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

Preaching Jesus of Nazareth, Part 3
Scripture: Acts 2:14-36
Code: 44-11

We come again to the second chapter of Acts. And by the way, thank you for being with us on Sunday nights. I know there are challenges in your world, as there are in our world, to be faithful on Sunday nights, but it's a great encouragement to me and to others that you see the importance and the urgency of being a part of this event every week. That sets the day apart from beginning to end to the Lord, which is of course a noble and important thing to do. And I just remind you that the messages that are given here on Sunday through the years, and even now, find their way around the world. There is seemingly no limit to how God is using His Word all over the world.

Been doing some research for something I have to write on David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the great preacher of Westminster Chapel in London who died in 1981, retired in 1968. He did not like recordings. In fact, he had certain disdain for recordings. He also believed that every pastor, every faithful Christian leader, should stay in one place, in one church, and preach week after week after week to the same congregation and leave the results to the Lord. And so, he did that. And as time went on from his preaching, books appeared, and his ministry was extended vastly beyond that pulpit through his writings, which began to circle the globe and end up in different languages.

But those who know him best always said he was a preacher, and he saw himself as a preacher, and you didn't know him unless you heard him preach. If he had had his way, no one outside that church on a Sunday would've heard him preach, but somebody else had their way, and recordings were kept. It was said by his biographer that probably the greatest impact that Lloyd-Jones will have will be his books. But, that was before the digital age. Now, you can hear him preach. Free, by going on the web and listening to him. He's being heard all over the world, and he left in 1981.

It's a wonderful, wonderful world in which we live for the spread of the truth, as it is a horrible world for the spread of evil and error. We're glad that we can counter that. So, we're grateful for the opportunity to minister the Word of God here. But beyond this, as the Lord the teaching here and spreads it at His own discretion.

Acts chapter 2 launches us into the Church Age. This is the day the church was born. This is the first gospel sermon preached by an apostle after the resurrection of our Lord. Thus, it's the first gospel sermon that contains all that the cross and the resurrection embody. First apostolic preaching, and it became the pattern for all subsequent apostolic preaching, and is still the pattern for effective, God-blessed preaching. It is theological. It is expositional. It is argumentative. That is, it makes a case and

presents the case in a chronological and logical fashion, and presents evidence, and reasons its way to an inescapable conclusion. It is a model of what preaching does in terms of its structure. It ends with a compelling response by an audience that can't escape the implications of what they've heard. And upon which they are immediately told what to do to remedy that situation. It is what preaching should be.

By way of its own structure, it has the most powerful introduction that any preacher has ever had, and that was the event of Pentecost. God gave the introduction to Peter's great sermon. A sound like a mighty rushing wind, flames of fire coming down and resting on people who then launch off into languages they don't know and proclaim the wonderful works of God. All the people gathered at Pentecost in Jerusalem hear the testimony to the wonderful works of God in their own language, and they know this is about God, and this is a remarkable day, and the Holy Spirit comes and takes up residence in the church, and fills them with His power.

The church is born, and it's born in Jerusalem where they had just crucified the Messiah and the Savior. And then, Peter stands up to speak, and there's the introduction explaining Pentecost. Verses 14 to 21. He explains what has happened, and what it meant, and how it was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, and Joel's prophecy was a prophecy about the inauguration of the Messianic age. So, what Peter is saying is: the Messianic age has begun. Joel's prophecy is starting to be fulfilled. What you've seen here is that which Joel spoke of, Joel chapter 2. All that Joel said doesn't come to pass until the end of the Messianic age, when the whole of creation is struck with judgment. Joel even described that. But that long Messianic era in which we're still living was launched formally on the Day of Pentecost.

So, the sermon begins with the introduction provided by God, and Peter explains the meaning of it: it is the beginning of the prophesied Messianic era. Which then poses the question: if this is the Messianic age, who is the Messiah? If it's the Messianic age, the Messiah must be here. Who is the Messiah? Starting in verse 22, Peter launches into the second part of the sermon. The first is the introduction explaining Pentecost; the second is the theme of the sermon exalting Jesus Christ. "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene." And he introduces them to their Messiah.

