the sense of sinfulness and crucifying Jesus. They are convicted. If conversion is to be genuine, it is the offspring of conviction. I love the passage that illustrates this in Zechariah Chapter 12. Maybe to some of you an obscure passage, but very, very important. In Zechariah 12, we have some of the predictions of what's going to happen in the tribulation in the time when Israel is finally redeemed. And I want you to notice what happens.

Zechariah 12:10, "And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitance of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication." There's salvation for Israel. Now watch, "And they shall," here's the first thing, "look upon Me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son. Shall be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for His first born. In that day shall be great mourning in Jerusalem." Verse 12, "And the land shall mourn." In other words, to begin with in the restoration of Israel, there's going to be a conviction and a guilt over the execution of Messiah. During the tribulation, the Bible says that Israel will be saved. And at that time, the salvation is going to come about, first of all, by conviction as they recognize they have pierced their own Messiah. And the pain and the anguish will be like having murdered your own child. That's how sacred Messiah is.

And that's exactly the same pain and anguish those people must have felt on the day of Pentecost. Just as bad as if they had taken some weapon and executed their own first born son. And then I love

this. In Chapter 13, verse 1 is says, "In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David." In other words, once conviction comes, it's followed by cleansing. But cleansing follows conviction and to bring anybody to Christ apart from conviction is not to bring them to Christ at all. It's an aborted birth. Conviction is the key in the hand of the Spirit that opens the heart to salvation.

And to everyone that you preach to, you need to preach with conviction. And we like to water sin down, you know. We like to hide from it and pad it a little bit so it isn't as gross as the Bible paints it. It's not right to do that. Men need to be convicted of sin. And you need to realize that you're a sinner, not only because you do sin, but you're a sinner because you live in rebellion against God. You say, I don't rebel against God. Yes, you do. You rebel against God by the very fact that you have committed your life to Jesus Christ. That's God's command that you do that and you've not done it. You live in rebellion against God.

For that you are the vilest kind of sinner. And so was I before I came to Jesus Christ. I spoke on this subject and young man came to me afterwards and he said, "You know," he said, "I'm not a rebel against God. I don't hate God. I don't feel like that at all." And I showed him from Scripture that he that is not with Me is what? He's against Me. I said, "You may be moving that way my friend, but until you come to Jesus Christ, you're in open rebellion against God." And this is true. And so many times we let people off the hook on the basis of well, you know, you're a liar. You've told some lies. Yeah, I've told some lies. See you're a sinner, now repent of that. That's not what...that's superficial. The repentance comes in a repentance from the total life of rebellion against the principles of God as exemplified in what Jesus did and said and was. Don't ever let anybody off short of that. When you preach, you preach with conviction.

Now, you say, well, if you preach with conviction, look here, 3,000 people will get saved. You can get out there and you can preach with conviction and they'll come to Christ. That's true. Why not preach with conviction then if they're going to come to Christ? There's another reaction that's possible though. They may not all come. Verse 33 of Chapter 5 says this, "And when they heard that," here's another sermon, "they were cut to the heart and to counsel to slay them." So there are other reactions.

You say I don't know if I'm so hot on this deal again. Yeah, I mean, it's not...everybody's going to get...some people might decide to slay him, but there are...you don't...that's...that may be a little rare. There are other reactions. Chapter 7, verse 54, is not so. "When they heard these things they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth." See that's not quite so bad. I mean, I could take a little of that, hmmm, anger. I'm not too sure I could take being slain. You know, that's a little harder.

You know, you can't assume, well, I've preached with great power and I've exalted the message of repentance. Therefore everybody's going to flock. You'll get the reaction all right. Some will come to

Jesus Christ. Some will grit their teeth and gnash on you, and others may design to slay you. But does that mean you don't preach it that way? Does that mean you water it down and don't tell it like it is? God forbid. God forbid. You say well, how do you preach with conviction? How do you convict men? Do you tell a lot of really convicting stories and a lot of little stories about kind of scary little tales and do you use a lot of emotional little gimmicks and get them all whipped up into a real fear thing? No, you don't. No, you don't. The great tool of conviction is not telling stories. The great tool of conviction is the word of God. The tool of conviction is illustrated to us graphically in Hebrews 4:12.

