

THE FIRST SERMON Transcript

By Dr. Ron Jones

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Well, today I'm gonna preach a sermon about a sermon. How's that for a way to start this morning. I'm going to preach a sermon about the first sermon that was ever heard in the church. And I'm talking about the one that Peter delivered 2000 years ago on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem. It's recorded for us in Acts 2 and verses 14 to about 41 or so. But before we get to Acts, as I was studying this week, it made me think—this whole topic did—about the fact that some people...not everybody, but some people say preaching has fallen on hard times. That it's kind of outdated for our day and age and we need to update the way we communicate in the church and, you know, this preaching...nobody wants to be preached at. Nobody wants to hear a sermon. Even in a lot of churches we talk about message, but not a sermon because that's just kind of off-putting to people. We need to update things and not preach at people. Maybe we need to have a panel discussion like a talk show on Sunday morning. And when I hear discussions like that or read articles about that, I cannot disagree more. And it's not because I'm trying to validate what I do, all right. Somebody might be going, "Yeah, the preacher thinks we ought to have a sermon and be preaching." No, it's not because I'm validating myself or what my friends and colleagues do. It's because, as I read the scripture, what I learn is that God always has an always will use the preaching of His Word to do two things- to reach lost people with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and to build up the body of Christ.

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Now, there are other ways to do that, mind you. One on one conversation, maybe even a panel discussion. I don't know. But when it comes to the local church, we talk about the primacy of preaching. It isn't outdated. It's the thing we do. It's the thing God does. It's the thing that He has put in place as the primary...not the only, but the primary way He communicates to us is through the preaching of His Word. And we see that in Acts 2. We see this in the first sermon that was ever preached. And we see it in verses of scripture outside of Acts 2.

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Let me just suggest a few to you. 1 Corinthians 1:21, "God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believed." Yeah, some people think that preaching is foolishness even for today. Some people think the message of the cross is foolishness. Some people think that preachers are foolish. Okay. I'll sign up for that. There's a little foolishness in me. But it was the foolishness of the message preached that God used to save those who believe. Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing," say it with me, "by the Word of God." All right? We need to hear the Word of God even as it is preached. Paul said to a young preacher named Timothy, who was about to become the lead pastor of the church in Ephesus. He told him, "Timothy, preach the word." Preach the Word. Don't preach your opinion. Don't preach your advice. A friend of mine posted somewhere on social media this week. He said, "Listen, if you want your church to grow, stop preaching your opinion and start preaching the Word of God." That goes all the way back to Paul's instruction to Timothy, right? Preach the Word.

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Romans 10:14, the apostle Paul asks these rhetorical questions. “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believe? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” And then 1 Corinthians 2:4, Paul says, “My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.” And that’s what good preaching always is. It’s not by might. It’s not by power. Sure, God uses gifted communicators and all of that, but He can use an ungifted communicator because it is by His Spirit. It’s in demonstration of His Spirit and the power of God that flows through. And this is what we see in Acts 2. The result of the first sermon delivered by a man named Peter can only be explained by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, because 3,000 people gave their life to Jesus Christ on the day of Pentecost, the Bible tells us.

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The purpose of preaching is transformation, not information. If all we get to on a Sunday morning is a better understanding of what the Bible said, even in its context 2000 years ago, just a better cognitive understanding of it, we’ve missed the purpose of preaching. A good sermon addresses at least two questions. What does the text say and mean? What does it mean? And to get to what it means, you’ve got to know what it says. But what does it say? And the second question is, what shall we do? Every sermon is aimed to transform us. If you walked into this place just thinking you’re gonna get a little bit of head knowledge about the Bible, learn more about the Bible and about Jesus, but not have it change your life in some way, well, you’re the fool in the room. You’re the foolish person. But we come to the Word of God with the expectation that the Spirit of God will use it to change us and shape us and mold us more and more into the image of Christ and to transform us by the power of the Word of God. And, again, we see this happening in the early church.

