

11a ACTS

Let's begin our study this evening in Acts chapter 2, beginning at verse 40. By taking a moment at the outset to clear our minds, prepare our hearts, seek the ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that our time will be beneficial, the study of the Word of God will be effective, and we will be better equipped to live the life to which we have been called. Shall we pray? Father, we are thankful, as always, for the many provisions that you make for us.

We are no doubt unaware of many of the graces that you bestow on us, protections and deliverances that are invisible to our eyes, and yet are miracles from the standpoint of divine intervention and divine protection. We thank you for the standing we have in your plan and in your purpose and in your will because of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for Him, for His example of faithfulness, His love for us, His willingness to go to the cross and suffer unimaginably on our behalf.

We thank you that because He has been raised up and honored above all creation and is even now seated at your right hand, we also have the hope of being raised up to dwell forever in the heavenlies. We ask tonight your blessing on us as we study your Word. We find ourselves often feeling inadequate or feeble when it comes to the perspicacity that is required to fully understand and apply your Word, but we know that there is grace sufficient for every need and that in our weakness your strength is made manifest.

So we do ask your blessing and your enablement on us as we study your Word together. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, tonight, as I said, we find ourselves in verse 40 of chapter 2 of the book of Acts. Peter has just delivered the first of several sermons that are recorded in Acts, certainly the first Petrine sermon, as they like to say about things that are related to Peter. They call them the Petrine epistles.

The first time I saw that word I was scratching my head. I thought, what are they talking about, a Petrine epistle? And then I realized, well, that's the one Peter wrote. But this is the first sermon.

We analyzed it in great detail last time. We broke it down into its three constituent parts, each of which has four sub-parts. And we saw that the general theme here is all wrapped up in God's manifestation of Jesus as the Christ.

Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ. Well, when they heard this, the audience was cut to the heart. They said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? This is a good question.

This is the response of the heart. And notice that it asks a question. Peter later on in the Petrine epistles will say, Be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.

And there is a great lesson here in verse 37 for us. Because we love the Lord. We love God's word.

We love to try to understand it correctly. And we have enthusiasm and even passion when it comes to certain subjects. I get very wound up in talking about certain things that I wish were different in the Christian world at large or in some of our denominational churches.

And sometimes the opportunity arises, a subject comes up, and I launch myself forth. And it takes a remembrance of passages like this to keep ourselves in check. Because just because we're right and just because we know what the Bible says does not mean that it is the place or the time or the way to speak when such an occasion presents itself.

How do we know when we should speak and when we should refrain and not inflict ourselves on others? Look at what happens in verse 37. Peter makes a statement. He lays things out.

People are saying, What is going on here? They asked a question. Why are these men acting as though they are drunk and it's only nine o'clock in the morning? So Peter says, Men and brethren, I'll tell you why. And he gives them this little three-point sermon.

You can deliver this whole thing. You can read it in about four minutes going slow. And it's finished.

Now that they have heard this, they do not begin to argue. They do not begin to express a point of view. They do not begin to say, Well, let me tell you what I think.

They ask a question. And this is the key. If we speak the truth in love, it ought to be short.

It ought to be sweet. And it ought to be to the point. And then we ought to calm ourselves.

We ought to be calm ourselves. We ought to cease and desist. Say as much as we need to say and then be quiet.

And see if the truth that is spoken generates a question. Be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks. It does not say continue to preach as long as someone is still standing and conscious.

It doesn't say continue to argue until people either give up, give in or pass out. It says that they asked. They were cut to the heart.

What is it that cut them to the heart? Was it Peter's eloquence? Was it Peter's earnestness? Or was it the truth that he presented from God's word? Well, of course, it was the latter. Because it doesn't say for the man of God is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. It says the word of God is the sword that cuts to the heart.

These men were cut to the heart because Peter's presentation was riddled through with the word of God. It was a weaving together of Old Testament passages which these people knew. They were applied to a specific situation, the coming, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ.

And then Peter stopped. Four minute sermon and he stopped. Now, when I say this, I am just preaching to myself.

Because this is one of my biggest areas of testing is knowing when to cease. As you know, this is why sometimes our lessons run to a second tape. But, ideally, we would follow Peter's example here.

In fact, you remember a few weeks ago, Bob Hope died. And his son, he had a couple of adopted sons, was interviewed. Chris Hope or somebody or other.

And they said, it might have even been his grandson. In fact, I think it was a grandson. Who had gone with Bob Hope when he was 98 or so to receive some award.

And he had his grandson speak on his behalf. And so the grandson got up and made a little brief pronouncement and sat back down. And as they were leaving, he recounted that Bob Hope turned to him and said, You did well.

