

Acts 2:36-37

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[0 : 00] My text this morning is to be found in Acts chapter 2 and verses 36 and 37. Acts 2, 36 and 37.

Therefore, let all the Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

Now here, we have the conclusion to Peter's striking sermon on the day of Pentecost. Preached by way of explanation to the questioning crowd, the meaning of the extraordinary events of that day that had bewildered them so much.

They had heard the mighty rushing sound of wind. And now, in the multi-language multitude assembled for the great Pentecost festival, they were hearing the apostles praising and magnifying God, every single person in their own individual language.

The language of the land of their birth. And they were amazed. And wondering. And some of them began to formulate their own theories as to what was actually happening, what was going on.

[1 : 33] Some, of course, had a very simple explanation. They said, huh, these men are just drunk. And that was the moment when Peter stood forth and preached this sermon that ends with the words of our text.

And from that moment he initiated preaching as the primary activity and method of evangelism of the church in the New Testament era. Now, there's nothing more important in the life of the church than preaching.

So long as that preaching, of course, is the Word of God and not the ideas of men that is being proclaimed. As the Scripture tells us, it has pleased God through the foolishness of what is preached to save them that believe.

Foolishness to a Jew, the idea of Jesus hanging on a tree was a stumbling block. Foolishness to the Greek who just didn't believe in a resurrection.

It didn't make sense. But this gospel is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believed. So it's important to ask ourselves when we attend church and when we listen to the preaching of the gospel, what effect is it going to have?

[2 : 53] What am I going to allow it to say to my heart? What effect will it have on me? Is it something that we just admire? We say, well, that guy is a good preacher, that fellow.

We enjoyed that today. And then we forget about it. Or is it something that is allowed to have its effective and factual and changing work in our own hearts and lives?

It certainly can't be a God-honoring activity to come and sit in church, to sit under the word of the gospel and not let it come into our hearts and be applied to our lives.

Now, our text here describes the climax and the consequence of the first sermon preached after the descent of the Holy Spirit on his church at Pentecost.

This was when he came down in power. And the preaching was done in his power and in demonstration of his transforming power.

[3 : 54] And 3,000 people were awakened to their need and were converted to Christ that day. And I want us to look at these words and see what we can learn about the effect of Spirit-filled preaching on the life of the hearers.

See, in our text, we can see here the conclusion that the sermon reached. And then I think we can notice the conviction the sermon achieved and finally this concern that the sermon aroused.

So, starting with the conclusion the sermon reached, Peter says that God has made, let all the house of Israel be assured of this, that God has made Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Now, the crowd that had gathered were curious to know what was going on as the apostles praised God in other tongues and each hearer heard what they were saying in their own particular mother tongue.

And Peter gets up to explain that this is the evidence of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was foretold long ago by the prophet Joel and which brings in the Gospel day when every person who simply calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

[5 : 25] And he goes on to say that this happened. This has happened because Jesus of Nazareth, who was recently crucified among them, has risen from the dead.

And that he has returned to heaven just as he himself and the Bible before his coming to this world had foretold.

The coming of the Holy Spirit today, he says, in verse 36, is proof of this. He, being at the right hand of God exalted, has poured out God the Holy Spirit on the church for it as you now see and hear. This is what has happened. There is only one possible conclusion, he claims. And this is that God has made Jesus, whom you crucified.

He has made him both Lord of all and proclaimed him as the Christ. You see, his conclusion has two contrasting statements. Two contrasting statements in two parts.

[6 : 32] First, he says, God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ. He indeed is the Savior. God has demonstrated conclusively that what he declared at Jesus' baptism and demonstrated with power by his resurrection that he is indeed his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased.

That, that is clearly true. He has vindicated his name before heaven and earth. He has honored him for his faithfulness in fulfilling the task of Messiah in living a sinless life here on earth.

In a human body. And in face of all the temptations that were slung at him by the devil. And then his dying for his people's sin there at the cross of Calvary where the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He has honored him by making him a Lord. He has given him a name that is above every name. This word Lord is not just a courtesy title like Sir.