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Every good sermon needs at least three things. It needs to be clear and simple, easy to understand, even complicated theological ideas. But it needs to be rooted in the text of scripture, and it needs to be gospel-centered and Jesus-centered. That’s the kind of sermon I want to listen to. And that’s the kind of sermon that I want to deliver.

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With that in mind, let’s go to Acts 2 where Peter delivered the first sermon. And I’ve got to give Peter credit, because when Peter delivered this message, it’s not like he had 10, 15, 20 hours of his week to study and prepare and to provide some notes. He didn’t have any of that. I mean, he delivered this extemporaneously. He didn’t even wake up that morning necessarily expecting the coming of the Holy Spirit, but He came that day. And suddenly Peter was thrust center stage in Jerusalem, and he preached. And he preached a really good sermon.

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Now, I’ve broken up Peter’s message into eight little parts, just mental hooks to hang our thoughts on this morning. Peter probably didn’t intend this kind of breakdown. Again, he’s flowing and he’s going, and it’s coming out the way it’s coming out. But there are at least eight

things that Peter lands on here in Acts 2. And beginning in verse 12—let’s go back that far—it says, “All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others mocking said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’” Remember, the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. And the disciples, the apostles began to speak in other known languages, languages that they had not been trained in. That’s the speaking of tongues, that miracle. And people were looking around, and they were saying, “Well, what does this mean?”

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And last week we talked about...we went into the New Testament, and we talked about some implications of the coming of the Holy Spirit for you and I as believers in Jesus Christ and what all that meant. Peter goes on to answer that question in verse 14. And the first thing he says it, “Friends, what we’re experiencing today was predicted in the Old Testament.” He frames it in the context of Bible prophecy. Listen to this beginning in verse 14. “But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.’” That’s 9:00 on our calendar. “‘But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel.’” Now, Peter is going to take them into the Old Testament. Every good sermon needs to be Bible-based, right? What Bible did they have back then? Well, they had the Old Testament scriptures. And they knew those scriptures well. And Peter, you know, is drawing upon this reservoir of Old Testament Bible knowledge. And he’s saying, “Wow, what we’re witnessing today was prophesied. It was predicted by the prophet Joel.”

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And he quotes from Joel beginning in verse 17. “‘“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”’” Isn’t that a great text of scripture? And at this point Peter, no doubt, had people leaning into his message a little bit, because, again, they were familiar with the Old Testament scriptures. And now Peter was making application to what they had just experienced to the fulfillment of this Old Testament prophecy.

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He frames it in the context of the last days. Did you see that in verse 17? “And in the last days it shall be like this.” You know, a lot of times I have people ask me, “Pastor, are we living in the last days?” Well, technically, yes, because it’s a technical term that started with the birth of Jesus and goes all the way to the end of the age to His second coming. All right? The big question for us is, are we in the final days of the last days? And that’s a whole other discussion, right? Nobody knows the day or the hour when Jesus will return. But what happened 2000 years ago was the beginning of God’s final countdown, the last days until Jesus comes again at His second coming. Peter even mentions the day of the Lord in verse 20, again, a

technical term that refers generally to that time from the rapture of the church through the Tribulation period and specifically to the day of the Lord when Jesus comes again, His second coming at the end the Tribulation period and at the Battle of Armageddon.

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Now, what's interesting is when he's quoting from Joel here, all that he says here and all that he quotes up through verse 18 seemed to have happened on the day of Pentecost. You know, "pour out his Spirit on all flesh," and visions and dreams and prophecies and so forth. All the signs and the wonders and the miracles that took place during the apostolic era. But he goes on to say the prophecy says, "I'll show wonders in the heavens and signs on the earth below and blood and fire and vapor of smoke," and so forth. Well, that didn't happen 2000 years ago, again, an indication that this time frame known as the last days is much more than just the day of Pentecost. This was a starting point, a beginning timeframe. All of the changes in the heavenly realms and in the sky above and changes in the earth and the moon and the sun and all of that will happen as we get closer and closer to the end of the age and certainly toward the second coming of Jesus Christ and during the Tribulation period. But Peter says all of this was predicted. This is easily understood in the context and in the framework of God's plan and the prophecies He's predicted.