You got on and you got off. And a lot of people who are in the public eye know that it's important to get on, say what you have to say, and get off. Well, we want to be careful.

We want to be considerate because we are wasting our time. And we are actually driving people away from the things of God or the word of God if we go to excess. So these people ask the question, what shall we do? Now if someone asks a question, now you have the opening to proceed.

What shall we do? Peter said to them, change your mind. Metanoeo. This is always the opening of the door to the plan of God.

Whether you are an unbeliever, whether we are believers, entering into the grace, entering into the power, entering into the potential of the plan of God always begins with a change of mind. Our perspective shifts. Our priorities change.

We set a new course. We do it. God in sovereignty does not reach down and clobber us on the head.

We will see that when we get to the Damascus Road and Saul of Tarsus. But we are not there yet. Change your mind.

This is an imperative in Greek of *metanoeo*. It is the aorist active imperative. It means start doing something you are not currently doing.

Change your mind. 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.

We went over this a little bit last time. But I have learned something in the past week that I didn't know last week. And I thought I would share it with you.

Remember, we went to Matthew 28, 19. Jesus said, as you go, make disciples. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Right? And then we saw here where Peter says, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Now, it has been something less than a month since he got the instruction from Jesus.

Did he already forget the Father and the Holy Spirit? Why does it say, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ? Well, I have been scratching my head over that for a few weeks. And this idea is not original to me. Some of the old gray-headed commentators from 150 years ago suggested this.

And I finally ran across it. The reason is, and I am elaborating and expanding based on my own understanding. But, remember, these men are from what country? Who is the audience here? They are all Jews.

They are all Israelites. They already have a relationship with God the Father. They already have a ministry of God the Holy Spirit as Old Testament saints.

Who is it that they missed? Who was it that was not revealed in the Old Testament except by way of shadow and symbol and prophecy, but is now fully revealed? It is the Lord Jesus Christ. As an Israelite, in whose name do they need to be baptized? It is the name of Jesus. For the Gentiles, who are outside the fold of Israel, who are not heirs of the law and the promises and the covenants, who have had no relationship with God in the past.

Remember, in 2819, Jesus says, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, these of all nations, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. They have got to come to the entire panoply of information that has been revealed from God. Jews, on the other hand, and these men, and I think this strengthens the case for our understanding that these people were probably and largely already Old Testament believers or believers under the Old Testament criteria.

What they lack was identification and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Christ. So I think that is an excellent explanation for why Peter says, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, on this day, you men be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ with a view toward remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now, instead of a national ministry of the Holy Spirit, which is what they received in Old Testament days, the nation was gifted with tabernacle workmen or artisans or judges or kings and other leadership that were a gift to the nation.

The Holy Spirit operated to benefit the nation. Now there is the individual gift of the Holy Spirit. But He is not an unknown entity to them.

They know all about the Spirit of God. He appears in the first few verses of the very first book of their Bible. And He continues all the way through Malachi.

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. Now, we almost got out of that section alive, having survived temporary gifts and tongues and baptism and women in the church and all these other things. But the very last word there, as many as the Lord our God will call.

This tempts me to dive into calling and election, but I'm going to resist because we have a much more controversial and much more pertinent place to do that coming up here in the near future. So if you can put as many as the Lord our God will call on hold for a little bit, believe me, we will run into a passage where we have no choice but to straighten that out. For now it is sufficient for our purposes to understand that people would not come to God, could not come to God, if He did not call us.

You cannot crash the party. You have to be invited. If there is no invitation, you cannot show up and be accepted.

You have to be invited. That's what the call is. So our question, which we'll answer a little bit later, is who are these many that the Lord will call? Is it universal? Is it limited? We'll address that here shortly.

So now let's continue in verse 40. With many other words, He testified and exhorted them, saying, Be delivered, be saved from this perverse generation. I think we talked last time about sozo here in the passive.

Be saved. Sozete is the way it occurs in Greek. Apotes geneas.

From this generation. This crooked one. That's what it literally says in Greek.

Be saved from this generation. This crooked one. The word crooked is scolias.

S-K-O-L-I-A-S. We have this in English. Scoliosis.

People with a curvature of the spine. It means a crookedness. A twisting.

Now, why does He say this? Why doesn't He say be saved from the tormenting, burning flames of hell? I would submit that it is because that is not what they need saving from. In the same way that Moses made the appeal in the wilderness, God made the appeal through Moses in the wilderness. Be delivered out of this perverse generation.