Listen to this, "For the word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit of joints and marrow and is a discern of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." It is the word of the God that is the convicting agency in the hand of the Spirit of God. We don't need all kinds of little convicting gimmicks, the word will do it's work. It is a piercing thing. And so when you preach, if you preach, when you witness, when you witness, you witness with great conviction of sin.

Don't ever stop short of that. If there's more to it than this, here's the nice thing, would you like it? That's not all there is to it. Anybody likes a nice thing. There's more to it.

And so, they have come to the place of conviction. They want to know what to do. And Peter, oh is he in a good position. . . “What do we do?,” And he replies. Listen, in verse 38: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Notice, he hasn't said anything positive until that final statement in verse 38. He has just hammered on conviction of sin until finally he says, “When you've repented and baptized, then you'll experience a marvelous thing and the gift of the Holy Spirit.” But his message isn't based on that, it's based on the fact that they have no right to exist as a rebel against God...no right to exist.

The first thing he says, let's take it piece by piece, is repent. What does repent mean? *Metanoeo* means to turn around and go the other direction. It means 180 degree turn...from going that way, to going that way. It's absolute opposite.

I'll never forget sharing Christ at a Hollywood Christian Group, actors and actresses, a young Muhammedan had come forward said, “I'd like to receive Jesus Christ.” I thought, boy, this is something, he's an actor. And I said, “You know, Muhammedans don't come to Christ like that.” And so he prayed and he received Christ and he got up, I'll never forget, he looked at me and said, “Isn't it wonderful, now I have two gods, Jesus and Mohammed.” And I said, “No, no, it doesn't work like that. You don't go up to the shelf in life and say, “I'll have one of those and one of those and Jesus...” No, it isn't that way. You turn from all that is a part of your life in terms of sinfulness all the way around and you commit yourself totally to Jesus Christ, and nothing short of that.

Jesus Christ is not an addendum to your activity. He's not a little divine salt on your diet of human activity. It's total commitment. And so, Peter says, “Turn right around and go the other way.” Now in 2 Corinthians 7, you know that little passage around verse 10 that says the world has a certain kind of sorrow but it's not godly sorrow, it's the sorrow because you got caught. You know? That's not the kind of sorrow he's talking about here, it's the sorrow that makes you turn all the way around. He says I don't want you to just be sorry you did this to Jesus, I want you to be so sorry you turn from your old and you turn to Him. Now I'll say more about that in a minute.

But repentance, you see, repentance is more than fear of the consequences. And at this point in their heads, that's kind of what they're thinking. We don't want to get stepped on by the Messiah. There's got to be deeper conviction. You see, false repentance dreads the consequences. True repentance dreads sin itself, you see. Laying aside all punishment, true repentance hates sin because of what it is, it's an affront to God. And the mere fact that it's evil and that God hates it is sufficient reason why the truly repentant heart hates sin and forsakes it.

Now these Jews were afraid of punishment, but they had to be more than that. They had to be willing to turn from sin and come to Christ. So Peter says, “Turn all the way around.” There's no salvation, mark this, there's no salvation in conviction, and often trembling is substituted for godly fear and the fear of hell for the fear of God. That's only the beginning. There must be a turning to Jesus Christ. True repentance forsakes sin and comes in total commitment to Christ. And there's an urgency in what Peter says here. He says, “Repent, repent.” He fires it out. It's an aorist which is an act that is in a moment, it's an immediate thing, complete turning in an instant. You see, salvation is not a question of education. Salvation is not a process, it's an act that happens in a moment. And I think too little we preach repentance, too infrequently do we let people off the hook on the basis of, “Here's a good thing, take this good thing.” Oh, there's so much more to salvation than that, that's why we get so many tares among the wheat. In the book of Acts, you check Acts 3:19, 8:22, 11:18 all the way through 20:21, 26:20 and all they talk about is repentance. Then you go to this one in Acts 17:30 and what it says, “God commands all men everywhere to...what?...repent.” There is no salvation apart from repentance.

