



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Acts 2: 14-41

Acts

“The First Sermon”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're continuing in our study in Acts and Acts 2, and this morning we're going to look at a length portion of scripture, verses 14 through 41, but I'm taking the entire section because this is the sermon that Peter delivered on the day of Pentecost and I want to treat it as a whole. I think we can make it through it and do it justice as well. It's the day of Pentecost. The Spirit has come. He has been poured out. The men and women, the apostles, and those with them, 120 that had gathered in the upper room began to speak in tongues, speak in languages, and they poured out into the streets and made their way to the temple, and the crowd gathered around them, and were amazed, we read in verse 12, that the people were speaking in their languages, and they asked the question, "What does this mean?" And there were some skeptics who were mocking and gave their explanation of what it meant. It meant that they're drunk, they're full of sweet wine they said, but Peter gives a different explanation.

And we read in verse 14, "But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: 'Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of my spirit on all mankind; 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 bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of my spirit and they shall prophesy. And I will grant wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and

glorious day of the Lord shall come. And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, 'I saw the Lord always in my presence; for he is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will live in hope; because you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Your holy one to undergo decay. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence. Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.' Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized 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 your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.' And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!' So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we come before You with praise and thanksgiving. We praise You as the sovereign God. We come to that fact in our text this morning. What

occurred at Calvary was preordained by You. You are the sovereign God. You chart things out from all eternity. You work all things according to the counsel of Your will, as Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:11. You are absolutely sovereign, and yet, we are men and women who are morally responsible for what we do, and we can praise You for Your sovereignty and thank You for the ability that You've given us to live in a way that pleases You, to believe in the truth of the Gospel because through the Spirit of God You've given us that because grace has been poured out through the crucifixion and through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we who have received it thank you for all that we have in Christ, and we thank You for the occasion that we have now to be here, to read the inerrant word of God that tells us these things and to be fed and nourished by it. We pray that that would be the result of our time together.

You have poured out the Spirit. He came on the day of Pentecost and we have Him who have believed in Jesus Christ, and He is our guard. He is our teacher. And we pray that He would teach us this morning the things that we have read and we will consider in some depth. So build us up in the faith spiritually, Father, and bless us. And we pray that You would bless those who have asked for our prayers. Bless them spiritually. Bless them physically. There are physical needs and some very great. We pray not only for healing, but for encouragement and for great blessing spiritually. We are built up in the faith in many ways, mainly through the scriptures, but also, Father, through the trials of life, and so, we pray that they would have that result with those who are in difficulty. Pray for those who are out of work. We pray that You'd give them employment. We thank You for what we have.

There's so many of us here, Father, that enjoy good health, and employment, and so many wonderful things in life. We have those, Father, because of You. All that we have, we have from above, and we thank You for it. We pray, Father, that You'd bless us this evening when we return to this place and remember our Lord and His death for us, and remember that He's coming again, and pray that You would bless that meeting, bless all who participate, and bless us now as we sing our final hymn, prepare our hearts with it for our time of study together. May it be profitable for each of us and glorifying to You. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] One of the greatest movement of the Holy Spirit in the history of the church occurred in the 18th century. It is known as the Great Awakening. In England,

it began when a young George Whitfield started preaching the Bible. People crowded into the churches. He had to preach every day to accommodate them and add services on Sundays. Wasn't long before Whitfield was preaching in the open fields to thousands upon thousands of people.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the awakening occurred in New England with the ministry of Jonathan Edwards. From his pulpit in North Hampton, he preached and people were convicted and brought to faith. He wrote that the meetings were greatly thronged. They were filled with people. Revival is unusual, but when it happens, it happens when the word of God is preached and Christ is the center of the message. That was true of the Reformation too, of the slogans of the Reformation where Sola Scriptura and Solus Christus, scripture alone and Christ alone, and it ushered in a new age of Biblical preaching.

Revival, awakening, reformation, whatever you want to call it, is produced by the Holy Spirit. He's like the wind. His movement can't be controlled. His movement can't be predicted. He moves sovereignly. He did on the day of Pentecost. He came in his time. He came with power and He produced a Great Awakening, but He did it in connection with the preaching of the word of God. The church began with a sermon. The phenomenon of tongues achieved the purpose of attracting a large crowd of people around Peter and the others in the outer court of the temple, and they were amazed and were asking, "What does this mean?"