The generation that we've seen on Sunday mornings where Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the ground opens up and swallows them the way the water opened up and swallowed the Egyptians. A perverse generation. A crooked generation.

It does not mean an unsaved generation. It does not mean a lost and hellbound generation. It means one that is not.

If the road that goes through the straight gate is straight, and if you are crooked, how are you going to follow a straight line when you can't steer a straight line? This is the old sobriety test. Drunk drivers get stopped and they say, okay, walk this line. Well, you can't because you're crooked.

You've messed up with alcohol. You cannot walk the straight line. This perverse generation, this scolious generation, cannot walk the straight line.

The generation is not going to be saved. Individuals in the generation can be saved out of it. So at this point, in a sense, it is every man for himself.

Be delivered from this perverse generation. This puts us in mind of the first chapter of Colossians. I think that's where I'm trying to go.

No? You know, I don't know why that does not stick in my mind. I have looked at it. I have memorized it.

And I can never keep it in my head. It is Galatians chapter 1, verse 4. Talking about the Lord Jesus who gave Himself for our sins in order that He might deliver us from this present evil age. This ionos poneru.

Evil time. Evil age. The generation is a measure of time.

So is the ionos. When it says unto the ages, A-C-I-S-E-I-O-N-O-S That's what we translate forever. We say unto the ages or forever.

When you see forever in a King James or New King James, it's unto, A-C-I-S-E-I-O-N-O-S. Unto the ages. It means just indefinitely far into the future.

Same thing we have here. We have be saved from this crooked generation. Then, those who gladly received His words, and the word gladly is not in our oldest and best manuscripts.

It is not a matter of your emotion when you accept or reject the Word of God, whether

you are a believer or an unbeliever. Sometimes you receive it with joy. Sometimes it's very uncomfortable.

Think about the last time you got some constructive criticism. All of us get criticism. Some of it is constructive.

Some is not. But upon reflection, after we calm down and look, we realize, well, that really is a helpful thing that I needed to know, but it was kind of painful to receive. When we get correction or rebuke or instruction, a lot of times it is very annoying.

It's very hard to receive it with grace because we don't like to be wrong. We don't like to have our flaws pointed out. And it's irritating.

It grates on our nerves. Some of these people probably had a hard time admitting that Peter was right. And it wasn't with gladness that they received it.

Oh, I'm so glad to know that I missed the Messiah and now I'm picking up after the fact. I crucified the Lord of Glory. Isn't that wonderful? Well, that's not in the text.

The Holy Spirit didn't tell Luke to write, gladly received. Some later contributor has put that in. Those who received His Word, it doesn't matter if they were happy, glad, sad, mad.

It makes no difference what their emotional state was. They received it. They took it on board.

And those who received His Word were baptized. We've covered baptism. This is a Jewish rite.

I was reading after the fact. I just got a volume of Adam Clark. I didn't have the volume that had Acts in it.

It came this past week, so I looked to see what Adam Clark had to say about baptism. He agrees with us, so I like him even more. He says, Baptism, it was the Jewish way of understanding joining.

It was a Jewish custom. It was a Jewish rite. These people being baptized in the name of Jesus, this also indicates to them that they may be leaving the realm of Judaism and entering the realm of Christianity in the same way that a proselyte would come to Israel and be baptized.

By being baptized in the name of Christ, they are taking a step beyond traditional Judaism. And they know that not everyone is going to want to take that step. So this is a step of faith, not only faith in Christ, but also a willingness to step out of their tradition and their religion.

And that day, it says in verse 41, about 3,000 souls were added. This is a lot of people. You think about, I try to think of a pool of water where these people were being baptized.

If you put 3,000 people in and have 3,000 people walk back out with their sopping wet clothes, you could imagine the water level just going down. I mean, this is a lot of people. When I try to think of a large number, I think about the brigade of midshipmen because I saw them all in one place and I knew there were 4,500 of them.

So I visualize you have some frame of reference for a large crowd. Think about a stadium or a section of a stadium that seats however many people. 3,000 people is a whopping lot of people.

All of these people evidently came to recognition of Christ and were baptized. You've got 3,000 sopping wet people walking around the area. And they, who were added to the relatively small core of disciples that existed previous to the day of Pentecost.

So now you've got 3,000 added to the, say, 40 or 50 that they started with. They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayers. Now when it says the Apostles' doctrine here, this is literally the Apostles' teaching.

This is didache from didaskalos. Didaskalos is the word for teacher. The Lord gave the church some to be Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and poimen kai didaskalos, pastors and teachers.

