

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

How to Be Forgiven of Your Sins **Acts 2:37-41**

Keywords: Acts, Day of Pentecost, Repentance, Baptism, Baptismal Regeneration, Paedo-Baptism

PowerPoint Presentation included: none

Sermon Audio Blurb: The sermon is done. The people are pricked. And now the call to repent and believe is given. In this sermon we simply look at what are the normal steps to find full forgiveness of our sin.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Acts 2:37-41
- B.

II. The Conviction (37).

- A. You must hear and understand the gospel truths.
 - 1. Men of old used the terms *notitia* and *assensus* to speak of this idea. *Notitia* = facts or content and *assensus* = acceptance or agreement.
 - 2. Until you hear and know and accept what the good news is then nothing else will happen. Nothing can happen because this necessary first step is missing.
 - 3. I have mentioned in the past a well-known saying attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, “Preach the gospel at all times. And if necessary use words.”
 - a. Likely never said it as there is no evidence showing he did.
 - b. But it is quite popular, especially today where virtue-signaling and social justice are gaining an ever growing place in the pulpits and churches in America.
 - c. But this is foreign to the bible. The gospel cannot be seen in one’s actions. It must be heard or read and grasped by the mind. It is a propositional truth. It is either true or false but there is no middle ground.
 - 4. This is why in his final letter before being killed for his faith Paul commanded Timothy, “Preach the Word.”

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5. Deuteronomy 6:4, the people of Israel were to utter these words, “Hear, Oh Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one.”
6. Over and over Isaiah the prophet commands the people to hear the word of the Lord.
7. Jesus tells the crowd in Matthew 15:10, “Hear and understand. . . .”
8. As Jesus taught in parables Luke records Him as saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Lk. 8:8)
9. And Paul makes it clear in Romans 10:13-14, “‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?”
10. This is what we saw in Peter’s sermon. A simple, scripture infused sermon proclaiming key points regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - a. He showed Jesus’ humanity.
 - b. That Jesus was approved of God the Father—He was God’s Man.
 - c. That Jesus was murdered but that even that was according to the will and purposes of God.
 - d. And most importantly, on the third day Jesus was raised from the grave.
11. He leaves off with the simple declaration that this Jesus whom these people are guilty of crucifying, is now seated in heaven until the Father judges and destroys His enemies.
12. Beloved, all of this was not lived, it was declared. The people had to hear. You had to hear. And those who you live with and know need to hear.
 - a. That is your responsibility.
 - b. At Missio Dei we teach that you are saved out of this world by the Gospel.
 - c. And then sent right back into this world with the gospel.

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13. Beloved you can build relationships all day long. You can produce kind acts and show works of great mercy. But this is not the gospel. These are effects produced by the gospel in you.
14. But if you are to be faithful to the call to go and make disciples, then at some point you must speak the good news. There is no forgiveness of sin without knowing the gospel.
 - a. The effects of that speaking can result in rejection, mockery, wonder, questions, intrigue, fear and conviction. For many who heard the gospel sermon by Peter it was fear and conviction.
 - b. And it is here that we see the next step on how to be forgiven of your sins.
- B. You must come under the conviction of your guilt and helpless condition (37).
 1. The reality sinks into their minds and fear is the result. Notice the full meaning of their question.
 - a. These were Jews who had been waiting expectantly for the Messiah to appear. Peter had just explained convincingly that He had come, but the Jewish nation had rejected God's anointed King. Jesus had gone back to heaven.
 - b. What would happen to the nation over which He was to rule? What were the Jews to do?
 - c. Their question did not just reflect their personal dilemma but the fate of their nation. What should they do in view of this terrible situation nationally as well as personally? In fact it is much more national/corporate than we tend to see as Americans.
 2. Pierced to the heart.
 - a. But they didn't stay there.
 - b. Many a soul is in hell today because they came under the conviction of their sin before their holy God but never did anything else.
 - (1) Rich young ruler (Luke 18:18ff).
 - (2) King Agrippa (Acts 26:28).

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3. Conviction is simply the awareness that there is a God. That you are not in a right relationship to Him. That you are guilty before Him. And that He shall judge you.
 - a. It is not some mild form of guiltiness which you shrug off and go on with your life.
 - b. Rather it is like these Jews. Their hearts are pierced. Jesus was the one sent by God to save them. And they murdered Him. But he did not stay dead and now when He returns He shall judge them.
 - (1) And they are guilty.
 - (2) They know it and they most certainly know that Jesus knows it. And they are stunned to the very core of their being.
4. So these people are not like the young ruler or King Agrippa. They are not intrigued or almost persuaded. This is not some intellectual exercise that they partake of. Something else is happening. And it is not from within them. It is not something they are producing on their own.
5. What you see here is nothing less than the great convicting work of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. It is what Jesus said in John 16:7-8, *“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”*
 - b. And here we see it. A massive group of people hearing and seeing the power of the Holy Spirit in enabling these people to speak languages they did not know. To hear the mighty acts of God. And then hear a clear exposition of Scripture that shows them who Jesus is.
 - c. Some mock. Some are offended. Some are intrigued. But some come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Their hearts are cut open. I am reminded of the power of the Word of God which is described as living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.