Now just imagine in your mind, if you can, you can't and neither can I really, but let's do the best we can with it, the Spirit of God helping us, to put ourselves in the shoes of those Jewish people. They are locked in to a beautiful and glorious and beloved tradition. They are part of a community that has a uniqueness like no other community in the world. They have a bond of nationality that is glorious and which they exalt. They have deemed as a nation that Jesus is a blasphemer, therefore He has been executed.

Now Peter says to them, “Turn around and say about Jesus He is who He claims to be. Cut the cord from all your past life and all that Judaism is to you and means to you and embrace Him as Your

Messiah." That, friends, is quite a change...that is quite a change. The beautiful Jewish traditions have not yet died out, even centuries after the destruction of Jerusalem, so meaningful are they to those people. And Peter is saying in an instant in time, "Kiss it all goodbye, turn right around, embrace Messiah and be counted as dead by your whole nation and all the people that care about you and love you." It's a cost that's very high.

But that's what repentance is, a total 180 degree turn from everything you knew. Repentance is just that, to reverse your verdict about Jesus, turn from Him...from sin too Him. You say, "Well can't you get in without doing that? Can't you come to Christ without repentance?"

John the Baptist preached repentance, Jesus preached repentance, the apostles preached repentance...it's got to be 'cause, my friend, if you're going that way and Jesus is over here, you can't get over here unless you turn around. That's the point. And I believe that even in Jewish evangelism today, we've got to preach that same message...repent for your rejection of your Messiah and turn, if need be, cutting all the cords that bind you to Judaism and face squarely Jesus as your Messiah and embrace Him. That's the message to Israel. And we need to be just as bold in indicting Israel for rejection of Jesus Christ as their Messiah as we are the Gentiles for their rejection of Christ and I don't think we can back off. We need to say to Gentile and Jew alike, you better change your attitude about Jesus. That's repentance. And not to repent is just tragic...just tragic.

So Peter calls on them to make a change that is unbelievable. Now he adds this, and I'll say some more about that in a minute, but he says this, "And be baptized...repent and be baptized." And at this point, the ritualists find their...their weapon assuming that therefore salvation is a result of repentance and water, but what is he saying? Is baptism critical?

Absolutely, oh it is very critical. But watch this, this is tremendous. Now when Peter was done preaching this sermon, I'm sure there was a great reaction among the people. I mean, it says that they were pierced in their hearts and they said, "What do we do?" They were really rattled. And many of them in their hearts had believed on Messiah and they had accepted the fact that this was true, that Jesus was the Messiah. And I'm sure the temptation would have been to say, "Boy, I'm going to believe this but I'm not sure to open my mouth about it. I open my mouth and whish....you know."

But you know something? There's something distasteful about such a secret disciple. So Peter doesn't want to tolerate any of that. He wants those to come to Christ who are really right on and really serious so he makes a formality here that is graphic as a symbol but that is even more graphic as a renouncement of Judaism. You see, he's saying, "I don't want any secret disciples. If you mean it, I don't only want you to change your attitude, I want you to change your association."

Now notice it says in verse 38, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." He made that clear because in Judaism there were all kinds of washings, weren't there? And they could have

been washed and it wouldn't necessarily been connected with Jesus, so he says, “I want you to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” That was tying them in with Him as their Messiah. Wow, what a transformation! And it meant that their families and all the rest of their world would count them as dead. The most despicable thing a Jew could do would be to come to Jesus Christ who was a blasphemer they had decided and worthy only of execution. But Peter says, “I want you to make a public act of severing your ties with Judaism and a new identification with Jesus Christ. And so I want you to be baptized, baptism of being a symbol of union with Christ.”

Oh, this was a big step. Dr. Ryrie said, quote: “Even today for a Jew, it is not his profession of Christianity nor his attendance at Christian services, nor his acceptance of the New Testament, but today even, his submission to water baptism that definitely and finally excludes him from the Jewish community and marks him off as a Christian,” end quote. That says I am identifying with Christ, that's a public expression. And we baptize folks in the name of Jesus Christ as a testimony to the world that they have been desirous of uniting with Jesus Christ totally. And that's why Peter insisted on the ordinance.