This is the teaching function. And so this is what needs to happen in any model of evangelism or any model of change of mind. If someone comes to consciousness of the things of God, whether they used to be an unbeliever or they are now a believer, it is essential to begin feeding your soul.

Soul needs spiritual food, and that comes from the teaching, didaske, of the Apostles, and in the koinonia, the fellowship, breaking of bread, the shared meals, and in prayers. Notice you have intake of the Word of God through teaching. You have exhale or breathing out application of the Word of God in fellowship and in prayer.

Fellowship, breaking of bread, this is a figure of speech that talks about conversation and time spent in exchange of ideas, answering of questions. So you have this horizontal aspect, and you have the vertical in prayer. Then fear came on every soul.

Now is this a good thing? Phobos, that's where we get phobia. Fear came on every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the Apostles. What sort of fear would this be? Sounds like a pretty happy group there.

So what is this kind of phobos? When I was wiring the pump and the lights for our pool, and I stuck the wires into the breaker box, and I installed my own breaker, and I realized

that I had 220 volts there in my hands, I had a deep and abiding respect for the fact that it could kill me at any single moment of carelessness. I was not quaking, and I was not trembling, I was not terrified, but I had a phobos, a very healthy regard and respect that conditioned all of my actions. I didn't let anything metallic and sharp be in my hand and near the wire at the same time.

I ensured that the power was shut off at the times when I was making connections. I made sure that nothing got in the way of my first and foremost priority of not getting killed over a silly swimming pool pump. This is the kind of phobos that we should have for God.

We do not quake, we do not tremble, we are not in abject terror of Him, but His presence and His eye upon us should condition every thought and every action. This is phobos. This is the fear of the Lord.

The Old Testament says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Electricity is a wonderful thing. The people on the East Coast found that out in the last few days with their big blackout.

Electricity is a wonderful thing. We don't typically fear it, but we certainly respect it, and we know that it can kill us if we do not respect it and don't follow procedures to ensure that it is our servant and not our executioner. The same idea applies when it comes to the fear of the Lord.

I think that's really the only illustration of that we need. I think we understand that it goes beyond a good opinion of God. Lots of people say, Oh, I think God's great, God is love, made the world, that's just wonderful.

But if there is not a regard for God in our daily life, if we don't acknowledge that if He is not pleased, life is not worth living. If He is not pleased, our activities are not worth completing. If God is not pleased with the way we're doing something, we might as well just stop because it is worthless.

It is useless. It will not be blessed. It will not bear fruit.

It will not reflect the glory of God. It has no redeeming value whatsoever. And if it's pleasing to us and not to God, it's that much worse.

Because we have now elevated ourselves above God, and it is a fearful thing to violate the first commandment. Thou shalt have no other gods ahead of me, God says. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength.

And that means that He gets first consideration, top billing, first priority. Pleasing Him should be our highest goal. The things that He values should be our values.

And if we are mismatched in any of those areas, there are severe, egregious consequences. It is not a light thing to go against the Lord God. He has illustrated that for us in so many ways.

We reviewed this past Sunday. The first time somebody violated Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. A man went out and said, you know, I need a few sticks.

Picked up a couple of dead branches and died for it. Why did God tell Israel to stone the man to death? He says, look, I want you to take what I say seriously. This is why consequences need to follow bad actions, whether it's in a school, whether it's in a society, whether it's in a home, wherever it may be.

Bad actions and bad decisions need to bring bad consequences to teach us, especially in the spiritual area. So, notice, because of this fellowship, because of this growth in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, because of their prayer and their fellowship in the things of the Spirit, a healthy fear of God develops. This was lacking in the Jews.

With all of their religion and all of their folly while they were in Jerusalem, they didn't have a fear of the Lord. Now they do. Fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

These are confirmatory. These are encouraging. These authenticate the message of the apostles, tell the people that God is, in fact, giving them the authority to speak, giving them the words to say.

Now, verse 44, all who believed were together and had all things in common and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all as anyone had need. This is communism. If there's one thing that makes my adrenaline level go up and set my teeth on edge and make me want to grab a weapon and start firing, it is communism.

I grew up when communism was a severe threat, when it had slaughtered millions of people all around the world, when we had men fighting and dying in Vietnam because there were communists, godless, communist, savage pagans in China, working through the North Vietnamese, killing people. My father was over there. They tried to kill him.

And I have no love for communism, whether it is implemented or whether it is a philosophy. Anything communist just raises any red-blooded American's hackles. Well, this is communism.

