

We saw last time that once the Holy Spirit had come, and God got the attention of the Jews in Jerusalem with the sound of a rushing wind, and hearing the disciples speak in their native languages, Peter stood up, full of the Holy Spirit to preach the first gospel sermon. He used the scripture to prove that Jesus was the Christ. He explained how the Pentecost event was the fulfillment of prophecy. Peter shared the gospel story of how Jesus went to the cross to save us from our sins, but He arose from the grave, showed Himself to the disciples, and ascended into heaven. He brought conviction upon the Jews by saying that God has made Jesus, whom they crucified, both Savior and Lord.

In tonight's passage we will read of the people's response to Peter's sermon. Just as the message of the gospel does not change, neither does the required response to the gospel, in order for a person to be saved. Let's see what lessons we might learn from the application of the gospel message, as we read Acts 2:37-41.

Verse 37 tells us that when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart. The Greek word cut means to be struck violently. Being cut to the heart shows the conviction of the Holy Spirit over a most grievous sin; they realized that they had killed their Messiah.

Different people respond to the gospel message in different ways. Pentecost was a Jewish Feast in which all Jewish males were required to come to Jerusalem, with their families, if at all possible. In their pilgrimage, they traveled from the far corners of the world, so while we rejoice that 3,000 were saved that day, that number represents a modest percentage of the people present. Some saw and heard what was happening and fell under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Others felt no conviction at all, or they suppressed that conviction.

Those who were saved that day felt genuine shame over their sin, and they responded by asking Peter and the other Apostles, "What shall we do?" Conviction is the motivating spiritual force that makes a person aware of their sin before Holy God. There has to be some awareness and regret over sin in order for a person to respond properly to God.

Whenever we share the gospel with someone, we call that person to a decision. Whenever the gospel is preached, we offer an invitation. When a person hears the gospel message they have no choice but to respond one way or the other. Either they receive the message in faith, or they reject it.

In verse 38, Peter commands the proper response. Everyone is called to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of his or her sins. It is interesting to note that the verbs repent and forgiveness are plural verbs, and to be baptized is singular. This helps us to understand that an attitude of repentance is important throughout our lifetimes. Once we are saved, we still have to live in a sinful world, and we still have to deal with our own sinful natures. We still have to seek God's forgiveness when we mess up, but God is faithful to forgive us over and over, when we have a repentant heart.

Baptism on the other hand is a once in a lifetime event. Since I usually do the baptism counseling in our church, I often run across children, and some adults, who are confused about baptism. Sometimes people think that they have to be baptized, in order to be saved. Some people might read verse 38 and reach that conclusion. But baptism has never saved anyone. The book of Acts makes it clear in chapters 5, 10, 13, and 26 that forgiveness is based upon faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone, nothing more, and nothing less.

The bible calls us to be baptized as a sign of our faith, and a public commitment of our lives to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. A person does not get baptized in order to be

saved. He or she gets baptized in obedience to the Lord's command, because they have been saved, and Jesus is Lord.

The phrase "in the name of Jesus" is the key to understanding that salvation is a matter of faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. In order to be saved, a person has to accept in faith that Jesus was God in the flesh; He sacrificed Himself so that we might be forgiven of our sins, and that He arose from the grave, to prove He had won the victory over sin and death for us. Repentance and faith then, are the primary elements for salvation for everyone. Baptism follows as a public statement of faith.

Once a person trusts Jesus as Savior and Lord, Peter says that he or she will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The scriptures clearly show that the Holy Spirit was active in creation. God filled certain people in the Old Testament with His Holy Spirit in order to aid them in accomplishing His purposes. At the Pentecost event, the Holy Spirit came in a general way to all who trusts Jesus as Savior and Lord. Here the bible promises that everyone who has saving faith will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is not speaking in tongues as it is taught and practiced in some churches today. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the personal presence of God in a believer's life. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit. That means that God is with us, personally, for the rest of our lives. When we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, our salvation is secure. We cannot lose our salvation, because the Holy Spirit of God possesses us. He convicts us, encourages us, instructs us, and supplies us with the specific gifts that we need in order to fulfill God's purposes in our lives.

The promise, Peter said, was for those who heard the gospel that day, their children, and those who are far off. This does not mean that if the parents got saved, their children would automatically be saved as well. The promise is for all people, that if a person trusts Jesus as Savior and Lord, he or she will receive the Holy Spirit. If a husband gets saved, he will naturally try to share the gospel with his wife. When parents are saved, they should bring their children up with every opportunity to come to understand the gospel so that they too can be saved. The reference to those who are far off is an early indication that the gospel is for Gentiles as well as Jews.