And he starts in verse 22 by describing His life, a life in which God attested to His deity and Messiahship by empowering Him to do miracles and wonders and signs, and God was performing all of this through Him, and you know it because it happened in your midst. Peter says, look at His life. This is the evidence that He's the Messiah. All the miracles. Then look at His death, verse 23, "This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." And so, Peter describes not only the life of Messiah, but the death of Messiah, and Messiah must die and the Old Testament pointed that out. There were many, many prophecies in the Old Testament specifically that looked at the death of Messiah. And then there was the whole sacrificial system which spoke of the necessary death of a sufficient offering

and sacrifice.

Jesus is the Messiah is made clear by His life. Miraculous life. And by His death, a substitutionary atonement fulfilling, certainly in detail, Isaiah's great prophecy in chapter 53. Now, we come to verse 24, and Peter comes to the third phase of this part of the sermon exalting Christ, His resurrection.

Verse 24. "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, 'I saw the Lord always in my presence; for He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted," or rejoiced. "Moreover my flesh also will live in hope; because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with Your presence.' Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on His throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned in Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses."

This, of course, is a devastating proclamation to the population of Jerusalem. Devastating because they had collectively rejected Jesus Christ, cried for His execution, handed Him over to the Romans, and He had been crucified. But here is the great culmination of Peter's sermon: the One that you, you by godless men, put to death, is none other than the Messiah. And the great proof of that, the final proof, not His life, not His death. The final proof, His resurrection. You put Him to death. "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."

This became, of course, the theme of all apostolic Gospel preaching. The resurrection of Messiah. If Messiah's sufferings were ordained by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, so was His resurrection. Everything led to this. God raised Him up. You killed Him; God raised Him. And by the way, all through the sermon, Peter emphasizes the difference between God's treatment of the Messiah, and Israel's treatment of the Messiah. This becomes part and parcel by the way of apostolic preaching going forward. You do one thing; God does another.

Chapter 3 verse 14, Peter preaching later says: you disowned the Holy One and Righteous One. You asked for a murderer to be granted to you. You put to death Prince of life whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. Again, you did this, but God did this. It goes like that throughout the record in the Book of Acts of the apostles preaching.

Chapter 10 verse 39. "You know about Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. God anointed Him with power. He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed by

the devil, for God was with Him. We are witnesses of these things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. But they put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. But God raised Him up on the third day." This becomes a pattern of apostolic preaching. You did one thing, and God overruled it.

That's the theme of his sermon, and it makes it unmistakable that God recognizes as Peter recognizes the horrible guilt of Israel. Through history, people have tried to, I guess to ease the pain of the reality that the Jews crucified their own Messiah by the hands of the Romans, but they were behind it, to somehow ease that pain. People have tried to divest the Jews of the responsibility of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the apostles wouldn't allow that to happen. And as close as they were to the reality of it, they made sure the Jews understood that you, by the means and the hands of godless men, put Him to death, but God raised Him up.

God raised Him up, he says, because, or since, it was impossible for Him to be held in the power of death. God put an end to the agony of death because it was not possible for Him to be held by death. Why? Because He was life itself. He was the life. John 1. Death could not hold His prey. He burst the bonds of death and came out of the grave.

And now Peter's starting in verse 25, and this is kind of where we're picking it up from last time. Starting at verse 25, Peter wants to connect this to an Old Testament prophecy, and there is a great one, an ideal one, in Psalm 16. And just as a kind of a preview of what comes later in the Book of Acts, this became a pattern among the apostles to go back to that passage in Psalm 16. You find, for example, in the 13th chapter, the shift has gone from Peter being the prominent preacher in the opening 12, to Paul being the prominent preacher. But the messages sound the same. Verse 28 of Acts 13. "And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead." And, verse 32, "We preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it also is written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You.'" A prophecy of the resurrection. "As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'" That comes out of Isaiah 55, another prophecy. And then in verse 35, Psalm 16. "He also says in another Psalm, 'You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.'" And the same emphasis. "For David," he can't refer to him, "after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay."

