

***The Great Stories of the Early Church***  
***04 - The Day of Pentecost, 02***  
***How Do We Proclaim the Gospel?***  
***Acts 2:1-47***

Acts 2:1-47

- 1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
- 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
- 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.
- 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
- 5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.
- 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.
- 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?
- 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?
- 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,
- 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,
- 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.
- 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?
- 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.
- 14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:
- 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.
- 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
- 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:
- 18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:
- 19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:
- 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:
- 21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.
- 22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among

you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. KJV

### **Introduction:**

We live in a day in which we are, and have been, lectured by religious professionals about how we are to proclaim the gospel. They have told us and continue to tell us that our methods must adapt to the times, that the world has changed, the old ways have moved into history and if we are to be effective we must adapt, modify, alter, and shift style to keep pace with modern development. And, many churches have tried and are trying their recommendations. Some are gathering large crowds and are seemingly being successful in many ways. Preaching against sin has become forbidden, unless, of course the preacher is railing on currently unpopular people and/or their lifestyles. But nothing is said which cuts 'across the grain' and the preacher never dares to challenge his audience on their sins. As a result, the churches are having no impact whatsoever on the declining morality even of their own memberships, never mind the culture in which they exist.

It is time to declare that the modern system has failed and realize that the methodology of preaching given in scripture is adequate for every culture and every time. Christianity has never been about how many people we can get into one building at one time. It has rather been about seeking to rescue souls from everlasting destruction by calling them to the kind of repentance that God requires and to the faith that saves eternally the ones who are enabled to grasp it.

We come this morning to consider the message of Peter at Pentecost and others in the book of Acts as examples of the kind of preaching that was resulting from the visit of the Spirit of God upon humanity in those early days of the church. Rather than seeking to understand how to modify them to make them more palatable to our generation, we want to understand how to imitate them as faithfully as possible. But in order to do that we must understand what it was exactly that they were doing.

### **Notice that Peter began with politeness to his audience, v. 14, 22.**

“Ye men of Judea and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem...”

“Ye men of Israel...”

The gospel message is intended to appeal to the rational part of man and, as such, begins with addressing the higher senses of the sinner. Unregenerate men, though they are all captives to sin, are not all continually given to their baser natures. Even though the Doctrine of Total Depravity is true, most people are not as bad as they can possibly be and almost every unconverted person has some sense of nobility and goodness about him. It is to that nature that the gospel message appeals.

Think about it, what first draws a person toward the gospel?

- A knowledge of something lacking in himself and a desire to be something better.
- A curiosity about religion and spiritual things.
- Fear of the Just and Righteous Judgment of God.
- A desire to not continue in his present life because he knows it to be flawed.

- A longing and a hope for a better state, not primarily physical but spiritual and emotional.

These are all evidences of a real and genuine longing for God. These people were not here at Jerusalem on Pentecost with consciously evil purposes in mind. They were, in one fashion or another, seeking God, desiring to be right with Him... and that as unbelievers.

It is to that part of the sinner that we speak when we bear witness to the gospel. That being said, the gospel is only effective if the sinner is interested and he is only interested if God is doing something already in his life. These people present in Jerusalem had all come of their own will and for their own purposes, yet God the Holy Spirit had been involved in gathering many of them there to hear the gospel so as to be saved.

So, as Peter did, when we speak to someone concerning the needs of his soul, we speak to him as and equal or, if we are speaking to a group we speak to them as one of them, not as some judge shouting down to them as if they were evil beasts and we ourselves as righteous angels.

An important part of this process is finding commonality with them and that is not always the same nor is it always easy. Peter was a Jew like these people, a worshiper of the God they presumed to worship, with a common religion and a common history. But Paul did not have it so easy at Athens when invited to speak to the philosophers and the religiously curious. But he did it.

Acts 17:19-31

- 19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?
- 20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.
- 21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)
- 22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.
- 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.
- 24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;
- 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;
- 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;
- 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:
- 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

- 29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.
- 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:
- 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. KJV

He began with a gentle prod that his hearers were “too religious,” but then found a commonality of sorts. They worshiped at an altar with the inscription, “to the Unknown God,” and Paul took this piece of their consciousness as his own, affirming that he was the spokesman for this deity.

So, here he had a place from which to begin, a sort of a “jumping off place,” and he used it to affirm what this “Unknown God” had done. He even quoted from one of their own philosophers, using truth that was commonly believed to help form a “bridge” to them.

When Peter was asked to speak at Cornelius’ house to the Gentiles gathered there, Acts 10, he began with this opening comment.