But it's the name, it's the position of the one who is above every name. He is honoring him with the highest position in heaven as the one before whom every knee will bow one day.

[8 : 04] Yes, knees on earth, knees in heaven and knees in hell. And they will acknowledge that he is indeed the king and judge of all. And by today's events, Peter is saying, God is declaring who Jesus is, what Jesus has done and where he is now.

He is the one who is approved of God. He is the one who is adored in heaven. He is the one who is admired by his people. He is the one who is authorized to send forth the Holy Spirit as the king and lord of his church.

What God has done with Jesus, he has exalted him. He has made him both Lord and Christ. But the other half of the conclusion is this, what men have done with Jesus of Nazareth.

This Jesus whom you crucified. The people had just rejected him. They refused to believe him. They listened to their leaders, the religious leaders who would not recognize him.

And they would not accept him as Messiah. You see, he just didn't fit in with their ideas. So they shut him out of their lives. And ultimately, they railroaded him to the cross.

[9 : 33] Where he was nailed and left hanging as a criminal there on the cross at Calvary. You see, this is what sin does to Jesus. This is what sin is.

It is refusing God's way to be saved. It is rejecting the one he has sent. And you and I have crucified him with our sin and our rejection of him.

We have put him out of our lives. We have said, we don't want him. He's not the one that we want to serve. Well then, who is the Lord of your life today? Who is the one you serve?

Is it indeed Jesus? It is wonderful that that is true. But is it so? I hope it is. Do you say, well, I don't mind going to church and recognizing these things, but my life is my own.

I want to do what I like with it. Is that spirit still in your heart? Are you saying something like that?

[10 : 44] Well, the question is, is the crown that belongs to the Son of God and Savior of men firmly on your head, on your own head, in your life, and not on his head?

Are you in disagreement with God about what place he should have in your heart and life? About your need to repent? About your need just simply to come, confess your sin, and trust him as Savior.

You see, this is the central focus of Spirit-filled preaching. What did Jesus say that the Holy Spirit would do when he came? He said, I'm going away and I'm going to send you another Comforter who will be with you forever.

And when he has come, he, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, when he comes, he will glorify me. He will show you who I am.

He will declare through the Word and through the proclamation of the truth, who I am as Lord of all and Savior. And secondly, he will convict the world.

[11 : 55] He will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment to come. You see, the sin of men set in the face of the righteousness of Jesus, who will one day judge the world in righteousness.

You see, this was the conclusion of the sermon that the sermon arrived at. That Jesus is the Son of God and Lord of all and in rejecting Him, they had rejected God's only way for sinners to be saved. They had despised the gracious outreach of God's love to them in sending them a Savior. They had rejected the Messiah that He had sent in mercy to His people.

That was the conclusion the sermon arrived at. But then we're told also about the conviction that the sermon achieved. When they heard this, they were cut to the heart.

You see, there was an awakening of conscience. They were struck by this man's preaching. They had followed His reasoning. They were convinced by His argument.

[13 : 09] And when the conclusion of the sermon was reached, it went like an arrow to their hearts. The fact that they had missed the truth before them that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had seen and heard so often and indeed was indeed the Savior who was sent to rescue them from their sins.

They didn't think they had any sins, of course, because they were all Israelites, were they not God's chosen people? Well, now the barb on the arrow was in the words whom you crucified.

Maybe religious Israelites don't think they are sinners. But look what we've done. We've rejected the Lord of Glory in the cruelest and most degrading way.

Condemning Him to death as a criminal and a murderer and a robber. And this is the Son of God and Savior. We have gone with the crowd crying with the common mob away with Him.

Crucify Him. And now they see it and they are pierced to the heart. And they said in their hearts, this sermon is for me. It's about me.

[14 : 26] It exposes me. It condemns me. Is that how we listen? Or is it more like, oh, I'm so glad that such and such are persons in church today.

That's the very message they need. No, the Holy Spirit pierced their own heart. Holy Spirit preaching is personal.