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Then he goes on to talk about Jesus. And the first thing he says is that Jesus was attested. Let's read on in verse 22. "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know." He's reminding them of things that they already know about this Jesus. But he calls Him attested. What does he mean? He was authenticated. He was validated through the signs, the wonders and miracles that even Jesus performed. The ultimate authentication of His ministry and His identity was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But do you remember the miracles of Jesus? There are many of them recorded in the gospel records, and the wonders and the signs that He performed. John records eight sign miracles in the Gospel of John, a sign being something that pointed to the fact that He was the Messiah.

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Do you remember when He started His ministry in Nazareth in the synagogue? He grabbed the scroll of Isaiah, opened it up and read that passage that says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and he has anointed me to do all these things. To heal the blind, to heal the lame," and so on and so forth. And He rolled up the scroll, He sat down, and He says, "This day this prophecy has been fulfilled in me." Okay? A little bit later John the Baptist...remember when John was arrested and thrown in prison and about to be beheaded? And John had a moment of doubt, and he sent word through his disciples to Jesus and said, "Jesus, are you really the one we've been waiting for? Are You really the Messiah?" And do remember what Jesus said to John's disciples? He says, "Go tell him about the miracles, the signs and the wonders and all those things that testify to the fact and authenticate My ministry that I am the one you've been looking for." And Peter just reminds these people on that day. "This Jesus you know about, He was authenticated. He was validated through all of these things. And then He was arrested."

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Peter fast forwards through Jesus's life and ministry and says in verse 23, "This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." I take that phrase "delivered up" to just refer to that time in the Garden of Gethsemane when, well, He was arrested. And that started His journey to the cross. But He wasn't just arrested. He was, kind of, predestined to be arrested. Isn't that what he's saying there? "Delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." Another translation says "the predetermined plan of God." In other words, it was important for Peter to communicate to these folks and for them to understand that this Jesus who was arrested and crucified, it didn't happen by accident, okay. It didn't happen because He got on the wrong side of religious politics. No, He came for the purpose of going to the cross. He willingly went to the cross. In fact, the language here in the original text suggests that God appointed Him to this duty. The word "foreknowledge" suggests God has been thinking about it for a long, long time, since before the foundations of the world. This was part of the Father's plan. And Peter is trying to frame their present day circumstances 2000 years ago in the context not only of Bible prophecy, but of God's larger plan and program that He's been thinking about and putting in motion since before the foundations of the world.

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And then He gets on to the crucifixion in verse 23. He says, "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men." Now this is where we go, "Ouch," if you were a Jew, one of the men of Israel and their families listening 2000 years ago, because Peter kind of puts the blame in their hands. Even though he just said, "Listen, this was all part of the predetermined plan of God, but you killed Him, you lawless men." There was nothing more insulting to a Jew to be called a lawless person, somebody who didn't follow the law of God. And it's a reminder, this interchange of the predetermined plan of God, and yet "you did this and you were lawless,"...it's a reminder that God has a remarkable way of rolling out His plan, His destiny, and then holding responsible those who carried it out for Him.

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Remember the time He did this with Pharaoh? The Bible says He hardened Pharaoh's heart, but then He holds Pharaoh responsible for what He did with his hardened heart. And you can say, "Well, that's not fair." I kind of agree with you. But I'm not God, and neither are you. That's just how He operates. And it's that mysterious world of the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. God is able to create free will beings like you and me without losing a bit of His sovereignty and His control. I don't know how He does that, but we just see evidence of that in scripture, and here is one of those places.

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He was crucified, then He was resurrected. And Peter goes into great detail now about the resurrection. Every sermon worth listening to gets quickly to the cross of Jesus Christ and to the resurrection, because this is the central message (0:19:00.1) of the Bible. And in verse 24, Peter says, "God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death,"—we'll come back to that phrase in a moment—"because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him..." Now he's going to go into the Old Testament. Now he is going to root what he's been saying not just in their experience, but in the scriptures that they know. And he goes back to something that King David, who was a hero to Israel, that King David wrote under the

inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Verse 25, “For David says concerning him.” Who’s Him? Messiah, Jesus. “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life and (0:20:00.1) make me full of gladness with your presence.”