You say, “Well, it says repent and be baptized. I mean, how do you get around the fact that you've got to be baptized to be saved?” Well very simple. For example, in Luke 18 we have a good illustration. There was a guy who came to Jesus and it says in verse 18, “A certain ruler said to Jesus, ‘Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’” Now that's a good question. That's the same question they asked in Acts 2 basically. And Jesus said to him in verse 22, jumping down, “Sell all that you have and distribute unto the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.”

Now therefore salvation is a question of economics. In order to be saved, you hock everything and give your money to the poor, true? Ridiculous. Of course salvation isn't a question of economics. Salvation isn't a question of giving money to the poor. You say, “Well that's what He said.” No, that's not what He said. He said, “Do that and then come and follow Me.” In other words, there's a barrier in your way, fella. You're never going to know salvation until you get over your big hangup which is...what?...money. You see, Jesus read his heart and He knew what that guy really loved, number one, and that was money. And we know that because the guy turned around and went home...said, “Forget it, I want my money.” It's not until you want Jesus Christ more than you want anything else that the conditions are removed. As long as God knows there's something in the way, He can point that out. And...watch this...the biggest stumbling block to Jewish conversion was the fear of persecution and being unsynagogued and put out of their whole world. And so Peter says, “I know that's your big problem, so that's what you're going to have to get out of the way.” And baptism would be a public acknowledgment that you were naming the name of Christ fully aware of what it was going to cost. No secret disciples.

The Word of God does not teach baptismal salvation. It does not teach that you're to be baptized to be saved. It's simply indicated here that they were to be baptized in response to what had happened

in their life as a public confession of their new union with Christ. And it was a high price to pay.

So, you see, to use this to teach baptismal salvation doesn't make any sense. Water doesn't make it. Water doesn't save anybody. And so, this idea of secrecy Peter avoids and expressly says, “Repent and be baptized.” But I hasten to say, baptism has nothing to do with the salvation. It only pulls out the real from the unreal. It only makes the commitment total which is really what salvation is all about.

But now watch this key point. “Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sin.” Now this is what people get confused because they say, “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.” In order that your sins might be forgiven which means that baptism comes before forgiveness. You've got to be baptized in order to be forgiven. Now that can't be true because that contradicts the Bible which says you're not saved by works at all. It also doesn't need to be that way, listen to this. In studying the word “for the remission of sins,” which is often translated by those ritualists as “in order that,” we find it to be the word *“eis,” “eis.”* takes many, many translations. One of those translations used with verbs of change is the translation “because of.” It is thus to be translated in Matthew 12:41 where it says the people repented because of the preaching of Jonah. They repented in response to preaching. Here we simply give it that meaning and that meaning it can well have and it reads this way, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ because of the forgiveness of sins.”

In other words, you repent and then you are baptized because your sins have been forgiven. It is a public sign of what has gone on in the inside. And so repentance brought the remission of sins, baptism only made it visual in terms of a sign, or a symbol.

Isn't it good what it says...just a footnote in verse 38...about the remission of sins? Isn't it nice to know that when you repent, your sins are forgiven when you come to Christ? Isn't it nice to know that you don't have any sins piling up against you but that you're free simply to agree with God about your sin and know that He's already forgiven it? First John 2:12, “My little children, your sins are forgiven for His namesake.” Colossians 2:13, “He's forgiven you all your trespasses.” Tremendous promise.

Then you'll notice at the end of verse 38 he gets to the good part and says, “And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Now isn't this wonderful because this is what the Jews have been waiting for? This is what Joel said, that God would pour out His Spirit. They've been waiting for messianic days, they've been waiting for the Spirit and he says, “Here's how you can experience the presence of the Spirit.” Remember in John 14 Jesus said He's with you, He shall be...where?...in you and He says there is a way to experience the indwelling life of the Spirit, that is by repenting and coming and identifying with Jesus Christ. The cost is high, but that's the demand.

