

BUILT ON THE GOSPEL - ORIGINS SERIES
PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE
Dan Burrell

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you today. We have just returned, and by 'we' I mean the elders of our church from a very important week. One of the members of our church owns a beautiful home on Kiawah Island, and each year they invite us to be able to use it for our church team to be able to pray together, to talk about the church, to make plans for the future and to kind of check on our own spiritual health. So that was this last week. And let me just say it was a tremendous blessing and I want to say 'thank you' to the family that provided their home to us. It is such a blessing, and it saves the church thousands of dollars to be able to use it, so we feel really blessed to be able to do that. (*Applause.*)

So coming off this week my heart is filled because I am encouraged. I am encouraged by the leadership that God has put in place, but I am also encouraged by what God has been doing in our hearts. And this morning I want this message to kind of reflect that. I want it to reflect some of what we discussed, but also some of what God has been doing, and I hope is continuing to do in us. It is behind the entire study we are doing in the book of Acts. It is about our future. It is about why we exist as a church. It is about important things in light of eternity.

I have spoken for thirty-five years. I have spoken to tiny Bible study groups and in coliseums filled with people. I understand what it takes to draw people to what I am trying to say. I get that. I know you are supposed to have a certain length, and so on. I am very intentional when I prepare my messages, even though sometimes I get teased about my speed. Actually I know as a public speaker that a certain level of speed requires you to sit forward and listen a little intently rather than to be thinking about your grocery list which is often what I tend to do if someone is speaking too slowly.

I know every once in a while you want to take a break and laugh. I get that. I know you want depth and I also know you don't want to get a headache by the end of the sermon. It is not a university class. So I get all that. And I feel that responsibility every time I come before the church. But I am going to ask you to do something else this morning. I am going to ask you to think. I am going to ask you to listen. I am going to ask you to pray. I am going to share some of that responsibility with you today.

I would like as we begin this morning for you to say, '*Lord, speak to me. Show me what I need to hear.*' I want you to ask the Holy Spirit to apply what we study here in a personal way. That whether or not you find me witty, or you enjoy sarcasm, or you like an illustration, whether you leave here disappointed in the length, or excited about the length, all of those things; rather would you stop right now and join me asking God to speak to us through His Word, via His Holy Spirit regardless of what others in the room around you do, or how I perform.

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Father, I pray as we start this message this morning, as we look at Acts, as we look at the very first sermon preached to the New Testament church, that institution for which you died, that family you called us to be a part of, that which will remain for all time in your presence. As we look at this sermon, and we acknowledge that we who are the called out assembly, those who have placed their faith and trust in you, have a responsibility to find important those things that you found important, to teach and preach that which You taught and preached.

Father, I pray also during this moment that if there is anyone in this room who walks apart from you, who is confused about their eternity, who knows they don't have a relationship with you, that in this hour your Holy Spirit would ignite within them that fire that gives them eternal life, that calls them to repent and follow you. Father, help each of us to take stock of our own lives even now, and say, 'Lord, my heart is open. My ears are ready. Speak to me now.' For it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Acts Chapter 2 is where we will be this morning. We are going through the book of Acts, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. We will be doing it for some time. The first third of the study we have entitled, 'Origins - Church as it Should Be.' We will be looking at the very inception, the very foundation, the very beginning of the church. And we will then understand what the church is, that it is that earthly part of the family of God.

It is that part of the family of God that exists at any time as the local church, that church which exists through all the ages past, present and future. It is the universal church. It is the called out assembly, the family of God, the redeemed Christ followers, Christians, however you want to label it, but it is the collective of those who have said, 'He is Lord. Lord of my life. Lord of the universe and I worship Him.'

Last week Pastor Ben looked at the first part of Acts Chapter 2, as the Holy Spirit came for the first time, following the ascension of Christ. The Holy Spirit came, and we know that today, post this event, that when you trust Christ as your Savior you get the Holy Spirit as Pastor Ben explained last week. If you didn't get to hear that message you can go back and listen to it on the podcast, or watch it on YouTube.