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Now, that’s resurrection language if you don’t recognize it. That’s an Old Testament prophecy. Not so much concerning David, but concerning the future resurrection of Messiah. Especially that phrase, “For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.” Why do we say that refers to Jesus and His resurrection and not to King David, who penned those words? Well, Peter goes on to explain. Verse 29, ““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.” The reason that wasn’t a prediction about King David is because David’s body is right over here in the tomb, but Jesus’s is not. The Holy One to which David was referring, even though he might not have recognized it at the time, was the Holy One of God, Jesus Himself, whose body did not decay in the grave.

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In fact, back to that phrase, “God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death.” Think of the birth pangs of a mother’s womb. The tomb was not a place where His body decayed. The tomb was a womb that gave birth, new life three days later as Jesus came walking out of that grave. What a wonderful way to view Jesus’s death on the cross and, even as He walked into that tomb, as a womb that gave birth to new life. Verse 30, “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,” Says Peter. “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.” I just imagine Peter...you know, the passion flowing through him right now as he gets down to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And he says, “Listen, we’re all witnesses to this. We saw the risen Christ. We were here when He was arrested, when He was crucified, when He was buried, and when He rose again from the dead.”

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The most credible witness in the 1st century was an eyewitness. Remember, we talked about the apostolic age and the credibility of an apostle who saw with his own eyes the risen Christ. And Peter gives testimony to that when he says, “We were all witnesses.

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And then there is a veiled reference to the ascension in verse 33. “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God.” Well, He was ascended and then exalted. And that exaltation is further described. “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. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to

my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” Again, he goes into the Old Testament and, with the use Bible prophecy and understanding his times and what’s happening there, he links that to what they’re experiencing. And then he says in verse 36, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

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Wow! What a powerful message. And Peter covered a lot of ground in this, but he hit on all the high points, didn’t he? And whether you believed him or not, Peter certainly believed it. But look at the response beginning in verse 37. Remember I said that all great sermons answer at least two questions- what does this mean? And to get to that, you’ve got to know what it says. Read it. Ask the interpretive question. What does it mean? And what does it mean for us in our time frame, right? And then what shall we do? This isn’t just about getting some more Bible information in our minds. It’s about living out the truth.

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And I love the way the people responded here. 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.’” What shall we do? What shall we do? Again, my encouragement is always that we’re asking that question. How does this apply to my life? How am I to live differently as a result of the message that I heard today? I understand that sometimes that gets a little bit muddled in my communication and others. But Peter makes it very, very clear here.

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By the way, it say, “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart.” This is language that describes the conviction of the Holy Spirit. That is one of the jobs of the Holy Spirit. Jesus mentioned this in the upper room in John 16. He says when the Holy Spirit comes, one of His jobs among many is “to convict the world of sin and unrighteousness.” I know some people that say, “You know, I need a religion that is guilt free and without shame.” And I say, well, you’ll never come to the cross of Christ without a conviction of sin. It’s the Holy Spirit’s job to speak the truth to us in a way that it cuts our heart.

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I think of Hebrews 4:12 when I read their response. “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, or joints and or marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” My job is not to make you feel guilty or to heap shame upon you. That’s the Holy Spirit’s job, that when our lives are not rightly related to Him, when there is sin in our life...maybe it’s the sin of unbelief. You’ve never repented of your sins. You’ve never come to faith in Jesus Christ. There should be a moment of conviction that “if I don’t get this right, I’m in a really bad spot. I’ve broken God’s laws.” And you come to the cross of Christ as a humble sinner. Conversion experiences that are apart from that, I don’t see that in the Bible. It’s the Holy Spirit’s job to bring godly sorrow to our hearts because of our sin. And 2000 years ago when they heard this message, they didn’t say, “Ah, Peter, whatever.” And they weren’t indifferent. Indifference is a decision. It’s a

decision to walk away and to reject the truth that you've heard. They were cut to the heart. The Word of God came at them and in them like a surgeon's knife that cut deep into the joints and and marrow and the sinew of your soul and brought godly sorrow to your heart. Such that you would say, "What shall we do?" And Peter says, "I'm glad you asked."