So again, way into the ministry of the apostle Paul, the emphasis is still the same: the resurrection of Jesus Christ was anticipated and prophesied in the Old Testament. Now I'll go back to how Peter handled Psalm 16. This is Psalm 16:8 through 11. You can look at the Psalm yourself. We'll just take

the New Testament text from that Psalm and stay there. “David says of Him,” and I want to point to the fact that David says of Him, leads into a first-person testimony from the risen Christ. “I saw the Lord always in my presence; He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exults; moreover my flesh will also live in hope; because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.” That’s all first-person. So while David wrote the Psalm, he wrote it in the first-person as the very words of Messiah, the very words that Christ would speak.

The Jews certainly thought, maybe this is talking about David. Maybe this is David’s first-person testimony of his own hope that he is somehow going to escape death. But no one ever claimed that David rose from the dead. He hasn’t risen from the dead. They all knew his grave was still with them. His spiritual resurrection, of course, occurred when he went to sleep in this life and entered into the presence of the Lord, and his bodily resurrection awaits the fulfillment of Daniel 12, when the resurrection of the Old Testament’s saints will take place in the future.

So, David hasn’t risen from the dead. His body has undergone corruption. He is in Hades, and that simply means the abode of the dead, in a general way. Sometimes it’s used of hell; sometimes it’s used of a place where godly people go. It’s the abode of the dead. David’s body is still there, so Peter wants you to understand that this can’t be about David. Can’t be about David.

Verse 29. “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.” David is not the fulfillment of Psalm 16. Not the fulfillment. This is the testimony of Messiah. The testimony is wonderful. Messiah declares, “I saw the Lord always in my presence; for He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken.”

That is the confidence that the Lord had that allowed Him to say these words. “Into your hands I,” what? “I commit my spirit.” Complete trust. “I saw the Lord always in my presence; for He is at my right hand, so that I will not be moved,” literally. Firm, confident trust.

Standing at the right hand is a pledge of protection in the ancient world. A bodyguard always stood at the right side, protecting with his shield, leaving his sword arm free to fight the enemy. He says, God is always at My side. Absolute confidence. Sure, there were those dark moments on the cross. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” But when that was over, all that was over, He said, “into Your hands I commit My spirit.” God did not abandon Him. “Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced.” This is part of what the writer of Hebrews was talking about when he said that Christ went to the cross for the joy that was set before Him. “My flesh also will live in hope.” He looked past, and in fact, He looked past to what was ahead after His resurrection. It’s really a beautiful phrase at the end of verse 26. “Moreover my flesh also will live in hope.” Literally, My body shall pitch its tent on the ground called hope. Even in death, even looking at the grave, Christ stood firm, never wavering,

never shaken, that His body would never be corrupt. “Because you will not abandon my soul to Hades.” You will not leave Me in the place of the dead. “You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.” He will not fall into corruption in the grave.

This is saying, My body will I commit in death with a confident expectation and hope that it will not suffer decay, but will be raised to life. Verse 28. “You have made known to me the path of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.” I’ll go through death, out the other side, into your presence. You will not abandon Me. You will not leave Me in the abode of the dead.

He refers to Himself in verse 27 as the Holy One, well-known name for Messiah. The demons call him the Holy One; we know who You are, the Holy One of God. Mark 1:24. The disciples, John 6:69, we saw that not too long ago. We know that You are the Holy One. So, our Lord was in view in Psalm 16. Peter’s point, so very strong. Every detail of the death of Messiah presented in the Old Testament. Every detail of the resurrection, in a sense, presented in the Old Testament. Promise of His resurrection came through David.

Who was David talking about? Well, who was raised from the dead? He was. And what’s the evidence? Check the tomb, verse 29. “I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.” David’s tomb is occupied, “because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne.” That’s the great Davidic covenant from 2 Samuel 7. “He looked ahead,” verse 31 says, “and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.” Check His tomb. It’s empty, and we are all witnesses.