It's about you. It's about me and Him and no one else. There was an awakening of conscience.

There was an awareness of guilt. What a wonderful servant a good working conscience is. That under God begins to show us the rottenness and the guilt of our hearts that we thought were fairly clean and pure and decent and respectable.

They thought they had been right in supporting the crucifixion of Jesus. But now their eyes have been opened and they discover what they've done. I remember reading the story of Prince Wellen who had gone out to hunt and for some reason his best dog, Gillard, had not come with him.

[15 : 47] But he went out and hunted and when he came back he was missing his infant child. And when he saw blood everywhere he suspected the faithful dog, Gillard.

And he drove a sword into the dog's heart only to see the moment he had done so the carcass of a huge wolf lying there torn and dead.

Still frightening even in death. A wolf that Gillard had killed defending the prince's dear child. Yes, he had slain the faithful creature that had preserved his child.

And Wellen said, the dog's dying cry pierced him his very heart in his sorrow for that hasty deed.

He built a great cairn of stones over Gillard's grave by the highway where all could see and the place still can be seen there. It is called Beth Gillard. Gillard's grave to this day.

[16 : 58] If being ungenerous and cruel to a dog all being unwittingly can make a person feel bad, how should we feel when we learn what we have done to the Lord of glory, the Son of God who laid down his life that we might live.

An old couple kept an inn and a young man with a purse of gold called one night and together the old couple resolved to kill him during the night for his money which they did.

But it was their own Son who had come back to gladden them in their old age and wished to see if his parents remembered him. You can imagine the bitterness of their lamentation when they discovered that in their lust for gold they had murdered their own Son who had come to enrich their lives with his presence and his accumulated wealth.

When an awakened conscience shows us what in our lust for sin and pursuit of our selfish ways have done to the lover of our souls we discover our true fault before God.

It pricks us to the heart. Have you been picked to the heart? Have I been pricked to the heart by God's Word? Pierced by the sharp two-edged sword of the Word of God?

[18 : 30] Have the arrows been allowed to get home? Conscience awakened brings awareness of condemnation. A dear lady that we know was recently visiting Fort William just the other day where apparently there is a faith mission campaign going on and there's a young man there quite a notable evangelist from Glasgow and he's out speaking in the streets and he was speaking to a young drug addict there in Fort William just the other day and as he spoke to this man the man says I know what you're saying is true because your low words are going into me like a knife.

It's God's Word. Does it go into us like a knife? The last thing I want you to notice is the concern that the sermon aroused.

Christ. I suppose that the vast number of the people had left their homes that day without a religious care in the world.

They lived in Jerusalem within reach of the temple or they were come to Jerusalem for the festival of Pentecost from all over and perhaps they were startled by that sound of the rushing mighty wind that came from heaven that verse 2 tells us about that heralded the arrival of the Holy Spirit and it made them hurry to the temple area to see what was going on and there their curiosity was heightened by the sight and sound of the apostles glorifying and praising God in such a way that everyone was hearing them speak in their own languages.

They were Israelites most of them if not all. Good church folk we would say. Doubtless frequenting the services within the temple courts. Doubtless being in the synagogue in their own area every Sabbath day.

[20 : 30] They would say the real religious people the people that would go to a church convention. But listen to them now. Just a short time later.

And they're crying out in their distress men and brethren what shall we do? who? You see it was first of all an expression of personal lostness.

They see their danger. They hadn't been aware of it before. They have grasped their guilt. They see the enormity of their sin and it has suddenly come home to their hearts and their hopeless condition lies before them in such a way that they just don't know what to do.

They don't know where to turn. What good is all my religion, all my church going, all my good living if this is where I find I stand?

They were not mourning for someone else. They were not asking generally what does a sinner do to get saved? They were saying quite clearly and quite specifically what shall we do?

[21 : 45] Or more specifically, what shall I do? They were not just aware of their sin, they were concerned for their eternal souls. How often we hear people say, and perhaps you and I have said things like this in the past, well I know that I am a sinner, I know I am not perfect.