Now you notice what he says here? What is the condition to receiving the Holy Spirit? What is it? One word, repent...did you get it? Do you see anything there about tarry, wait, come on, everybody, we're

going to the Upper Room? Do you see anything about any kind of signs, wind, fire, vision, tongues? I don't. Repent and then to show that forgiveness has been accomplished, be baptized and the receiving of the Spirit comes as a result. Now the Spirit of God doesn't come as a result of water baptism, but of repentance. Every believer receivesthe Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation; 1 Corinthians 12 says, we're all baptized by the Spirit into the same body. That's salvation.

You say, “What is the gift of the Spirit? Well that's the Holy Spirit Himself, that's all that means. So, this is Peter's appeal. Let me summarize, very quickly. For the Jews who had openly rejected the Lord, not only repentance but baptism, that they might identify publicly with Christ. And he knew the biggest stumbling block to their discipleship was the fear of persecution, and so he makes that the standard because he wants them to get over the one hurdle that will really keep him from coming to Christ. And he knows that if the ones that get over that hurdle, they'll be the real ones.

You know what we try to do when we evangelize? We try to remove all the barriers so it's real easy. Then we wonder why we have so many tares among the wheat.

Now I want to add a couple of footnotes, just so you'll be clear on this. The Spirit of God is not given in water baptism. Don't connect that with the water but with the repentance. Secondly, I do think it's important that baptism should follow salvation immediately. I feel that on this occasion it was the very same day as a public declaration. Some people have been Christians for a long time and never followed baptism and thus not publicly declared their union with Jesus Christ. I think this is wrong and I think if there are those of you who have not yet been baptized since you believed, you need to be.

Thirdly, let me add this. The word “gift” at the end of verse 38 is *dorea,* which means a free gift--unmerited, for nothing with no cause and no condition. And that's exactly how you got the Holy Spirit, you didn't earn Him. You can't earn Him. You can't pray for Him. You can't go get Him. You can't whip Him up, stir Him up, or bring Him up. He came down at the moment of your salvation.

Now you say, “Well maybe that's only for the Jews, baptism.” No, because in Acts 10 Cornelius was baptized who was a Gentile. Later on Paul says, “I baptized Crispus and Gaius.” So we believe that this is something even for us today to declare our union with Jesus Christ.

Now, notice verse 39, and this carries it on from there. “For the promise...that is the promise of the Spirit as a response to salvation in Christ...is unto you,” that's them standing right there that day, “and to your children and to all that are afar off.” Who do you think the “afar offs” are? Gentiles...Gentiles, Ephesians 2:11 to 13. So this is a promise not only for Israel but for Gentiles, “Even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Now there's the sovereign side of salvation.

But then you go back to verse 21 and it says, “And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” There's the human side. So you have both sides of the divine

paradox right there.

So Peter's appeal is direct. He fires right away at them and says, “The Spirit will be yours, you will experience the fullness of the coming of Messianic days only if you break all the cords of Judaism and turn and identify yourself with Jesus Christ, and you who really mean it will be willing to do this, be publicly baptized that the world might know that you are naming the name of Jesus Christ.” Peter asks so much, oh he asks much.

Now I love the next verse...verse 40, “And with many other words did he testify and exhort.” I told you he couldn't have preached just two and a half minutes. He went on and on and on, many other words. He testified. He exhorted them, saying, and here it says save yourselves, it is a passive imperative, “Be saved from this crooked generation,” you can't save yourself. “Be saved from this crooked generation.” Jesus called that generation faithless and perverse and evil. And in 70 A.D. God swept down on that generation and wiped it out. One million, one hundred thousand Jews were killed in the siege of Titus in 70 A.D. And here Peter says, “Save yourselves,” in the sense that you yield yourself to the salvation provided freely for you in Christ. Jesus of Nazareth is your Savior.

What do you do? You repent. And to make sure your repentance is honest and legitimate, you'll be willing to name His name in front of your own people. Peter hit hard.

I hope, friends, and just a moment I want to say this, I hope, friends, that we learn a principle about evangelism here. Major on sin and judgment and give the whole truth, do you see? Full repentance, nobody builds a tower intelligently who doesn't first sit down and count the cost. And I don't think we give people enough stuff to count. Let a man know exactly what he's doing when he comes to Jesus Christ from beginning to end.