David was a prophet. David was making a prediction. Do you see the picture of this powerful sermon? It should really be condensed and given in one expression, not dragged out over weeks like this. It’s the Messianic age. You’ve seen the supernatural phenomena. God has arrived. His Spirit has come. The Spirit has been with you, is now in you. This is a new day, a new age. It’s the Messianic age. The phenomenon fits Joel 2. If this is the Messianic age, then the Messiah must be here. Who is the Messiah? Look and see. It’s Jesus the Nazarene. How do you know? His miraculous life, His substitutionary death fulfilling Old Testament prophecy, and His resurrection from the dead, to which we are all eyewitnesses. Peter’s argument, really, is irrefutable. Psalm 16 refers to the resurrection of someone. It can’t be David. But everybody knew the Messiah would come out of the loins of David. Jesus did. His mother Mary was in the Davidic line. Even His father was in the Davidic line. The Psalm refers to Messiah. Messiah will rise.

Who is Messiah? The one who comes at the time of the Messianic age, and rises from the dead. That leaves you one possibility. “This Jesus,” verse 32, “God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.” It’s the Messianic age. That means the Messiah is here. Who is the Messiah? The

Messiah is Jesus. Testified to by His life, His death, His resurrection, and we are all witnesses. 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says there were 500 people who saw Him after His resurrection at one time, in one place, in Galilee. This is a classic example of expository, doctrinal preaching. Carefully reasoned, carefully progressing in its argument. The inescapable conclusion is that Jesus is the Messiah.

Peter wants to grab one other aspect of His Messiahship, and that's His ascension. Come to verse 33. So, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. Verse 33. "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God." That's the ascension. And they were there. They were there watching that. The ascension is in chapter 1 verse 9. He was talking to His disciples, His followers, who were later gathered in the upper room and constituted the first congregation of redeemed believers in the Church Age. And as He was talking to them, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, two men, two angels in white clothing stood beside them and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in just the same way as you've watched Him go into heaven." They were there, eyewitnesses. Not only eyewitnesses to His resurrection, but eyewitnesses to His ascension. He was exalted to the right hand of God, and that was just the initial aspect of what happened because of His ascension. And once He had reached the right hand of God in that split second, having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you have both seen and heard.

It circles all the way back to the event that they had just experienced. This all happened because the Messiah went back to glory, took His place at the right hand of God, and God gave Him the promise of the Spirit. Remember, before He had left, He'd breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," in anticipation of this very day. Right back to Pentecost again, the exalted Messiah has gone back to the right hand of God. How do you know He was exalted? We saw Him go up. How do you know it was an exaltation? How do you know He actually did what He had been sent to do? How do you know God was pleased? Because God authenticated His work by sending the Holy Spirit.

And Peter quotes another Davidic Psalm to prove Jesus is Messiah by His ascension. Verse 34. "It was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."'" Who sat at God's right hand? It wasn't David. It was the Lord God saying to the Lord Messiah. It was the Father saying to the Son, "Sit at My right hand, and I will make all Your enemies Your footstool." That means to put Him in the exalted place over everything and everyone. That's drawn out of Psalm 1:10.

David never did that. David was not exalted to the right hand of God and given the name "Lord." Philippians 2 says that Christ humbled Himself, and God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name above every name, and what is that name? The name Lord, so that every knee would bow to that name. By the way, that Psalm 1:10, the Lord said to My Lord, both are equal in essence and nature. One member of the Trinity speaking to another.

So, Peter has made his case. We know that Jesus is the Messiah because of His life and miracles, because of His substitutionary death, because of His resurrection, and because of His ascension. And we know He ascended, we know He is exalted, we know He is at the right hand of God, we know He has been declared Lord because you've seen the result: God sent the Holy Spirit to launch the Messianic era.

Therefore, verse 36, his conclusion, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." He doesn't blame the Romans. You did it. Assuredly, absolutely, for certain, you need to know this: the house of Israel must know for certain. It's emphatic by its position in the Greek, and it means "with perfect certainty and without any doubt."

Again, the contrast is stark between God's treatment of Christ and their treatment of Him. You killed Him; God raised Him. You killed Him; God exalted Him. You killed Him; God made Him Lord. He claimed to be the Messiah, the Sanhedrin rejected Him as a blasphemer, condemned Him to death. You joined in; you screamed for His blood. You crucified Him. His Messiahship was announced at His baptism. It was confirmed through His ascension, and the subsequent sending of the Holy Spirit.