Ben gave a wonderful explanation about the fact that when we trust Christ as our Savior we get all the Holy Spirit we need, we get all the Holy Spirit we are ever going to have, and it comes instantly upon our repentance and our salvation. And then the rest of our life is 'how much of the Holy Spirit has us?' That is the big struggle. And that is that act of sanctification where we are constantly yielding our own selfishness, and our own agenda to the Holy Spirit.

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So that is what occurred there in the first part of the book of Acts. Then we see some quotations of Scripture. This is so that the listener would understand that all of this is the fulfillment of prophecy. And now we are going to begin in verse 29 of Acts Chapter 2. This follows a passage of Scripture there that is referring to some of the prophetic prophecies of the Old Testament, and now in verse 29 we have Peter who will be teaching the early believers.

“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that He would set one of his descendants on his throne, He foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.”

Peter told them that they saw it happen. They saw Him after He was resurrected. They were the testimony of the reality of the resurrection of Christ. Let’s continue in verse 33: ***“Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”*** This is Peter’s reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 34: ***“For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says.”*** Now he is going to quote a passage that David said during his lifetime. ***“The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’”*** Then Peter goes back to the sermon. ***“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”***

Look at verse 37: ***“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.’ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ So those who received this word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”***

Three thousand souls! This is Peter’s message at Pentecost. Now let’s stop and let me do just a little bit of education and contextualization so that you can kind of understand the atmosphere that was going on here. Pentecost, which literally means ‘Fifty days,’ penta meaning fifty and cost meaning days. And it took place fifty days after the Jewish Feast of the Fruit Fruits, and it was fifty days after the resurrection.

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Remember there were forty days after the crucifixion of Christ and then there were ten days of prayer that followed since His ascension. So this was the time when the Holy Spirit was now introduced at the end of that.

Now we have the fledgling church that was being introduced to the whole world. So this was a very busy time. Peter's message had several parts to it and we are not going into it in depth. But just so you can understand it initially what he was trying to do in verses 14 through 21, he was trying to explain what had just happened. I mean this was kind of freaky stuff seriously. They were sitting in a room, they hear a sound like a tornado, but nothing was blowing off of the table. They hear this rushing wind, then all of a sudden this guy has a fire over his head, and this other guy has a fire over his head, and they all start wondering if they have a fire over their heads too. All of a sudden they have these appearances of flame or fire over their heads.

And I have to tell you if that happened here this morning I would be a little nervous. I would be a little confused. I would be a little excited. I would be having all kinds of emotions. And they are no different than us. They knew they were supposed to wait there until God told them to go, and they knew that God was supposed to give them a sign, but they didn't know what that sign was going to be. And now all of a sudden they hear a noise, they see flames, and then they are talking in other languages. What in the world is going on?

And so Peter is getting up and he is providing clarity. How many of you love clarity? I am a big clarity guy. I have to have things spelled out really clearly to me. Once I know what is expected of me, once I know what it going on, man, I am good to go. But if I am confused, I will bump into walls and babble nonsense. I just need to have clarity to proceed.

And I love this about Peter. He has been an impulsive guy, but he is also a take charge guy. He gets up and he says, *'You know what. I have a sermon. I have to share something with you.'* He told them, *'I want you to understand what you have seen here is the fulfillment of Scripture. This is the Holy Spirit. And He is Christ and God Himself, He is a part of the Trinity. And He has come as He has promised. The Comforter has arrived and we now have a mission to perform.'*

So in verses 14 to 21 Peter was explaining who the Holy Spirit was and then he was explaining in verses 25 to 35 how it happened. The reason this happened was because Christ was crucified and resurrected. Were it not for the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit would not have arrived. The Holy Spirit wasn't in the Old Testament in the same way that it is for us in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit wasn't a continual presence in the life of an individual. Now the Holy Spirit was there, He was

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active, and we see God through His Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. We see it in the children of Israel, and periodically throughout Scripture, but the constant indwelling of the Holy Spirit takes place at salvation and it began at Pentecost with this special visitation.

