

Acts Series #2 - "The Way Back" - Acts 2:37-41

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *The First Sermon*

1. The first sermon ever preached by a Christian pastor was only about 2 minutes long
2. But it was so powerful, when the invitation was given at the end, 3000 people got saved!
3. The reason we know it was only about 2 minutes long is because the entire message is recorded for us in Acts 2 - let me read it . . .

B. *Set The Scene*

1. It's the Day of Pentecost - streets of Jerusalem filled with Jews from all over the world who have come to celebrate the religious holiday
2. It's also 10 days after Jesus had ascended into heaven, leaving the disciples with the command that they were to wait for the promise of the Father, the baptism and empowering of the Holy Spirit
3. So they were gathered together, in prayer and worship, waiting on God -
4. And then it happened that the Holy Spirit came upon both them and the place where they were meeting
5. The sound of their praises and that of a mighty wind created a disturbance in that part of town and soon a crowd had gathered around them to see what was going on
6. When Peter saw the crowd gathered, and realized that the promise of the Father had now come - he boldly launched into the task of evangelism to which he and the other disciples had been commissioned by Jesus

C. *Acts 2:14-36*

1. Indeed, this message was short
2. And fully half of it was simply Peter quoting the scriptures
3. But he placed the emphasis squarely where it needed to be laid -
4. Jesus was the Messiah, proven by His rising from the dead
5. But the people had rejected Him and so stood in dangerous peril of the judgment of God!
6. The response of the crowd was quick and intense . . .

II. TEXT

A. *The Response*

{37} Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

1. Peter didn't need to preach a long message,
 - a. trying to convince his hearers of their need for Jesus

- b. because every word he *did* speak was anointed by the Holy Spirit
- c. and went straight to their hearts, effectively convicting them
- 2. Truly, these people are experiencing the convicting power of the Holy Spirit
- 3. How important it is that we remember that unless the Holy Spirit draws a person to Christ, they cannot be won
- 4. Unless a person is made by God to see their desperate situation in sin, they will see no need for the Savior
- 5. All our arguments and reasoning will fall on deaf ears if the Holy Spirit is not present to apply it to their heart
- 6. In John 16:8 Jesus said,

“When the [Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

- 7. We see the literal fulfillment of that right here in the response of the crowd to Peter’s message
- 8. They were convicted first of all of their sin in having rejected the Messiah
- 9. They were convicted of Jesus’ righteousness, proven by His rising from the dead
- 10. And then finally, they were convicted of judgment, realizing the pressing weight of the Holy Spirit’s urgency to take action to correct their relationship with God before it was too late
- 11. And so they press Peter to know what to do
- 12. Friends, never forget the critical role of the Holy Spirit in winning the lost to Christ
- 13. As you study so that you can answer people questions and doubts -
- 14. As you speak to the lost about salvation
- 15. As you attempt to live your life as a loving and holy witness of Jesus
- 16. Pray! Pray for the Holy Spirit to bring conviction upon the hearts of the lost

B. Vs. 38-39

{38} Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

{39} “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

- 1. How does one become a Christian?
- 2. We find out how right here
- 3. First, Peter tells them to *repent*
 - a. to repent simply means to turn around and go the other way
 - b. the Greek word is *metanoia*
 - 1) meta - “change”
 - 2) noia - from the word for “mind”
 - c. to repent means to change the way one thinks about something so that one’s actions are also changed
 - d. when Peter called the to repent, he meant specifically to repent of the

sin he had just spoken to them about and the sin to which the Holy Spirit had made them so painfully ashamed of