But there is not a note of concern on our lips or any worry really in our hearts when we say that. We are saying I am not a perfect person. Not concerned about our sinfulness because we have not been convicted of our guilt before God.

But when the Holy Spirit makes us know assuredly that we have rejected and that we have ignored the one whose loving concern for our eternal souls, that we have despised that and our proud selfish ways, are such that we have pushed aside the one who is Lord, who is Christ, and the one with whom one day we will have to do, we too will cry out, what shall we do?

Perhaps there is someone in the church today and they have got that very question. What? What shall I do? What? What does this mean that I have got to do?

It is a question that shows an expression of their lostness. But how wonderful it is to know that Jesus of Nazareth came to seek and to save that which was lost.

[23 : 20] You feel lost today, well, there is a Saviour for you. They have secondly, showed their need for spiritual guidance. You see, they admitted they didn't know. Their hearts were open to what God's Word would teach them.

Often we speak to people about their soul's salvation. And we discover that by their way of it they need no guidance. They know it all. They know how to get to heaven. They live a good life. They go to church. They have things they trust in. God is bound to treat them. They're not like these other people they can point to over there. It's all about themselves. They will tell you the things they do. They will tell you the ground of their hope in heaven. But they don't seem to mention Jesus Christ. I think it was just this morning's Scripture Union reading. I think the note by Fergus MacDonald points out that the great problem with people is their arrogance before God. They know it all. You know it all.

[24 : 26] It's all about them. But when the Holy Spirit shows one their sin, they are awakened to the awfulness of their position before God in all these things. And all these things fade into insignificance.

Now it's all about God. How will He deal with me? What has He got for me? And they realize that they have nothing at all. They have no hope. They are lost, undone, and without hope. Unless someone can guide them to a Savior from sin. Are we ready to be led today to Him?

Back from the dark paths of sin into the joy and peace and pardon of Jesus Christ. There's a way back to God from the dark paths of sin.

There's a door that is open. You may go in. At Calvary's cross is where you begin when you come as a sinner to Jesus. Why did they cry out?

[25 : 26] It was because sin was suddenly to them not just something in their lives, but it was a hateful thing that they must be rid of. It was a burden that was pulling them down, that was sinking them in a sea and would drown them.

It was because there was a longing to be free from it and to know the liberty that this Jesus could give and to be right with God. In what way can we acknowledge our wrong and be freed from it? Well, Peter has the answer. Repent, he says, and be baptized, every one of you. Turn from your sin with grief and hatred of it.

Leave it there. Openly confess Christ as your Savior. Trust Him to wash away your sin, as that is symbolized in baptism.

your sins will be removed. No more guilt before God and you will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He will come and take up residence in your life and you will be renewed by the very Christ you have neglected.

[26 : 42] And if it was true for those who actually took part in the crucifying of Jesus and railroaded Him to the cross, how much more can we be sure that there is pardon for us too. What effect does the preaching have on you?

What effect does the preaching have on you today? Have you faced the conclusion that Jesus must be Lord, unquestioned Lord in your life? Have you been convicted of your sin?

Are we concerned about our souls? Well, repent now. Cast yourself on Jesus and do not be ashamed to tell the world what you have done. Jesus, as the prophet long before foretold, will have mercy on you and He will abundantly pardon.

May He bless His own word to us. Let us pray. Lord, we thank You today afresh for the wonder of the gospel of Jesus. we confess, Lord, our own arrogance before You.

We think we know so much, but we need our eyes opened. We need our understanding to be made illuminated by God the Holy Spirit. Lord, show us ourselves today that we may see who we are and what we are.

[28 : 08] But above all, we pray that You would show us our Savior in all the wonder of His love, compassion, and grace, and patience with poor recalcitrant sinners and enable us to trust Him and to go from here knowing that He is our Savior, that we have put ourselves in His hands and we are secure, pardoned, and at peace with God for time and eternity.

For His name's sake we pray. Amen.