What is communism in its purest form? Everybody shares everything. Russian communism, Chinese communism is a different thing because in its implementation you have a perversion because what they've actually done is subdue all of the masses and rake in all of the wealth and have a few people living in mansions and driving big cars and running the government and skimming all of the largesse while the rest of the people are waiting in line for a bar of soap. But the main question here is is this a model

that we should follow? Once we join a church, should we all pool our collective resources and the less fortunate should have sort of a Robin Hood idea? What have we seen in these first verses of Acts, this first chapter and a half that we've covered? What did we see in the arena of water baptism and in speaking foreign languages? This is a transitional time.

This is not a time to draw timeless procedures for the operation of a church from. That includes pooling resources. That includes having all things in common and staying all together in a big commune.

It means we don't water baptize. It means we don't wait for someone to speak in a foreign language and so on. We understand that these are teaching tools.

They are reinforcing and encouraging tools in a time when there is no Bible, in a time when there is no teaching apart from what the apostles and the supernatural, temporary spiritual gifts can provide. There is a need for encouragement. There is a need to stick together.

There is a need as they blaze a new trail into the church age to have some special measures taken. And this is one of them. How do we know this? Are we just picking and choosing and saying, well, I don't like that one so that was temporary.

Here is the criteria. Ask yourself this question. If I see something in the book of Acts in the first ten chapters, do I find it in the epistles to the churches? Do I find it in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Timothy or Titus? Do I find it in Hebrews? Do I find it in James? Do I find it in 1st and 2nd Peter? Do I find it in 1st, 2nd and 3rd John? All of those letters were sent, with the possible exception of Hebrews, all of those letters were sent to churches and pastors of churches to teach how the believers in this age should function.

So if you find Paul or Peter or John encouraging saints in some town to pool their resources and have all things in common, if you see them encouraging them to speak in tongues and to interpret in tongues, if you see them encouraging to baptize, then you have grounds for bringing that practice down through the decades and centuries and millennia of the church age. If not, it gives one pause for thought. Does it not? If these things are important, if they are essential, if they are central to the operation of the church, why does Paul never mention them? Why does Peter never mention them? Why does John never mention them? Why does the Lord Jesus in Revelation 2-3 to the letters to the seven churches never mention them? Because they are part of the transition.

And this is how we know. Scripture interprets Scripture. So, do not come under conviction and decide that you need to sell all your worldly goods and give me the money and move into my house.

We're not going to do it. So, verse 46. Continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house.

Now notice verse 42 and verse 46. Breaking bread from house to house. What is an essential component that is emphasized and is reinforced in the Catholic epistles as they are called, the epistles to the churches? Christian fellowship.

Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the habit of some is. You have Paul talking about how to conduct oneself when you are breaking bread over in Corinthians. Talking about the Lord's table.

And do you not have sufficient food at home that you come to the fellowship meal and hog the food so that some are gorged and others go hungry? Notice he tells the Corinthians don't you have food at home of your own? He doesn't say when you come to the commune you're hogging some of the food. He says, don't you have food and drink at home that you don't need to come and make a pig of yourself at the fellowship meal? Well, it's easy to see. Look for the things that are common.

Look for the things that are projected into the future. Look at what scripture emphasizes as you move into the later years of the first generation of the church. Those are the things that last.

And one of those that last is Christian fellowship. If we want to find encouragement and strength and the ministry of spiritual gifts that God has provided to build us up we need to stick with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to cultivate and look for opportunities.

I was talking to my cousin Bob who was here a week or so ago. And our generation is now reaching the point the generation that preceded us had reunions and made efforts to keep in touch and we were thinking it's about our turn to start trying to do that. We have to sort of make an effort to find ways to spend time together because they're in Tennessee, we're in Texas, there's others in Oklahoma and California and Florida and all over the map.

And if we want to stay close as a family we're going to have to make a little bit of an effort to get together and to plan to co-locate and to spend time in fellowship. The same is true in the family of God. It is a matter of importance to find ways to spend time with believers of like mind.

We are not an island. God did not design us to go sit by the brook Cherith and wait for the rapture. We gain.

We can bless others and we can be blessed ourselves by Christian fellowship. But sometimes it takes an effort. We have to maybe sacrifice a little.

We have to organize a little. We have to work a little to make sure that we avail ourselves of the grace of God that is present in the body of Christ in our fellow believers, particularly those who are of like mind. This is what they did.

Continuing daily with one accord in worship at the temple, breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. Well, this is a good place for us to stop. We have one more phrase here.

The Lord added daily to the church those who were being saved. We are easing into this calling and election business bit by bit. But let's pause here and take our break.

Spend a little time in fellowship ourselves. And when we come back, we will pick up at the end of verse 47.