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ACTS 2:37-47

Last week we saw the Holy Spirit come upon the believers at Pentecost.

We saw as these believers were filled with the Holy Spirit.

We saw them as they spoke in other languages.

We saw how a vast group of folks who had come from different countries heard about this and how they were amazed and marveled at the fact that these unlearned Galileans could speak in specific languages they could each understand.

Then, we saw Peter stand up and preach an anointed sermon.

It was a sermon in which he addressed the men of Judea and of Jerusalem.

It was a

sermon in which Peter quoted the Old Testament.

It was a sermon in which Peter spoke very clearly exactly what Jesus came to do...

how He **worked many miracles...**

how He **followed the predetermined plan of the Father...**

how He **was nailed to the Cross...**

how He **was raised up again...**

how He **sits at the Father's right hand**

how not only did the **Father promise the Holy Spirit**

but they had witnessed the Holy Spirit's coming!

Finally, it was sermon in which Peter held these folks accountable.

Verse 23... "you nailed Him to the Cross..."

Verse 36... "this Jesus whom **you** crucified..."

So, our lesson this week begins in **verse 37...**

"Brethren, what shall we do?"

Why did they ask this question? Because they had been **"pierced to the heart."**

They had been pierced to the heart by the message of Peter's sermon. The word used here and translated **"pierced"** appears only here in the New Testament. It means **"stabbed"** and it carries with it the idea of having been **stabbed suddenly and unexpectedly.**

These men were shocked and stunned by what they'd heard. Now, let me ask you...did Peter tell these men something they didn't already know? I mean, was the death of Jesus "news to them?"

NO! No doubt everyone who had been in Jerusalem for Passover and had stayed for Pentecost knew of the crucifixion of Jesus...

But the full impact of Peter's message was news to them, wasn't it? And I believe it was news to them for several reasons...

- 1) For the first time they suddenly realized that their Messiah had been executed. They had been taught about and had looked for the coming of their Messiah for centuries...and now they know He's come and **He's been executed.**
- 2) They realized for the first time that **they themselves** had done it. It would have been bad enough to find out their Messiah had come and someone else had killed Him, but suddenly they were faced with the reality that **they** had done it! **They** had nailed Him to the Cross. How **guilty**

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they must have felt.

- 3) They must have been **filled with fear**. Peter had announced to them in his sermon that the Messiah they had killed was now alive. Peter had also quoted from **Psalm 110** and said God would make His enemies His footstool...well, they must have thought, "what greater enemies **existed** than those who had killed God's Son?"
- 4) Finally, they were devastated by the fact that what they had done could not be **undone**.

So their hearts were pierced and they said to Peter, "**What shall we do?**"

I believe all these things attributed to these folks being pierced in their hearts, but I believe the main thing is that **the Holy Spirit had done a work in their hearts that only He could do...the work of conviction.**

The Holy Spirit convicts the human heart of **sin**, and of **righteousness**, and of **judgment**.

He convicts the heart of **the nature of sin**.

He convicts the heart of **the need for righteousness**.

He convicts the heart of **the nearness of judgment**.

The Holy Spirit makes folks see their personal accountability before God for what they've done. They become aware that **they've rejected Christ**. They become aware of **their lost condition**. **I don't believe there can be genuine conversion without genuine conviction.**

(Our pastor's wife is the best I know at leading little children to Jesus and the very first thing she does when she counsels little boys and little girls who say they want to be saved is establish the fact that they know what sin is!)

If a person...child or adult...doesn't realize he or she is a sinner, they certainly aren't going to realize they need a Savior, are they?

And these folks in **Acts 2** have become acutely aware of their sin. Peter's sermon had achieved its desired results. The Holy Spirit had used the words Peter spoke to bring conviction to these men's hearts.

I want to ask you...was there ever a time when you knew you couldn't undo the things you'd one but your heart cried out "what **can** I do?"

Well, Peter is just about to tell **these folks** and **us** what we can do when we're deeply convicted over sin. Isn't it neat that God doesn't walk away from us when we ask Him what we can do?

First of all, Peter said, "**Repent**" –

What does repentance mean? It means making a 180 degree turn around from the direction you were headed. It speaks of **a change of purpose**. It means turning **from something to something**. It means turning **from sin to God!!**

Secondly, Peter said, "**Let each of you be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.**"

Peter doesn't allow for any "secret disciples".

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You and I have a hard time grasping the magnitude of what Peter has said to these Jewish People. You and I have lived all our lives in a “Christian nation”...a nation in which, at least so far, attending Sunday School and church and being baptized are all accepted. Some folks don't quite understand why anyone would want to be in church more than once a week, or even once a month for that matter, but it's not a foreign thing to them, is it?