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Number one, he says you need to turn. He says repent. It's a word that sounds kind of archaic, doesn't it? Repent. We heard it at the beginning of John's ministry and of Jesus's ministry. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," John the Baptist said. Jesus comes along. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Repent is a good Bible word you can't get away from, and it means "to turn." Do the 180. Stop going in the direction that you're going toward your sin and yourself and toward your idolatry. Turn away from idols and turn toward the true and living God. Peter says, "You want to know what you should do? Turn right now. Just stop where you are, turn, and run toward God.

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Secondly, testify. He says, "Repent and be baptized...in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Now, baptism is the way we testify, right? It's the way we go public with our faith, you know, New Testament believer's baptism. I always say everybody needs to preach at least one sermon, all right. Every Christian needs to preach one sermon. Now, don't get nervous. I'm not going to ask you to do public speaking or anything like that. But baptism is a sermon, and it's a very simple three-point sermon. You identify with the death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's all you've got to say. In fact, you don't say anything. You're just baptized. You're identified with the death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And what you're saying is, "I've decided to follow Jesus. I unashamedly go public with my faith." So he says turn and then testify.

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Now, back in the 1st century, for you to testify that you were a follower of Jesus Christ and go public with your faith, it meant that your life was probably in danger. And there are parts of the world today where that's true, that if you go public with your faith in other parts of the world outside of our United States, you know, it may cost you your life. Not so much here in our part of the world, but it might cost you a friendship. It might cost you a promotion. It may send you culturally and in terms of your relationship to the Island of Misfit Toys. You know, you don't get invited to all the reindeer games anymore because you're one of those Jesus people. Okay. But you still have to testify. There are no secret service Christians. You can't be in the witness protection program and be a Christian. You've got to testify, all right. And some people say, "Well, my religion is private to me." No, it's not. It's personal. We're gonna get to that in a moment. But it was never meant to be private. Jesus died for us publicly on the cross, and He expects us to testify, to identify with Him, to go public with our faith. And that's what New Testament baptism is all about.

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Now, at the risk of being tedious here, I know I need to drill down a little bit. Because the implication in Peter's response here raises the question, is Peter talking about baptismal

regeneration? It's a theological idea that suggests that baptism is required for salvation. And we teach, and the Bible is clear in other New Testament passages, baptism is not required for salvation. Salvation is required for baptism. You're baptized when you become a believer in Jesus Christ. And we call it believer's baptism because faith in Jesus comes first, you turn, and then you testify. But it sounds like Peter is saying, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It sounds like, if we take this as an ordering of events, that you repent, you're baptized. And when you do those two things, then you'll be forgiven, and then you'll receive the Holy Spirit.

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We've got to be careful with using this phraseology as an ordering of events, because elsewhere in the book of Acts people repented, they receive the Holy Spirit, and then were baptized. We can go to some places in Acts where that happened. So this is not to establish an ordering of events. The other confusion here is around...and this is where I've got to get tedious...the word "for." "For the forgiveness of your sins." This is where it helps to go deeper into the original language, the Greek language. And you'll find a little word pronounced *eis*, often translated "for." But there are three ways to define *eis* or to use *eis* in the Greek language. One, to say "in order to." In other words, repent and be baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of your sins. That's one way to understand it. Another way is "so that." A third way is "with respect or reference to." In other words, repent, and then you're baptized in reference to the forgiveness of your sins. In other words, we would call it a picture, a symbol of what happened to you- the death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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Baptismal regeneration, which rose sometime in church history, suggests that baptism is required for salvation. We would say in our context, no, it's not by works, even the work of baptism. And when you have a passage here that in the English is a little bit unclear, what you've got to do is go to those clearer passages elsewhere in the Bible where it is clearly stated, you know, the requirement of salvation by grace and through faith alone kind of thing. Not of works, lest any man should boast. And then come back to the passages that are unclear, do a little bit more of a deep dive to understand- are we missing something in the English language here as it was translated? And I think we are here. It's an unfortunate translation. Peter is not saying that baptism is required for the forgiveness of your sins. So I wouldn't build a whole theology around baptismal regeneration from this passage for the reasons that I just implied.