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- (1) The Word of God brought about by and through the Holy Spirit.
 - (2) The instrument through which the Holy Spirit works His sovereign will to harden some hearts and to cut to the core others.
6. What happens when this work occurs? It is what you see in our passage.
- a. They ask what can be done, if anything thing. They need forgiveness—desperately. Is there hope? Is there a way?
 - b. Gone are the excuses. Gone is the self-assurance that they are fine and things will work out. They are stripped naked before their Creator and they see guilt. They see rebellion. They see judgment and wrath.
 - c. There is a great mind-shift that happens, better yet, a great heart-shift that only God can accomplish.
 - d. One thing you discover if you decide to do serious study of the Bible is the sheer number of people who do not believe the gospel but study the person and life of Jesus Christ. Extremely deep, scholarly works on the bible and Jesus. But they don't believe. They can make many interesting and even very poignant observations about Jesus.
 - (1) But they are unmoved by the true of the gospel and the promise of judgment. They sit as critics, calmly observing from the sideline the claims of Christianity and the person of Jesus Christ.
 - (2) But if the Holy Spirit moves upon them, then all that changes. They are now the ones who are under scrutiny and they are the ones who are being examined. But not by some man, but God. And they see that they are the guilty one. They are the one under judgment.
 - (3) And that is what happened here in Acts. They went from people observing these few Christians to now becoming people themselves who were deeply convicted of their guilty and the impending judgment. They need something outside of themselves.

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7. And this takes us to the next step on how to be forgiven of your sins.

C. You must repent (38a).

a. Peter called them to repent.

(1) Repent is an important word. It means to turn from something, to have a change of heart, to change your ways or direction in life.

(a) It starts in the heart but doesn't remain there.

(b) Far more than a mental attitude or a regret for the things you have done.

(c) It involves an abandoning of your old ways and turning toward Christ.

(d) It is looking with disgust or fear at what you are—a sinner, and looking for the way of escape. And that escape is only found in Jesus Christ.

(2) This word, “repent,” is commonly used along with another term, “return,” or to turn back or turn toward.

(a) In Acts 26:20 Paul said, *“they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.”*

(b) Acts 3:19 *“Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away...”*

(c) 1 Thessalonians 1:9, *“For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.”*

2. Up to now this is rather straightforward to many of you. You see the preaching of the gospel/good news in Jesus Christ. You see conviction. And you see the call to turn their hearts and mind from their way to only Jesus Christ.

3. All of this is internal though. So what Peter now does is take it from the internal to the external. From thinking to actions. From the abstract to the concrete.

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- (1) Then he says, be baptized. And it is here that all sorts of confusion and unhelpful teaching comes into play for too many.
 - (2) Many use this passage as a key passage for infant baptism, baptismal regeneration, removal of the guilt of Adam, or baptism by only Jesus' name. Therefore it is not one to pass by quickly.
 - (3) I plan on taking a brief excursus starting next week, Lord willing, to develop the biblical teaching on baptism. So I will be brief here.
- b. Peter has just preached his first gospel message to a huge crowd of unsaved Jews. He clearly declared that the Messiah they had waited for was the One they had just crucified. He then declared that Christ had risen from the dead and was at the right hand of the Father in heaven.
- c. The response was "what must we do?" The cry of desperation, the cry of those who had realized that they had no hope. And Peter says, "Repent and be baptized."
- (1) All Peter is doing here is obeying the command Christ gave to him and the other disciples prior to His going back up to heaven.
 - (2) There are two phrases attached to this command to be baptized: in the name of Jesus and for the forgiveness of sin.
4. But it is also a key part of the next step in being forgiven of your sins so let's move to that step now. . . .
- D. You must believe (38b).
1. The first phrase was that they were to be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ."
 - a. It is an act of identification. They must come and be baptised in such a way that they show they have repented in their hearts of reject Jesus.

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- b. It is not teaching a new formula that is different than what Jesus taught in the Great Commission. It is say they must identify themselves completely and utterly with Jesus.
 - c. And a public baptism is how that is done. Just as they would be baptised at the end of there time of ceremonial uncleanness to signify that they were now clean before the Lord. Now they would be baptised while clearly identifying themselves with the rejected but risen Jesus Christ.
 - d. You must see this. These Jews had rejected Jesus as the Messiah. They had Him crucified on trumped up charges. Now they believe He was and is the Messiah and that He rose from the grave and is going to return to judge all of humanity. So what must be done!? They must identify with Jesus.
 - e. But this is also where the third aspect of saving faith comes into play. We mentioned *notitia* and *assensus* at the beginning. Now we see the last part, which was called *fiducia*. A trust and hope. A resting and a love for Christ and what He has done.
 - f. They knew the facts. They were not arguing with the facts. But would they trust their souls to them? More importantly, would they trust only and always in Jesus alone?
2. The second phrase here gets to the heart of our time today, “For the forgiveness of your sins.”
- a. That word, “for” (eis) is a very common and broad word.
 - (1) It is commonly translated as “unto” “into” or “for.” But they don’t actually give its sense or meaning.
 - (2) It can refer to ‘purpose,’ which would mean that Peter was saying, “be baptized for the purpose of the forgiveness of your sins.” Which is contrary to the clear teaching of the bible that salvation comes not through any type of act or effort but through faith.
 - (3) It can also refer to ‘reason,’ which would mean that he was saying, “be baptized because of the forgiveness of your sins.”