But, for these Jews who had been convicted of their sin,
for these Jews to openly, publicly identify themselves as followers of Jesus Christ through baptism – well, this was a very serious thing.

And Peter is asking them to do just that. ***Peter is calling upon them to prove the genuineness of their repentance by being publicly baptized.*** And in doing this, they would come under great condemnation from their employers, their family and their friends.

Now, is baptism ***essential for salvation?*** No. Nowhere does the New Testament teach that baptism is essential for salvation. In fact, in many places the New Testament ***does*** teach that salvation is solely by grace through faith. However, we need to address this here, because those who believe that baptism is essential for salvation (baptismal regeneration) base that belief in large part on this verse. ***In fact, they see this verse as primary proof for their view.***

While the preposition “for” can mean “for the purpose of”, it can also mean “because of” or “on the occasion of” and this is what the correct interpretation of this verse is. “...***be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ because of the forgiveness of your sins...***” We should never lift a verse out of its context and build a doctrine on it.

Baptism follows salvation - not the other way around.

There are basically 4 reasons for New Testament baptism:

- Water baptism is ***an act of obedience.*** We have been commanded to be baptized. We have been given the example of how we should be baptized by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.
- Water baptism is a ***picture of the Gospel:*** the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why we believe in baptism by immersion...it's a much more clear picture than sprinkling or pouring.
- Water baptism is a picture or ***testimony to others of what has happened in my life.*** It is an outward symbol of an inward change.
- Water baptism ***identifies me with a body of believers*** who have like beliefs.

Let's look again at the phrase “***for the forgiveness of your sins...***”

Up to this point, the Jewish people had looked to animal sacrifices offered in the Temple as the source of forgiveness for their sins...

and Peter was proclaiming an end to all that. Jesus was God's sacrificial Lamb and they were no longer to rely on the blood of animals but on the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus to save them...to provide forgiveness of their sin...

Well, let's get back to the Holy Spirit for a moment...

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Nobody, these men included, can possibly know all that is involved in receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Christian life is the process of finding out, day by day, the wonderful things all this means.

Let me ask you, on the day you were saved, did you have any idea how He would **help you and comfort you and guide you and convict you and direct you**? No, you didn't because the Christian life is the *process of finding out day by day the vast dimensions of such a life. It is a learning experience!!*

We received the gift of the Holy Spirit because the Christian life is a supernatural life. The only person who ever lived that life was Jesus. Because we cannot live the Christ-life, He has sent His own Spirit, the Spirit of God, to come in and live that life in us.

There are many names for God found in the Old Testament. There are many names for Jesus found in the New Testament. But, did you know that there are also many names found for the Holy Spirit?

He is the Spirit of **truth (John 14:17)**, therefore we ought not be **deceived**.
He is the Spirit of **faith (2 Cor. 4:13)**, therefore we ought not to be **discouraged**.
He is the **Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29)**, therefore we ought not be **disgruntled**.
He is the Spirit of **holiness (Rom. 1:4)**, therefore we ought not be **defiled**.
He is the Spirit of **wisdom (Eph. 1:17)**, therefore we ought not be **daunted**.
He is the Spirit of **power (2 Tim. 1:7)**, therefore we ought not be **defeated**.
He is the Spirit of **love (2 Tim. 1:7)**, therefore we ought not be **discordant**.
He is the Spirit of a **sound mind (2 Tim 1:7)**, therefore we ought no be **disturbed**.
He is the Spirit of **life (Rom. 8:2)**, therefore there should be nothing **that savors of death**

about us.

He is the Spirit of **glory (1 Pet. 4:14)**, therefore we ought not be **dull**.

All ten of these characteristics of the Holy Spirit are characteristics the Lord Jesus manifested in His humanity, He was never deceived, discouraged, daunted, or disturbed. He always manifested grace and wisdom, power and love. **The gift of the Holy Spirit is what makes it possible for the supernatural life of the Lord Jesus to be reproduced in us day by day.** The Holy Spirit, with our cooperation, lives that life in us and through us. Such is the genius of Christianity.

Well, that pretty much tells us who the Holy Spirit **is**...let's see who **receives** the Holy Spirit.

Verse 39...

I believe if we stop and think this through we'll see something very exciting! Peter says **"to you..."** Some of those same folks to whom Peter was speaking were probably those who shouted...

"Let Him be crucified!"

This tells me that no matter what a person has done, once that person has repented and the blood of the Lord Jesus has cleansed that person, the Holy Spirit is as much for that person as for anyone else.