So Peter is explaining to the people that this happened because Jesus was who He said He was. This was no ordinary man. This was no common criminal. This was no political mistake. Jesus came and died, was resurrected, and the visitation of the Holy Spirit is evidence that God's prophecies through men of old in the Old Testament have now be fulfilled, and He is with us still. His plan is complete, but it is not completed. It has taken place as He has prophesied, and yet He still calls people to salvation through repentance and belief that Jesus was who He claimed to be.

Then in verses 36 to 41 Peter is demonstrating why the Holy Spirit came. And that is where I want us to focus today. As we talked with the elders last week, as Ben and I prepare for the future in teaching and preaching, as we look at planting another congregation in Mooresville in the coming year, as we look at what we want our attention and our energy and our focus to be on, it is about this - the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Great Commission commands us to take the good news of Jesus into all the world. That is what we have been asked to do. We have not been asked to gain political power. We have not been asked to accrue riches. We have not been asked to simply do good works. We have not been asked to make deals for our own benefit. We have been asked to go into every part of the world and to preach the fact that Jesus saves, that He is the hope of our salvation, and that if we will just trust in Him and believe that He is who He is that then our purpose in life will have been completed and then eternity awaits us.

Scripture says that Christ will not return until the gospel has been taken to every corner of the earth. Do you understand what the implications of that is? You know we always talk about how we can't wait until the Lord comes, we can't wait until this is over, we can't wait until Christ establishes Himself here. But if we really believed that we would all be missionaries every day of our lives, because until the whole world hears, until the whole world has had the opportunity, Christ, in His patience, in His love and in His grace, holds Himself back to be reunited with His church. He is not willing that any should perish.

And yet, the responsibility, the opportunity is shared with the church. The very foundation of the church is Jesus Christ. The very mission of the church is the gospel. We must never forget that is why we are still here. That was the message that Peter was giving to them. In his desire for clarity he realizes that this was a disorienting time. Stop and think about what happened here for a minute. There had been the triumphal

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procession into Jerusalem, they had the Last Supper, there was the betrayal, they had the trial that led to the crucifixion, there was the resurrection, there were Jesus' appearances all about Jerusalem and surrounding areas, then the ascension into the clouds. Then there was a ten day prayer meeting and now the Holy Spirit arrives. And all of this happened in just a matter of a little less than two of our months.

They had to be confused. They had to be disoriented. They had to be asking, *'What next? What is going to happen next?'* And Peter wanted to get up in front of the people and say, *'Listen, listen, I know we have seen a lot. I know things didn't pan out the way some of you thought they would. Some of you thought this was about an earthly kingdom, and political power, and now you are just confused. I want to make sure that we keep the main thing the main thing.'*

So Peter got up and he preached, and what was his sermon, the very first sermon to the New Testament church? It was the gospel. He told them that the prophets had proclaimed the Holy Spirit would come. They prayed that the Messiah would come. They longed for the day that the Messiah would come. And when He came they murdered Him. They killed Him. They crucified Him. He who was without sin, He who was the hope of Israel, He who we had prayed for was hung on a cross between two thieves and we watched the life drain from Him.

The Bible says that when the people heard that it ripped their hearts. It cut them open. And they asked, *'What do we do now? What do we do now?'* When you hear the truth in its stark reality there comes this seminal moment whereupon we have to ask, *'What do I do with God? What do I do in my current state?'* They had heard the gospel, they had observed and maybe they had even studied. So were they going to walk away from it, were they going to dismiss it, were they just going to shrug their shoulders, or would they believe?

In the New Testament we see examples. The rich man said to Jesus, *'What must I do to be saved?'* And Jesus looking at his heart said, *'Dude, you love a lot of things more than you love me. You care about a lot of things more than you care about me. How about this - why don't you sell everything you have and follow me?'* It was a moment of truth for that rich young authority figure. And he thought about it and he said, *'I think maybe what you are telling me is the truth, but man I love my stuff.'* And the Bible says he walked away saddened, because he chose his stuff over the Savior.