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- (4) It is this last sense that I believe best fits the clear teaching of the Scripture. And something we will explore in greater detail in upcoming sermons.
 - b. So Peter is telling them to repent of their sins, and because of that, they were to be baptized.
3. Now the argument often is given, that baptism in some way actually saves. And the reason for many is Vs 39, which is tightly connected to the idea of paedo-baptism/infant baptism.
 - a. The argument basically is that the promise refers to being baptized and being forgiven sin as a result of the baptism.
 - b. That promise is for both the “you,” which is the youth and adults, and “your children” which is for any young children and infants in the crowd as well.
 - c. However, the promise is grammatically linked to the receiving of the Holy Spirit.
 - (a) Acts 1:5, 8.
 - (b) Acts 2:33, points out that Christ himself first received this promise, and now, they too, those who have repented will receive the Spirit.
 - (2) It also includes “those who are far off” which would involve Gentiles as well and that is what we will see in the book of Acts.
 - (a) Samaritans (essentially half-breeds), Acts 8:14-17.
 - (b) Gentiles, Acts 10:44-47, (with Acts 11)
 - (3) But the clincher is final phrase, “As many . . . may call.” This limits the entire point to the call of God. Those called of God shall be the recipients of the Holy Spirit.
 - d. The promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all today who believe. And vs 39 tells us who these are. They are the ones God calls to Himself.
 - e. No one is almost saved. No one is partially saved. When you go through these steps I outlined for you. When you repent and turn to

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God and when by faith you place your trust in Jesus alone, you are forgiven.

4. And so we see in vs 40 that Peter now begins to strongly encourage all who are listening to come and identify with the risen Lord (40).
 - a. It was a costly call. It meant you turn your back on this world and all that it promises.
 - b. It means you see this age as broken and perverse or twisted. That this is not your home and the god of this age, Satan; nor his lies, are yours anymore.
 - c. It is not adding Jesus to your life. It is an utter abandoning of one life and way for another. An all or nothing affair.

III. Conclusion.

- A. In vs 41 we see the results.
 1. Those who believed did so gladly. This sense of gladly is built into the word “received.” It is not one of reluctance. It is with joy and hope. It is that moment when you see you are snatched from the jaws of death and are now safe.
 2. Only those who embraced by faith Jesus were baptized. This shows that there was some mechanism in place to determine if they rightly received Peter’s words.
 - a. To receive would be the equivalent to “believe.”
 - b. There was some sort of official record keeping in place so that they knew how many were added to the original group. This is one of the basic passages that is used to argue for membership.
 - c. Though that is a lot of people being baptized ,if the Apostles did them all it would be 250 each which would take about 8 hours assuming 2 minutes per person, which is slow. But if all who originally were in that first group in chapter 1 were involved then it would take less than an hour.
 - d. Remember that there were many baths/baptismal pools throughout the city, most certainly near the Temple. And it would be public to all. The word would quickly spread what was happening and there would be no turning back.

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- B. The spiritual situation for any who do not believe is a terrible one.
 - 1. They either reject, hate or simply ignore God. They suppress the truth of God that is in their very heart and they give glory to the creation they see rather than to the Creator.
 - 2. The result is they find themselves under His judgment and shall receive the fulness of His judicial wrath.
- C. But for the ones who find themselves convicted of this truth; for those who are like a blind person who is beginning to see; the temptation then begins to be what is the bare minimum required to get this sentence of death off of me?
 - 1. So they claim to believe.
 - 2. They think it can be a private affair between themselves and Jesus.
 - 3. But it isn't and can't ever be that way.
 - 4. Just like these Jews, some of you must make a decision. What and who will define you from here on out?
- D. Peter confronted these fellow Jews with the reality of the last days and the risen Christ. He spoke of the reality of the coming judgment. And he made it abundantly clear when they asked what must they do to be rescued from this terrible state, that they were to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus. No hiding, no vagaries. They must identify with Jesus all the way.
- E. And so I do the same to you. Will you repent? Will you believe? What is it that holds your heart so strongly that you will lose your soul?

Benediction

“May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Small Group Questions

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- **If you have questions regarding the nature of baptism, perhaps from your past or from those you know, share them in the group and then send them to the pastor so that they can be answered in the sermons that are planned.**
- **Have two to three of the group share when they came to faith. Try to relate their personal testimony to what we heard. None are quite the same, for we all start in different places, but we all end up at the Cross. Let this time be respectful and joyous, my desire is that it would warm your hearts.**
- **Now, having heard of others conversion, try to identify what is preventing you from talking to others of their need of Christ? Again make this respectful but identify what needs strengthening. How does your group plan to address it?**