- e. and that was their rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah
- f. friends, let's face it, that is usually the way the Holy Spirit convicts the lost
 - 1) He makes them painfully aware of some specific sin or need in their lives
 - 2) He gets at the larger issue of sin itself by dealing with specific failure
 - a) it might be hate
 - b) or lust
 - c) or drugs - whatever
 - 3) the point is—He gets specific, and puts His finger of conviction on the exact point of need
 - 4) this is why it is so important that we not shun declaring what God requires of man as we seek to evangelize the lost
 - 5) God's law is the standard by which He measures our lives
 - 6) proclaiming the requirements of the law provides the tool the Holy Spirit then uses to confront the lost with their need
- g. and the first response the sinner needs to have is repentance
- h. they need to have a change of mind and heart about their sin
- 4. You see, when Peter told them to *repent* he was calling them to *do* something
- 5. He was telling them to *respond* to the conviction they were experiencing by yielding to the Holy Spirit's counsel that they should no longer *reject* Jesus but instead *receive* Him
- 6. *Repentance* is almost a forgotten issue in much of modern preaching
- 7. It's sad but true that one rarely hears about repentance anymore
- 8. The modern gospel is more often an offer of health and wealth rather than a message of salvation from sin and hell
- 9. In fact, one rarely hears about sin today
 - a. it's as though preachers are afraid of making people uncomfortable
 - b. conventional wisdom says that you don't talk about sin and the need to repent because it's negative and makes people get defensive
 - c. and heaven forbid that people might feel uncomfortable
 - d. why then, they might not come to church anymore
 - e. and then the offerings wouldn't be as big and we couldn't buy the new organ or add on the new rec center
- 10. Jesus said this in Matthew 7:13-14 . . .

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

- a. Jesus presents the vast bulk of humanity as headed toward destruction, and of course He is speaking of hell
- b. the way to salvation and life, the way to heaven is narrow and traveled

- by relatively few
- c. the only way to escape the way to destruction means turning around and going the other way
- d. resisting the flow, turning your face into the wind and walking the other way
- e. that's repentance!
- 11. All of this means, of course, that the Christian is one who repents of sin
- 12. And since repentance is the *first* response a person makes in coming to Christ, if there is no repentance from sin, then we have to ask if there has been a *genuine* response to God
- 13. Quite simply, if there is no repentance, there is no salvation!

- 14. So, the first step is repentance; the second step is faith
- 15. For that is what Peter means when he tells them to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins
 - a. to be baptized in Jesus' name meant to submit one's self to Jesus' authority
 - b. it meant to identify with Him completely in both life and death
- 16. Baptism is an outward action one takes in declaring the inward reality of having put one's faith in Christ
- 17. Peter was not saying that getting dunked would save them
- 18. He is saying that true faith will move a person to specific actions
- 19. And the first action of saving faith is one of an intense desire to be identified with Christ
- 20. Baptism was the mark or action Jesus told His followers to use for that identification

C. Two Steps

1. What we see is a negative and a positive
2. Two essential steps in coming to Christ
3. Or as I prefer to think of it; two sides of the same coin
4. Repentance and faith
5. Repentance means turning around, *away* from sin
6. Faith means turning *toward* Christ

D. Vs. 40-41

{40} And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

{41} Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

1. There was more that Peter went on to say to the crowd that day
2. It says he testified and exhorted with "many other words"
3. But notice he did this *after* they had already indicated their desire to respond
4. Peter immediately began the process of teaching, training, and discipling
5. He knew Jesus had called them to make *disciples* not merely *converts*
6. So he got a quick start

7. Friends, it is essential that we be, and make *disciples* today
 - a. men, women, and young people who are loyal and consistent followers of Jesus Christ
 - b. not simply quick *converts* who say the sinner's prayer and get stuck on some church role somewhere but that is the end of their experience with Christianity
8. We need to follow Peter's example and testify through the teaching and application of God's word
9. We need to exhort one another, encouraging each other to go on with Christ from where we are, where ever that may be, to new places in spiritual growth
10. Like Peter we need to call upon each other and the lost to be saved from *this* perverse generation
 - a. man - if Peter's generation was perverse
 - b. what are we to say of *our* generation?
11. Oh friends, how desperately we need each other to keep from being seduced by the siren song of this world's perversions!
12. To Peter's invitation, 3000 responded and were saved
13. With one simple message, the church grew from a mere 120 to multiple thousands

III. CONCLUSION

A. Again

1. What God did on the day of Pentecost, He can, and is doing still
2. If we will but follow in the footsteps of Peter's example
3. God can save thousands right here in Ventura County
4. We need to simply proclaim His Word, calling the lost to repentance and faith
5. It is the Holy Spirit who will apply the truth to the hearts of the lost
6. Then we teach and exhort them to follow hard after Christ

B. To All

1. Want to conclude by focusing on v. 39

{39} "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

2. The promise of salvation is to all who God calls
3. It is to anyone and everyone whom the Holy Spirit convicts of sin
4. Even to those who are afar off
5. By that, Peter meant those who were far off in the future and far off in geographical distance from Jerusalem
6. God's offer of forgiveness and life is for all mankind
7. Is He calling you today?
8. Respond - repent and believe!