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Back to what Peter tells them to do. He tells them to turn. He tells them to testify. And then he says to make it personal. He says, "Repent and be baptized every one of you." It could also be translated "each one of you." This is a personal decision for you and I to make. Should we respond? Should we be asking, what shall we do? Absolutely. And here is the idea. Nobody can believe for you. And, parents and grandparents, you can't believe for your kids and your grandkids. This is a personal decision. Not private. You go public. You testify. But it's a personal decision. When we stand before the Lord one day, it'll be a personal, one on one conversation. He says, "Each one of you baptized after you repent and do this in the name of Jesus Christ."

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The good news Peter says in a couple of places. Verse 21, “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “Each one of you need to respond, and everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord—here is the guarantee—you will be saved.” And then he says in verse 39, “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.” Just underline and circle that phrase “those who are far off.” In the New Testament language, that really refers to Gentiles. And Peter wouldn’t come to a full understanding, nor did the early church come to a full understanding of the scope of the gospel to include not just the men of Israel, which was the audience to whom Peter was talking in Jerusalem in the first sermon. Twice he refers to the men of Israel and their families. He was talking to Jews. Pentecost was the coming of the Holy Spirit to Jews. But the gospel and the Holy Spirit was for everyone, including those who are far off, including Gentiles.

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Fast forward now to Acts 10. Peter would have to have the vision. He would travel from Joppa to Caesarea to meet a Gentile Roman official named Cornelius. And it was there that Peter finally realized this is all for the Gentiles, too. And that was the reason why the baptism of the Holy Spirit was delayed until that moment, because word had to get around that this was not just for the Jews. It was also for the Gentiles. And now Peter, you know, a central figure in the church, is face to face with a Gentile who comes to faith in Christ. And the baptism of the Holy Spirit falls on him, too? You’ve got to be kidding me. Well, Peter, you said it back in chapter 2. It’s for those who are far off, too.

0:38:14.3

And it’s for anybody today who is far away from God. You may be here today, and you just feel so strange in a place like this. Gentiles were considered strangers to the covenant promises of God. Well, we’re all strangers when we’re outside of a relationship with God. This may seem so strange to you, so odd to you to be in a church, to have somebody preaching at you. Maybe you didn’t grow up in a place like this, and you feel far, far away from God. Listen, this is for you, too. It’s for prodigal sons and daughters who are far, far away from God in another country somewhere, extravagantly spending away their life and far, far away from God. On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came, it was a coming home party for that group of people, too. And it’s a coming home party today. Every week we gather to celebrate the resurrected Christ it’s a coming home party. And it’s a celebration for all who were once far away who are willing to come home by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let’s pray together.

0:39:23.8

Father, thank You for this time in Your Word. A lot of ground to cover this morning, but such important ground to cover. And I pray for anybody here today under the conviction of the Holy Spirit who is saying, “What shall I do with this,” that today would be a day they turn. That they turn from their sin, from their wicked ways, from a life of selfishness and godlessness, and turn to the one true and living God who sent His Son Jesus to die upon the cross for our sins and who rose from the dead. Father, how can we not respond? We can’t remain indifferent to it. We have a choice to make today. And if that describes where you are today, let me just encourage you to just reach out to God by faith in the quietness of your heart with words that

might sound something like this. “God, You got me today. There is something stirring in my spirit right now making me feel really, really uncomfortable. And I guess it’s that conviction of the Holy Spirit thing, and I want to respond today. I want to say yes to Jesus, place my faith and trust in Him as my only hope for the forgiveness of my sins and for a home in heaven, for eternal life beyond the grave.” Father, however that cry of the heart comes up, I pray that You’d recognize it as faith, and, on the promise of Your Word, grant forgiveness and the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. And I pray this in Jesus’s name, amen.

0:41:48.8