And we know that Zacchaeus also was a rather wealthy man. He wasn't a popular dude because he was a tax collector. And yet up in a tree he was confronted with the truth when Jesus said to him, *'Zacchaeus, you come down. I am coming over to your house today.'* We used to sing that as children. Jesus went to Zacchaeus' house and that

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day he got confronted with the truth. Zacchaeus was a whiney, little thief, thinking that power, money and being a government official was all there was to life. And Jesus told him to stop it, to quit his job, give back everything he had stolen, and to follow Him. And you know what Zacchaeus did? He obeyed. He did it. He got confronted with the truth and he said, *'I believe.'*

Now here is the sad thing. There are very few people in the United States of America today who have not heard the truth, but they have not dealt with the confrontation. Some have made excuses. Some have made delays. Some have said, *'Well, I just want to have one foot in this world and one foot in that world.'* And some have said, *'There will come a time later on when I will do business with God. I will make sure I am okay with Him, but for now I am going to enjoy all that I have.'*

Like the guy we find who used to throw the crumbs to the poor guy who sat outside his door. And God said to him, *'You think you are going to build bigger barns? You think that this is all there is? You think you have all the time in the world? I'm sorry but tonight you have an appointment with eternity.'* The Bible says he woke up in hell separated from God forever because he waited one moment too long.

This was the gospel. This was the message. This was the beginning of the church. This was the first sermon. Peter told them they had to decide what they were going to do with what they had seen, who Jesus was, with the fact that He had died and He rose again. Peter made that declaration. *'Make sure that you trust in God. Repent of your sins, trust in Christ and then be baptized.'* I want to deal with that in just a moment a little bit more.

Now you have to understand that this was a radical message to the culture of that day. And by the way it is a radical message to the culture of this day. It is still radical, because we like to pretend that we have something to contribute. We like to pretend that we can make it on our terms. We like to pretend that we are at some level in control. And we are not! Either God is true or He is a liar. Either God is right or He is wrong. There are no gray areas with God. He is the ultimate. He is the absolute. He is the cornerstone. He is the foundation. He is the source. And if we don't grasp that, we are going to miss it.

So the legalist says, *'Yeah, I can have eternal life but I have to keep all of the laws and the rules.'* The moralist says, *'I can do enough with my good works.'* And the universalist says, *'Well, there are many paths to Heaven. You just have to choose one.'* And the ritualist says, *'Do these religious exercises.'* And the humanist says, *'It doesn't matter because there is no god, and if there is, he doesn't even matter.'*

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But Peter says something really clearly and really well defined. He looked at them and said, **“Repent.” “Repent.”** That is an interesting word. It is a word that literally means ‘a change of mind that leads to a change of direction.’ It means ‘an abandonment.’ You were headed in this direction and you come into confrontation with truth, and rather than keep going in the same direction that you were headed, you literally turn around and walk in the opposite direction. You change your mind, and because you have changed your mind, you changed your direction.

There is always action attached to repentance. It is not just an acknowledgment, because even the devil believes in Christ. But it is a repentance. In other words I am heading this way and I realize that this is not right, this is wrong. I can’t do it myself. My sin separates me from God. God paid the price through Christ His Son. Jesus took the cost of my sins and paid for them once and for all. He demonstrated that He is who He is because He conquered death. He invites me to repent of those sins and my ability to save myself from them, or to gain forgiveness for them on my own merit, and now I must trust in Him. And we turn and go the other direction.

We walk away from that. We walk away from our thoughts, our preconceived ideas, our notions, our influence, our power, everything that we think is important, including our ability to control our lives, our ability to amass possessions of our own and to be able to think we can cling to them. We turn away from all of that, and we say, *‘Just Jesus, that’s all I need, just Jesus. I am heading for Him. I am trusting His word.’* And when we do that, the gospel has transformed us.

Now I have to pause here because we need to understand that this term repentance follows conviction. But do you know what the danger is? Sometimes we can ignore conviction so long that sin ceases to be an issue for us. It is no longer a problem for us. We are so used to hearing the Holy Spirit in truth speak to us, and then ignoring it, that eventually the voice gets quieter and quieter and quieter, and we become more comfortable in our sin.