Well, some of those there thought they knew what it meant and they explained in a mocking skeptical way that the apostles were drunk. Peter refuted the charge by saying it was too early in the morning for them to have had the opportunity to drink to excess, and then, he answered the question, "What does this mean?" with a sermon, the first sermon of the church, and it is a model sermon of apostolic preaching. We learn a lot by observing what others have done and we can learn a lot from the sermons that have been preached. Spurgeon's preacher's college had a tradition of giving students a text right on the spot and having them preach it extemporaneously to Mr. Spurgeon and his staff. That would've been a rather unnerving experience to have to preach to the prince of preachers, but one student was given the subject of Zacchaeus. And so, he stood up and said Zacchaeus was of little stature, so am I. Zacchaeus was up a tree, so am I. Zacchaeus came down and so will I. And with that, he sat down. It was, it was a

three-point sermon and it probably showed a lot of wisdom. You can't preach if you're not prepared. We learned that.

Peter was prepared. He was filled with scripture and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was under his control and his sermon reflects that. It's governed by at least four principles. It's an exposition of scripture. It is centered on Christ. It is unapologetic. It's a bold presentation of the truth and it's clear. It is a well-reasoned exposition. So first of all, Peter taught the Bible. He expounded four texts from the Old Testament, which explain what was happening on the day of Pentecost and why it was happening.

His first text is Joel 2:21-32. It explained the phenomenon of tongues. This isn't drunkenness. This, Peter said, is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel. Now, Joel prophesied judgment, but he also foretold a day of great blessing when God's people would be refreshed, when they would be satisfied through the gift of the Holy Spirit. That day had come on Pentecost. Verse 17, "And it shall be in the days' God says, 'That I will pour forth of my spirit on all mankind.'" That had happened.

So Pentecost was the obvious fulfillment of prophecy, but only a partial fulfillment. A hundred and twenty who were gathered there who had received the Holy Spirit can't be all mankind, but the Spirit had been poured out from heaven and it marked the beginning of the last days. We are now in the last days. We read that in other statements of scripture. In 1 John 2:18, the apostle wrote, "Children, it is the last hour." The author of Hebrews wrote, "In these last days, God has spoken to us in His son."

The last days are the days between the Lord's first coming and his second coming, and they've lasted now for nearly 2,000 years. Much of Joel's prophecy will occur at the end of the last days. There will be signs and wonders in the sky and on the earth. The Lord said in Matthew 24 that these will herald His coming. The sun turned to darkness, the moon turned into blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord. So there is much to come. Christ will return. He will establish His earthly kingdom, His millennial kingdom, then the spirit will be on all mankind. He will fill the earth. Young men shall see visions and old men shall dream dreams. All Israel will be saved and it will be a glorious day.

But today too is a glorious day. The Holy Spirit has been poured forth, meaning

in abundance He has come, like a rainstorm on a dry land. The believer in Jesus Christ has the fullness of the Spirit. We are fully equipped for the mission that has been given to us. We are fully equipped for the Christian life, equipped to grow in the grace, the knowledge of the Lord. We lack nothing.

If you're a young believer, if you have only recently been brought to faith in Jesus Christ, you may be 50-years-old, 60, 70-years-old, but if you're a young believer, or if you're a young, young believer, if you're a young person, a teenager who has only recently come to faith, you're fully equipped to grow and mature in the Christian life. You don't need a second blessing. You don't need to look for something further. The Spirit of God has come in fullness and we are fully equipped. And so, we are to now grow. Nothing holding you back from doing that. Every day you are to walk by the Spirit, and as you do, you will grow. Paul describes that magnificently in 2 Corinthians 3:18. He speaks how we grow from glory to glory. It's this progressive transformation that takes places throughout our life. It's never completed in this life, but we are being transformed from glory to glory every day as we walk by the Spirit, as we study His word, and that's what we're to do. We're to grow.

We lack nothing though. Nothing holds us back from doing that. We have been fully equipped for this and that is what Joel prophesied and it was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit has come. People of Jerusalem witnessed the proof of it with the miracle of tongues. They heard their own languages being spoken and they wondered, "What does this mean?" So Peter has explained it. It's not drunkenness. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfillment of prophecy. Then he goes on to show that other great events that had occurred in Jerusalem during the past 50 days were also the fulfillment of prophecy and the person and work of Jesus Christ. And here, we see the second principle of preaching and that is that it is Christ-centered.