So that's the body of his message exalting Christ. Not only as Messiah, but as risen, ascended, enthroned Lord. This is the first apostolic sermon, and it leads to the apostolic creed: Jesus is what? Lord.

And by the way, this is great preaching from this standpoint. This isn't the word of Peter, did you notice that? This is not the word of Peter. Peter never says, "I say to you. It's my opinion. Let me give you some insight." No. What Peter does say, go back to verse 22, is, "this man is attested to you by God." "This Man did miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst." "This Man was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God." Verse 23. Verse 24. "God raised Him up again." Verse 32. "God raised up again this Jesus." Verse 33. "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear." And it is the Lord who says to Him, "You are My Lord, sit at My right hand." This is all the work of God. That's why in verse 36 he says, "Let all the house of Israel know for certain that this Jesus whom you crucified, God has made both Lord and Messiah."

Stark, the difference between what they did to Jesus and what God does. This is so direct. The argument is so inescapable. The facts are well-known. They all knew His life and the miracles. They were aware of the execution. They screamed for His blood. They knew about the trials. They knew the story. There were people everywhere saying they had seen the risen Christ. The tomb was empty. And here, the validation of heaven comes in the arrival of the Spirit in a supernatural

phenomenon that has no earthly explanation. And when they speak in languages, they speak the wonderful works of God. And so everyone knows this is God doing all of this.

They had killed the One that God had exalted, crucified the hope of the ages, dipped their hands in the blood of the very One that the prophets had looked for. And he made sure they got it.

That takes us to verse 37. “When they heard, they were pierced to the heart.” They were pierced to the heart. That word is only used here in all the New Testaments. They were stabbed. The power of the argument wasn’t a tear-jerking illustration. It wasn’t some kind of clever insight. It was the overwhelming power of the evidence from testimony and Scripture, and the power of a systematic argument left them stabbed, stabbed.

And they cried to Peter and the rest of the apostles. “Brethren, what shall we do?” How can we reverse this? They’ve done a terrible thing. Terrible. Incalculable. Unparalleled. Killed the Messiah they had been waiting for. What can we do? I mean, it’s a horrible position to find yourself in. What do we do? You might say, “Wow, I’m glad I’m not in that position.” Well, you are if you have rejected Christ. You joined with the crucifiers. So they say, “What do we do?” We’ve seen the introduction explaining Pentecost, then the theme, exalting Christ. Come to verse 37 with me and let’s look at the third part of this, the appeal. We could say exhorting penitence.

What do we do? Pierced to the heart. That word is to literally penetrate with a sharp instrument. But metaphorically, acute pain. Sudden and acute pain. They are literally stabbed in their hearts, deeply affected with anguish and alarm. There’s panic in their hearts, real panic. Well, what are the causes of this piercing, this trauma? One, they had killed their Messiah. They had killed their Messiah. Yeah, they handed Him over to the Romans, but the Romans would never have done it if they hadn’t forced them to.

So, they’re facing the reality: we’ve killed the Messiah. That’s a horrible thing. The long-awaited One, we killed Him. He came in our generation, and we killed Him. The horror of that, of course, deepens when they begin to realize the deep sense of guilt. They now are guilty before God of the most monstrous crime in history. That leads to a third reality: the fear of divine wrath.

And how did Peter wrap up the few final words of his message before he indicted them in verse 36? He’s saying, “God exalted Christ, His right hand, and then made His enemies a footstool for His feet.” Graphic language. In ancient times, kings were elevated, and everyone was below their feet. And enemies would be thrown at the feet of a monarch. And would have the freedom to dispose of them at will. They literally were now at the feet of one whom they had killed, who was now their ruler and their judge. He must’ve been filled with vengeance. Their fear would be terrifying realization. He wasn’t dead. He arose. He was at the right hand of God. He is now on the throne. He is crushing His enemies under His feet, and that would be us. And of course, the realization then, that they can’t

change what they did. They killed the Messiah, the long-awaited One, profound sense of guilt, terrifying fear of wrath. Their judge is alive, and exalted, and they can't undo what they've done. That's what that stabbing was. Deep sense of the evil of their deeds. Profound fear of judgment, and wrath, and vengeance. What do we do? What do we do?