So the introduction, the theme and the appeal. Now watch the result, this is so good. You say, “O brother, if there's any results, it will be a miracle if they don't just stone him, you know.” I mean, could you preach like that, all that hell, fire and damnation and get away with it?

Somebody was introducing me to this lady and said, “John's the pastor down at Grace Community.”

She says, “Well, is that kind of a nice church?”

I said, “Oh yeah. We have a wonderful time.”

She said, “Well you're not one of those hell, fire and damnation preachers, are you?”

I said, “Yeah, oh yeah.”

She said, “You are?”

I said, “Well, you know, you've got to speak the truth.” And, you know, as a result of that, I had a chance to share with her a little further. I'm not ashamed that I preach judgment, I better preach judgment.

You say, “Well, you couldn't expect any results, could you? I mean, you can't just go out there and do that, you've got to be glib and cool and clever and subtle, see. And you've got to say...you've tried pot, have you tried Jesus? Jesus is a groovy high, man, see. I mean, you've got to be sort of cool about this deal, you'll get a lot of results.” I call them spiritual abortions, that's what you'll get. You'll get superficiality and what is born is dead.

Well, how many believed? Well he had a good response, not very man, if there were half a million people there, they had in verse 41, “They that were gladly received His Word was baptized, same day they were added to them three thousand souls.” Now that's...you say, three thousand? Boy, one sermon, three thousand converts, often takes three thousand sermons to get one convert. That's true. But here you have this three thousand...that's really not very many. You figure out a percentage on the basis of how many that were there; that's not very many, that's just a little handful.

Would you want to know something? They baptized all three thousand. You know what that means? That means those three thousand were for real. And then I love verse 42, oh is this good. “And they continued...what's the next word?....steadfastly.” Don't you like that? The three thousand they got, they kept. Whoa, it's so right to do the evangelism the way the Spirit's designed it to be done in order that when you're done you've got what you've got, see.

Jim Oguin came from Equador and told me he was in Guayaquil and told me that had a big evangelistic thing and they had 40,000 people on three or four nights and two thousand five hundred first-time professions of faith in Christ and three months later they found three people in the church. All the churches in that whole city had three from those meetings. Where were they? Something was wrong somewhere.

It can't be easy to come to Jesus Christ. It's easy in the sense that there's no works involved, but it means that you turn from everything your life has meant. From it to Jesus Christ in total commitment. “They continued steadfastly.” Oh I love that. Jesus said in John 8:30, “Many came and believed,” then He said this to them, “No, wait a minute, if you continue in My Word then are you My disciples *alethos* for real.” See, you've just begun. If you're still around when all the hot spots have been hit, you know. You remember what happened in John chapter 6, it says, “And many of His disciples forsook Him and fled.”

You see, it's not who comes, it's who's there when it's all over. Continuing is the sign of salvation. So the church is born. And what I like about it is, it was a real church, it was visible and the same that was visible was invisible. In other words, all those that were in it were really in it. If your evangelism is right, you'll save a lot of tears for the church. Don't be involved in spiritual abortions or bringing tares into the church. Make sure your evangelism is clear. The church was born.

Peter preached as the Spirit gave him unction. The results, fantastic. And the first day that little church existed, that church had well over three thousand people in it and they were together and they were for real and they were about to change the world. We'll see how they did it next week. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for principles that You've taught us this morning. God, we just don't want to be superficial in our ministries. We want to be sure that we realize it's not how many but it's what kind. We're not so concerned with how many come to Jesus Christ superficially, or how many people we have opportunity to lead to Christ, although that's important, Lord, that's not the end. The thing is that we're concerned that they be real, that they have counted the cost, that they have removed the barrier and the obstacle, whatever it is, that they like Jesus, said, “Be willing to leave father, mother and all of these things,” that they be willing to take up the cross and follow Him where they're not worthy to be His disciples.

God, we want to talk to desperate people and if they're not desperate, we want to show them they need to be desperate. God, help us to be involved in really Holy Spirit evangelism. Don't take away our zeal, Lord. Just give it to us in the right perspective. Thank You for what You've taught us, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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