We can become like the proverbial frog in the pot of water where the temperature is gradually getting hotter and hotter. It happens so gradually that we no longer even hear conviction for our sins. That is what is happening in our country. The things that are wicked and sinful that we accept today, in previous generations were abominations. The attitudes that we embrace today on a routine basis, at one time were horrors to imagine. And the path of sin is always away from conviction and toward acceptance and even celebration, where in our sin we celebrate our perceived freedom to do as we want. The message of the gospel runs headlong against that and says, *‘Stop it! Admit it is wrong, and change.’*

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Maybe you are thinking that sounds really authoritarian, that sounds really black and white. And that was the point. That is the point of the law. The law doesn't save us. You can be as good as you can be all of your life and that doesn't save you. But the law shows us that we need someone to help us. And that person was Jesus. If we hated our own sins as much as we hate the sins of others around us we would be driven to repentance far more regularly and surely.

'Your sin drives me nuts, but I am quite comfortable with my sins.' (Laughter.) Today many want to redefine sin as only something that hurts others. *'As long as no one gets hurt, it is okay.'* Show me that in the Bible. Will someone please show me that in the Bible. Or is that just a cool idea we came up with to let us be more comfortable in what we are doing? I mean let's just be honest about it, okay? *'As long as everyone is consenting it is okay.'* No, it's not. No, it's not. We don't get to judge. We don't get to make those rules. Those were established well before our existence. And we can try, but you need to understand there are always consequences when making a wrong decision.

I can try to get by with speeding, but there is a high likelihood that at some point I am going to be called to reckon. *'Well, no one is getting hurt.'* That doesn't matter, that is the law. *'Yeah, but it makes me feel good.'* That doesn't matter, that is the law. *'Well everybody else is doing it.'* That doesn't matter, the law applies. And we have to be aware of that.

Now I want to take another part of this Scripture and focus in on it, and then we will close this up. It is a phrase in the Scripture that is often misrepresented. And I feel like in order to do justice to this text we need to look at it carefully, and to analyze it for just a moment, lest something be misunderstood. And it often is, as it relates to this.

So as Peter is addressing this in verse 38, he says, ***"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."*** So if we condense that just a little bit it says, ***"Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins."*** And I want to focus here for just a moment because it is so important that you not misunderstand this. You need to understand that the words we read here were not given to us in English; they were given in a language actually that is far more sophisticated than English, and that was Greek.

And so in the Greek there are multiple words that have to be translated into the limited number of English words. And sometimes the translators had to make this decision or that decision; therefore there is an area, or it is a science really, of Biblical interpretation. This is called hermeneutics, and the meaning is 'the study of interpretation' and Biblical hermeneutics is 'the study of Bible interpretations.'

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And when we talk about hermeneutics, there are these rules that we apply to make sure that our language has conveyed the original intent of the Scripture. So we need to understand a couple of things. Number one - when you read this passage you have to understand the context. For those hearing Peter's sermon, baptism was publicly identifying them as followers of Jesus. And it would immediately put them in harm's way. It would make them outcasts, many of them would lose their jobs, lose their family connections and ties, and would cause them persecution and rejection. Many of those who heard this message and trusted Christ would eventually die for having received that message, or they would undergo some kind of persecution.

Salvation, real genuine salvation results in a change of identification and a corresponding change in character. We know that. The two are frequently connected in Scripture. For example like Zacchaeus, as I mentioned earlier, and others who rejected their family and followed Christ. "***Any man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not worthy of the kingdom of Heaven.***" The Scripture over and over states these things.

When we decide to make Jesus Christ the Lord of our lives there is a distinction and a distinct change in identity, in conduct and in character that provides evidence that it was real. Peter was speaking to an audience that needed to understand that. And maybe I need to make sure that we all understand that as well today. When you trust Christ it is not about fitting into Southern culture. It is not being American or Western. It is not about joining a club. It is not securing a place in a social regiment.