You know, there's a sense in which everyone who rejects the Lord Jesus Christ is in that same position, because nothing will happen to those people who killed Him and never repented. Nothing will happen to them in hell that won't happen to people who weren't even there, but rejected Him. It is in this state that the sinner is void of any hope. How can we preach to affect this? To coddle sinners, to try to make them feel good, is to be void of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, judgment. Effective gospel preaching must not only tell the sinner of his sin; it must prove to the sinner his sin. It must prove it.

The first and primary responsibility of all gospel preaching is profound, painful, agonizing conviction and fear, most of which has been extracted out of any kind of gospel preaching today. To make sinners feel the pain and the agony, like they're having some kind of a heart attack because of what they've done is the stuff of real apostolic preaching.

Here was a group of people who did what Zechariah said all Israel one day would do. They looked on the one they had pierced, and they mourned. What do we do? Conviction is the first work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. Conviction is the first work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. First work. Conviction can result in what it does here. We'll look at that, but it doesn't always turn out good. Chapter 5 verse 30. Peter and the apostles say the God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you put to death. This is what the apostle said all the time. You did this; God did this. God raised up Jesus, whom you put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, and we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him. But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and repented. Is that what it says? No. And intended to murder the apostles.

So what do you do? Change the message? The first work of gospel proclamation is conviction. In the seventh chapter, Stephen preaches that great sermon to the Jews in Jerusalem, and essentially it ends the same way. Verse 51, the end of Stephen's sermon. "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit. You're doing just what your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become." You're just like your fathers. They killed the prophets, and you've killed the ones the prophets spoke of. And you, who received the law as ordained by angels, and didn't keep it. And when they heard this, they were cut to the quick again, and began gnashing their teeth at him. And what did they do? They stoned him to death.

So what do you do? Change the message? Conviction is the first and primary work of gospel preaching. So, they said, brothers, collectively to one another: what do we do? At this point, the first expression of amazing grace appears in apostolic preaching.

Verse 38. Peter said to them, “Repent, and each 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.” Is that not shocking grace? How fast did they go from this massive overwhelming trauma, this indictment, to this compassionate, merciful word of grace? “For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” So then, those who had received His word were baptized; and that day there were added about 3,000 souls.

Wow. 3,000 who had been stabbed to the heart for having murdered the Messiah, who felt the burden of that crime so profoundly that they were fearing the vengeance of God would fall on them instantaneously. They’d cry out, “What shall we do?” Knowing they can’t undo what they did. They hear this staggering word from Peter, repent, be baptized, receive forgiveness, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit from the one that you executed, who rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, and sits at the right hand. He will give you the same Spirit He has given us.

Well, there’s a lot more to say about that. That invitation. Repent. But we know what that means, don’t we? We don’t need to camp on that or expand that. That would take away the power of this conclusion. Repent. Turn and go the other way. Turn and go the opposite way in what you think about Christ, and turn from your sin, the horrible sin of your life which culminated in you killing the Messiah. Turn, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Make a public profession of Christ, and symbolize it by baptism. Open, public baptism.

Boy, that would’ve been some testimony. In the city of Jerusalem, 3,000 people were baptized, and all 3,000 of them were saying to the entire population of Jerusalem, “We committed a massive crime against the Messiah, and we are now confessing Him as Messiah, Savior, and Lord, and being baptized in His name.” Being united with Him in His death burial and resurrection.

Change your view of Christ. Flee the horror of your wretchedness, culminating in the sin of murdering the Messiah. Peter doesn’t allow for secret disciples. Change your association. Demonstrate a clean break with Judaism. In the name of Jesus Christ. This is a public act of severing your ties with Judaism and a new identification with the Messiah. Big step. Alienation. You will be thrown out of the synagogue, dispossessed from your family. You will be persecuted, and that’s what happened, wasn’t it?