Verse 40 reminds us that the scriptures do not record every word of Peter's sermon that day. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Luke boiled down the gospel message to its essence. Notice the Peter pleaded with His audience. He begged them to repent of their sins and trust Jesus for their forgiveness and salvation. There was urgency about His message.

There needs to be urgency in our presentation of the gospel as well, but I learned early in my ministry that I couldn't force people to give their life to Jesus. You cannot manipulate people into heaven. I refuse to play the numbers game because baptisms do not necessarily count the number of people who have actually been saved. God gives us free will. Each person has to make a conscious choice whether or not to receive Christ in faith, and base his or her life upon His Lordship. If there is no personal decision, there can be no personal relationship with the Lord.

Peter qualifies that the promise is extended to all whom the Lord our God will call. This reminds us that God is sovereign over all things, including salvation. No one gets saved, apart from God's calling on his or her life. This speaks to the issue of what is really in a person's heart. God knows us better than we know ourselves. A person cannot fool God, and they cannot go to heaven apart from repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ. God calls those who are willing to make the necessary commitment.

How does God call? God calls through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, at the preaching of His word, and the personal testimonies of His saints. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit went out in a general way to everyone who heard the gospel and responded in faith. Today the Holy Spirit is still going out to those who hear and respond in faith.

Elsewhere Paul wrote, “How will they hear, if no one tells them?” This is why it is so important that we consistently share the gospel with others. Those who are lost need to hear about the love of Christ, and what He has done for us, so that they have at least an opportunity to be saved.

In verse 40, Peter’s call to commitment was “Save yourself from this corrupt generation.” The context here is that this was the most corrupt generation, because they killed the Son of God. Killing their Messiah was the most terrible sin of all. They deserved God’s swift judgment, but God was giving them a second chance: a chance for forgiveness, a chance for a new life, and a chance for eternal life, before He judged their nation in 70 AD. This is the same chance the God gives lost sinners today, before God begins to pour out His wrath upon the earth.

“Save yourself, from this corrupt generation” is an appropriate call to repentance and faith today. We are living in a corrupt generation. My generation has dropped the ball. As a people, in my generation, we have become self-centered, promiscuous, and as ungodly as any group that has ever lived. We have not held to the teachings of our parents or upheld the clear teachings of God’s word. We have abandoned the principles upon which this nation was founded, and have denied the God who gave us the ability to live in liberty and prosperity.

It is my generation that declared we do not want the word of God in our public schools. My generation made it lawful to sacrifice our unborn children for the sake of convenience and to hide sin. This generation forsakes the word of God for the promise of sensual pleasures, and the ability to grow rich at the backs of the working class. This generation decided to provide abortion counseling, and contraceptives, in our public schools, which encourages sexual promiscuity among our children, without parental consent. This generation produced an entitlement mentality where people believe that the government owes them whatever they want, and the government believes they can take whatever they need from the average worker. My generation has spread lies about creation, and climate change. My generation has redefined marriage in an attempt to promote homosexuality among all people, and especially among our children.

All I can say is, “Save yourself from this corrupt generation.” In this generation, we continue to see fulfillment of prophecy concerning the end times. We see the nations conspiring and closing in on Israel. We see the nations making alliances, and the call for a one-world government. The naivety of people astounds us, for they cannot see what the future holds. But we have the word of God, and we have His Holy Spirit, and it seems like God cannot withhold His judgment upon this generation for very much longer.

Our message to the lost world is save yourselves, while there is still time. Come out of this world of sin and darkness. Turn away from your sins and receive God’s forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ.

When Peter sounded the warning, and made his plea, the bible says that 3,000 people responded in faith, and they were baptized, sealing their commitment to Christ. Today we are on a downhill slope. I don’t know at this point if there is anything anyone can do to turn things around. I still have hope, for our country and our world, but if we are in the last days, time is running out. So we will continue to sound the alarm, and we will continue to call people to come out of this corrupt generation, into a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

For those of us who are saved, we look forward to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but our hearts break for those who do not know Him. If you are here tonight without Jesus, I have no personal agenda here except that I am worried for you. I don't want you to remain lost in your sin and without hope. It doesn't have to be that way. Confess and repent of your sin to God. Trust Jesus and His sacrifice for your forgiveness. Invite Jesus into your heart as Savior and Lord. Receive His Holy Spirit. Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.