When you trust Christ as your Savior it is an abandonment, an abandonment of the lies of Satan, the ability to save yourself, the sinful choices you make, and we are to be identified with Him. People ought to notice the change in us, and if they don't it calls into question the legitimacy of our proclamation.

The second thing is - there is a principle of hermeneutics in play that is called *analogia scripturae* which simply means 'the analogy of Scripture.' And the law of hermeneutics says this: "*That no correctly interpreted passage will contradict another correctly interpreted passage.*" So we have to look at all of them. And I am not trying to give you a seminary education this morning, but I just want to say that the whole of Scripture reminds us that salvation is by faith and not by works, by faith alone in Jesus Christ, not by works. Therefore baptism is not required for salvation; it is the evidence that we have given our life to Christ. It is that first action that we are asked to do so that we will be identified as Christ's followers. It is not a prerequisite for salvation.

Jesus, by the way, had repeatedly condemned rituals and legalistic practices. He would hardly have implemented a new one that would be required for forgiveness, or

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being right with Him. He certainly didn't reference that to the thief on the cross when he was dying beside Him. He didn't tell him to repent and be baptized, He simply told him to trust Him and today he would be with Him in Paradise.

The fourth thing is this - the preposition in the Greek is the word *eis* and it is translated here as 'for.' So it says this: 'for the purpose of,' or 'for the remission of sins.' That's the way it was translated here. But in other places in the Scripture the exact same word *eis* is translated 'because of' or 'on the occasion of.' In Matthew Chapter 12 and verse 41 the same word is translated in the passage that is referencing when the people of Nineveh repented because Jonah was preaching to them. And because he preached to them, they repented.

And so when we understand a better translation of this, and one that aligns with all the other passages related to it, Peter was telling them to repent and be baptized because their sins have been forgiven. On the occasion of your repentance, be baptized. That is the next expected step in your journey. And it is the evidence that you really meant it.

Let's make sure we understand this, because we live in a culture where there are even Christian denominations that don't quite follow this, and we want to make sure that we are Biblical and not denominational. We are not denominational at Life Fellowship, so we don't have any skin in the game, right? Other than we want to be Biblical. So the fact is this isn't to be done as a child in advance of a future salvation. The idea is we repent, and then we are baptized, because we need to be identified. It is something that we each have to choose.

Now I wish I could have chosen for each of my children at birth, '*You will be a Christian all the days of your life.*' But I don't have that power. Why? It is because God gives that to each of us individually. If you were baptized as a youngster that may have been a nice moment, and that may have been something that drew your family together. It may have been a picture of a covenant and a promise that they entered into with the expectation and the hope that someday you would become a Christ follower. But at some point you have to decide for yourself whether or not you believe this stuff. You have to make that decision yourself.

And at that point when you repent, the next step ought to be baptism. Even if you were baptized as a child you need to understand that every evidence in Scripture is this - baptism follows salvation. And it is a picture of the death, the burial and the resurrection of Christ. The word *baptizo* literally means 'to immerse,' and that is why we practice immersion here. This picture of the death, the burial and the resurrection of Christ takes place after salvation so that the whole world will know.

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And do you know what I love? I love the fact that over the years I have seen people follow the Lord in baptism, having repented of their sins and trusted Christ as their Savior. And others came and watched, that is why baptisms are public. And as some people watched, some wanted to hear the story again. They would ask, *'What made them do this?'* And after hearing it they wanted it too. That is the purpose. It's the story. It's the gospel. It's Jesus Christ living, crucified, buried and risen. You see it in the picture of baptism. You explain it and the Holy Spirit does the rest and calls us to salvation.

So the first step Peter said was to repent. The second step was to be baptized. And the third step he called them to was action. Then we see the results. Here in the most holy of cities, Jerusalem, filled with religious pilgrims, something stunning happened. In a single day, 3,000 people came to Christ and were baptized. Three thousand people!

Now think about how difficult and dangerous it would have been for them to do that during this time. It was the days of Roman occupation, the days when political power had been ceded by Rome for the purpose of controlling the people to the religious higher hierarchy of that day, which was Judaism. The Jews hated Jesus and they were the ones who had him crucified. And here now in Jerusalem there were these pilgrims, these people from all over civilization, who had come to this city, and they had witnessed what had happened. They stuck around because they couldn't understand all that they were seeing.