Acts 10:34-35

- 34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:
- 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. KJV

Here was an affirmation of Peter’s belief that they had some things in common, they feared God and were committed to living righteously. He was likewise confident that all such people are accepted by God. Their common God, their common humanity, and their common faith put them all on equal footing, an idea that would prove very difficult even for Christian Jews at Jerusalem to accept.

Stephen used the same method when speaking to the Sanhedrin.

Acts 7:2

- 2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken... KJV

He showed both respect for and commonness with those who heard him.

Any of us who undertake to communicate the gospel to men must first *believe* that but for the grace of God they all are our equals and we must open with that as our understanding, seeking to communicate it sincerely. Human beings have keen ears for arrogance and there must be none of that in us.

**Having begun politely we must do another thing.**

This is sometimes very difficult but we notice that Peter laid hold of truths commonly held there

at Pentecost. He did the same before Cornelius, Stephen did it in front of the Sanhedrin and Paul even did it with the Athenians. The Jews to whom Peter and Stephen spoke believed that the scriptures were the Word of God. That is always a wonderful place to start. Cornelius had apparently already heard of Jesus and was in a place to readily believe on Him. The Athenians believed that there was a God Who had created them. All three of these men used the common beliefs to transition the discussion to Jesus Christ.

We should be interested enough in those to whom we speak about Christ, or those to whom we *intend* to speak with, to learn and observe, as Paul did at Athens, *what* they believe and consider what part of it might be truth. *“Where is the common ground?”* should be our questions to ourselves, *“where is that place to begin the conversation?”* And, then we should consider how we might present the gospel to them in light of that common truth.

**At some point the issue of sin and of God’s call to repentance must be laid out.**

We must settle this in our minds before we ever begin. This is that place to which every gospel message must come. Peter and Stephen plainly laid the charge of ‘murder’ concerning the death of Christ before their audience. Paul declared before the Athenians that “God hath commanded all men everywhere to repent.”

This is undoubtedly the most difficult part of the presentation of the gospel. It is most often the place that the conversation becomes tense. Often the one being addressed will become angry and defensive, resorting to accusations of hypocrisy against the one who is sharing the gospel.

Please understand, presenting the gospel is not about convincing or tricking someone into praying a prayer. It is about laying before them the very theme of Jesus’ message, “unless you repent of your sins you will never see the Kingdom of heaven. Instead, you will die in your sins and be condemned before God at the Great Judgment.”

Jesus was hated and ultimately crucified for saying that. You will stir up trouble for repeating His message as well but this is also certain, those whom you love will indeed perish unless they hear and bow before the gospel message.

Christian conversions requires the acceptances of two truths that are counter-intuitive to the unbeliever, ideas that he would never invent while sane concerning himself: personal wickedness and eternal judgment. Every person kicks and rages at the idea that he is a sinner through and through and that God has already judged him, finding him unworthy of eternal life. God the Holy Spirit must make that real but He normally does not do it apart from someone sharing that ugly information. Don’t expect for anyone to take kindly to it at first. At the same time, never suppose that anyone can be saved without believing those things to be true. These realities are fundamental to a full gospel presentation.

**The Result:**

There is a variety of results that might occur and that are possible but all of us must continually remember that we are not responsible for the outcome of any gospel message. On the Day of

Pentecost the Holy Spirit fell upon thousands with heart changing power. The same occurred at Cornelius' house. But no one apparently believed as Stephen preached. In fact, they murdered him for what he said. Even here, however, the witness was not in vain. Those who stoned Stephen laid their outer garments at the feet of a witness to the execution, Saul of Tarsus, whom God later saved, who was used to bring the gospel to Europe. There was very little in the way of response to Paul at Athens. Some mocked, others politely excused themselves, and only a few followed him.

We must not accept the thought that another's conversion depends upon us. If the message is rejected, it does not reflect badly on us. If we have the opportunity and do not speak, that is our responsibility, that is our failure. The gospel, once presented truthfully, is in the hands of God and subject to the decision of the person who hears it. The sinner bears full responsibility for what he does with that message.

### **To Review:**

When God gives us an opportunity to speak to a lost soul, we should:

Address him/her with respect

Seek to find common ground, truths that are commonly held by the two of us

Transition from those truths to a presentation of Christ, of sin, and of repentance

Be bold and be firm, polite but firm

Leave the results in the hand of God

I would also add this. Our culture has produced a lot of "gospel hardened" souls, people who have heard that gospel many times but for whatever reason have rejected it. With some of these people there is little, if any, common ground. Some of them have considered and rejected all of the truths that we hold dear. What can be done for them?

Nothing until God changes something, awakens something, disturbs their world

So... pray that He might do something

Seek from time to time to seek if the door is open yet

Keep it open on your side

Maintain hope as much as is humanly possible

Remember.... He saved you!