Next, Peter says, **"to your children..."**

Some of these same folks were the ones who shouted to Pilate when Pilate said that he was innocent of the blood of Jesus... **"His blood be on us and on our children!"**

And the Holy Spirit was for them!

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Next Peter says, **“for all who are far off...”**

Who are they? Well, Beloved that’s our ancestors...that’s the Gentiles down through the ages! And the Holy Spirit was for them!

Finally, in case he’s left anyone out, Peter says, **“and as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself...”** Has the Lord our God called you to Himself? Then, Peter says the Holy Spirit is for you!

That brings us to the end of Peter’s teaching and preaching as the Holy Spirit recorded it on the Day of Pentecost...but **verse 40** tells us he spoke many other words exhorting folks to come to Jesus.

Verse 41...

Peter’s sermon brought forth results, instantaneous results under the mighty moving of the Holy Spirit. The rest of this chapter describes what happened as people made their decision for Christ

And stepped out of darkness into light...
out of death into life...
out of wrath into grace...
out of sin into Christ...
out of Judaism into the Church...

Note the order of conversion...how they “received” and then were “baptized”...**verse 41...**

(May I say to you that if you’ve received Jesus but you’ve never been baptized...you’re living in disobedience to the very first command He gave you to follow after your salvation?)

May I also say to you that from the first day of the church’s history, and consistently through **Acts** and the epistles, baptism was believer’s baptism. No other kind of baptism is ever considered in the New Testament. The Bible just simply does not teach infant baptism.

Verses 42-47...

Many things marked the early church.

- 1) It was marked by **truth**. **“they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching.”** Remember when we said a couple of weeks ago that the Holy Spirit was essential for the apostles to recall all that Jesus had taught them? Well, this is what we see here. Don’t let this slip by you...**precept comes before practice**. What do I mean? I mean that **doctrine comes before experience**. **Experience must always be tested by doctrine, not doctrine by experience.**

So many churches are putting experience and feelings **before** and **instead of** doctrine. Don’t do it! And discourage anyone you know from doing it!!

- 2) It was marked by **fellowship**...that blessed “tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.” They continued **“in fellowship.”** New links of love were forged that day. They were all members of the same body and they all had the same Head!
- 3) It was marked by **prayer**...
There’s something so special about praying with and for our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- 4) It was marked by **sharing**...
Don’t think for a moment that this was communism. This was a form of reaching out to folks who had needs. Communism is the state telling you that you **must** share your possession. Christianity says we will share with those in need because the Holy Spirit prompts us to do so.

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5) It was marked by **praise...**

They considered their salvation to be worthy of their praise. They forgot about the hardships their relationship with the Lord Jesus brought and focused instead on praise for Him.

Well, let me just say a couple more things in conclusion.

The early church had purity and it had power! It was filled with reverence and awe and fear! Somehow along the way we've lost our fear of God and in losing that fear, we've lost our power.

I believe one of the reasons is that our Christianity doesn't cost like theirs did back then. One day it might, but right now in our country it doesn't. These folks paid a high price for coming to Christ...it cost them their families, their friends, their jobs, their social standing and for many it cost their very lives.

But they were willing...3,000 in that one day were willing!

Verse 47 tells us that the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved!

And may I say to you that's the **only way** anyone can be added to the church. **The Lord adds to His church!**

The body of Christ doesn't grow by adding names of folks who just happen to walk down the aisles of our church. It grows as **the Lord** adds saved people to its numbers. Luke said, "**The Lord** added daily..."

He's been adding to it daily ever since, sometimes by **the thousands**, and sometimes a **few** here and a **few** there.

Sometimes a **child** comes to know Jesus at his mother's knee.

Sometimes a **person** finally comes to Jesus after years and years of struggling against the gentle wooing of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes a **man or woman or child over in Africa** comes to Jesus because of the missionary from our church who brings the sweet message of God's love for him.

Sometimes a **teenage gang member** comes to Jesus because someone like Ronnie Tullos is willing to invest his life in the inner city of Memphis.

Sometimes an **old man** comes to know Jesus as he's on his death bed.

We can know there has never been a day since Pentecost when the Lord has not added to His church such as should be saved. And we can know that He will go on doing that...adding and adding until the Rapture.

What about **you**? Has He added **you** to His church? God tells us in His Word that TODAY is the day of salvation. Why does He say that? **Because we're not promised tomorrow!!**

"Today if you hear His voice do not harden your heart..."

My prayer is that all who are sitting in this room and all who are on our roll have been added to God's church!