Peter insists on the ordinance of baptism to make the repentance full, public. There's no salvation in the water. In fact, the better way to translate this, and I won't go into all the details, would be to translate it this way: repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ because of the forgiveness of your sins. When you repent and confess the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven sin. Baptism is the obedient act that makes that public. That is consistent through the whole of the New Testament.

For example, Acts 10, Cornelius and his friends believe, receive the Holy Spirit, and then are baptized. Believe, receive the Holy Spirit, and then are baptized. That's always the pattern. But the magnanimous grace that is here is just absolutely shocking. You might say, well, I'm a pretty bad sinner. I don't know if the Lord could forgive me. Well, I don't think you're any worse than this group. I don't know what you've done to other people, but you didn't kill the Son of God. You didn't murder the Messiah. They did. And grace is extended instantaneously to them, and complete forgiveness if they will repent for their crimes against God, and if they will embrace Jesus, confess Him as Lord, be identified with Him in His death and resurrection, and baptism. Complete forgiveness will be theirs. They will receive forgiveness, and they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will come to dwell in them as He did those believers on that same day earlier in the day when it all began.

Just a reminder, footnote, baptism should follow salvation. That's the pattern. If you haven't been baptized, you're disobedient. You say, well, I'm not sure I have time. You don't have any price to pay for being baptized. You don't have any price to pay. You're not going to get thrown out of something. You're not going to be alienated from your family, most likely. It's not going to maybe cost you your life, but it did them.

Baptism's just a matter of obedience. Not just you, he says, verse 39. "For you and your children all who are far off," that's Gentiles. Middle-wall, partition broken down, Ephesians 2. Jew and Gentile, went in the church. This is for everybody. For everybody. For everybody. You, your children, everybody who's a far off, and oh by the way, as many as the Lord God will call to Himself, and we're back the sovereignty of God again, aren't we?

Back in verse 21, did you notice? Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That's verse 21. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, from Joel 2. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. And in verse 39, as many as the Lord Our God will call to Himself. There are those two things put together without any explanation. Divine sovereignty and human will.

Oh, by the way, that's a short sermon. I think you could read it in three minutes. It took me a few weeks, but you could read it in three minutes, because it's a summary. And I've had to kind of spread it out a little bit. Verse 40, with many other words. I love that. "With many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.'" He saved. He

made His argument, and He pled with them. Those who had received his word were baptized, and that day there were added 3,000 souls.

Somebody wrote a doctoral dissertation on: was there enough water in enough pools in Jerusalem to baptize 3,000 people in one part of a day? There was. I'm not sure how that all works out, but that's what they did. They must've used every available pond, pool. You say, well, why would they need that? Because there weren't any Presbyterians yet, so they had to put them under. Do it right.

Can you imagine what was going on in Jerusalem, where all of a sudden 3,000 people in every available part of that city, wherever there was water, there was mass immersion going on of 3,000 people. You're fairly well into the day by now, and this is going on all over everywhere, and they're all confessing Jesus as Lord, and Savior, and Messiah, and repenting. Shocking. They listened to Peter and wanted to escape this perverse generation. They needed to escape, because in just a few decades, that whole city would be destroyed in 70 AD. Escape. Escape while you can.

The final results are wonderful. 3,000 people. So, that's a mega-church in a day. Nobody, and then 3,120. They kept going from there, and thousands more were added. What was that fresh, exciting, church-like. We're going to find that out next time. Not next week, 'cause seminary graduation, but the week after. Verses 42 to 47, one of the most rich portions of the Book of Acts, so you come back for that.

Lord, we're grateful again, as always, that You've given us Your Word. It is food for our souls. It is joy to our hearts. It is powerful and convicting, calling us to faithfulness and obedience. It is also an overwhelming mercy and grace to know that we're a part of what was born that day, that our names are added to the list that started with 120 and then 3,000, and a few weeks later, 5,000 more. And You've been adding ever since. How privileged we are to be among the redeemed. We, too, are guilty, for to reject Christ is to crucify the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame. But we have been forgiven, and we have been granted the Holy Spirit as a gift of grace. We thank You for that. Thank You for that. Be gracious to some in our midst, some who are hearing this message. Call them to Yourself so that they will call on You and be saved. This we ask in Savior's name. Amen.

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