So Peter steps out of the Upper Room, with his band of apostles and believers, and he tells the people to listen. He told them that the Messiah had come, that He had been killed, that He was resurrected, and now they needed to repent and be baptized. And that day 3,000 people said, *'Yes! Yes, I believe. Yes, I repent. Yes, He is real. Yes, He is alive. Yes, I am willing to sacrifice and pay the price no matter what people may say, no matter what people may think, or no matter what people may act upon - I believe.'* And they stepped forward with courage and conviction. They were willing to say, *'All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give, and I come just as I am without my plea.'* They gave themselves to the gospel of Christ.

Many to whom Peter was speaking that day had likely heard of Jesus. Some had likely heard Him teach. Some of them were likely at the crucifixion. Most had heard of His resurrection as word spread around the city that Jesus had been no ordinary man, but it wasn't until this moment in time that the message finally sank through. Here they were religious, devout, sincere, curious; they were observers, they were pilgrims who had

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come to a holy city for holy days. But finally there came this moment when the gospel took root in them personally.

Four things I want you to remember and then I am done. Number one - the very first sermon in the New Testament was a sermon about the gospel. Our action call this morning is two things. Number one - if you do not know Christ as your Savior, or if you have known Him but have not been baptized, you know what you are supposed to do. It is right here in the Scriptures. Why are you waiting? Why are you waiting? Why don't you act on this? Why isn't this important? This is the most important decision each one of us will ever make. We are face to face with the truth - what are we going to do about it?

And then - these three thousand spread out all across civilization and revival broke out. And it has never ceased in some part of the world from that day to this. It is still continuing. 20,000 people a day are turning their hearts and lives to Christ in China, where many will have their homes burned down, many will be imprisoned, many will lose their jobs and will be forced to work substandard jobs, all because they said, '*Jesus is Lord.*' '*Jesus is Lord.*'

There is a far cry of difference between that and someone looking at you and saying, '*You must be one of those Christian idiots,*' just because you have a fish symbol on the back of your car. These people are paying. Why? Because it is true, because it is real, because the Holy Spirit has called them to salvation and they have said, '*I am repenting and I am being baptized. I am following Christ.*'

The second thing is this - in spite of being in the most religious city in the world at that time, many still needed to repent and respond to the gospel. Do you know who else was listening to that sermon that day? It was the one hundred and twenty that had been in the Upper Room. They needed to hear it again. And we need to hear it again. And you have heard it this morning that Jesus saves. And we need to keep hearing it over and over and over again, lest it become something that we just gloss over, or forget, or put so far behind us that we never think about it anymore. It is that moment in time when we turned from death to life everlasting, when we walked in darkness and now we walk in light, and that needs to burn in our hearts all the time. And if the flame has died down, we need to fix it individually, and as a church.

The third thing is this - it was the Holy Spirit that empowered the gospel, not the preacher, not the venue, not the disciples, not the atmosphere, and not the location, it was the gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Word of God enlivened, enlightened and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

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So what are we going to do? We need to lift the Word up high and pray that the Lord of harvest would do what only He can do as we do what we have been called to do. It is not about me, it is not about the church building or campus, it is not about leadership; it is about us individually living out the gospel every single day.

Number four - when the gospel is preached, transformation occurs and it occurs immediately. It occurs immediately, as a fire is lit, lives are changed, people move out of sin and into life. That is the gospel. It is the foundation on which we have hope. Let's pray.

Father, we love you. Thank you for your Word. Thank you for Jesus who paid the price of our sins. Help us, Father, to walk out of here remembering Peter's sermon of the gospel, and the beginning of your church. Help us, Father, to accept the call to action for believers. And Father, may no person who heard the message of the gospel walk away without making a decision, either to repent, to be baptized, or to be a part of the Great Commission in spreading the gospel to others. It is in Christ's name I pray, Amen

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.