Peter develops in these next verses the Lord's death, resurrection, ascension, and his present ministry in heaven. Now, we might have expected Peter to have continued speaking of the Holy Spirit, explaining His person and His work. He's just been poured out. This is His day, so to speak. Peter doesn't do that though. Instead, he speaks of Christ and that is consistent with the Spirit's ministry. He does not draw attention to himself. The Holy Spirit has been called the shy member of the trinity. His task is to glorify Christ. Jesus said that in John 16:14 and that's the sign of the Spirit's guidance.

That's the evidence of His work. Where the Spirit is working, Christ will be declared and glorified, and Peter does that. He begins by recalling what the men of Israel had witnessed in the Lord's ministry, how it had been attested to by God with miracles, which God performed through him. It didn't elaborate on all of that and all those in attendance knew these things, he said, points that out. They'd witnessed what had taken place in the Lord's ministry. They'd seen the healings. They knew of the raisings from the dead. They were without excuse for not having received Jesus as the messiah.

Now, he doesn't develop the Lord's earthly ministry. Instead, he came quickly to the main issue of that ministry, which is his death, the cross, because this is where the issue of salvation is settled, and that's the purpose of this message. The purpose of this sermon is to show men the way to salvation. Verse 23, "This man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." If we learn nothing else from this verse, we should learn that the cross of Christ was no mistake. It was no accident of history. It was planned and purposed by God from all eternity, and in stating that, Peter forestalls any objection that might have been made that Jesus wasn't the messiah because He'd been crucified. Some no doubt were thinking that. How would he be the messiah? He was put to death on a cross. He was crucified as a criminal. That's not the messiah. Well, he did die that death. It's true. He died the painful and shameful death of the cross, but only because he was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. Plan of salvation is accomplished by the shedding of blood. Israel's sacrificial system taught the nation that.

Mark Newman a few weeks ago taught you that very point from the book of Leviticus. Without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. The cross was prefigured in the slaughter of bulls and goats and lambs. It was God's will. And the cross of Christ will never be understood until that fact is understood. Until we realize, until we understand that it was predestined by God.

In fact, Isaiah describes the father as the one putting his son to death. Isaiah 53:10, "The Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief." And Jesus was willingly crushed. He said, "No one has taken my life from me. I lay it down on my own initiative." Why? Because that was the plan from all eternity. That's what he came to do. Now, that doesn't deny the part of men in all of this or their guilt, and Peter

does not excuse them because of the sovereignty of God, because this was planned, predestined from all eternity. In fact, just the opposite. Peter accuses them. You nailed Him to a cross, he said, by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. Divine sovereignty doesn't diminish human responsibility. Both are together here in the same verse and we find that in other places.

In Luke 22:22, Jesus said of his crucifixion and betrayal, "The son of man is going as it has been determined, determined from all eternity, but woe to that man through whom He is betrayed." And we have divine sovereignty, and yet, Judas was responsible for what he would do. Well, the other side of the coin we see in Acts 13 in verse 48 where Luke writes that "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." Appointed from all eternity, yet they responded, they acted, they believed. God's will mans response. Divine sovereignty, human responsibility; they are set side by side.

I recognize that seems problematic, but it is not. It's problematic in our minds. We can't understand it fully, but it's not problematic in terms of God's understanding and God's work. They are both clearly taught in scripture and often likened to the parallel lines of two railroad tracks, which never meet in this life. You look at the tracks and they're parallel and they don't come together, but then, if you're looking at the railroad tracks from a different perspective, if you look up, then they do appear to meet on the horizon. Now, that's an illusion with the tracks, but not with divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Those two lines are not really parallel. They do meet. They do converge perfectly at the throne of God in His eternal decree. We may not understand it all, but it works together and it's understandable for God who has plan it all and carries it out.

Peter doesn't try to explain the connection. He treats them as two obvious and inseparable principles in order to express some truth. First of all, to expose the people's guilt, and secondly, to show them God's remedy. Men crucified Jesus Christ, but only because God planned the death of his son as the lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Slain for His people, that He might save them from their sins and cleanse them from their guilt. And when that was done, when Jesus Christ had accomplished the work of the cross, when He said, "It is finished," God showed His approval of what He had done, showed that He was pleased with what His son had done, that He was

satisfied with the sacrifice that He had offered for us, He raised His son from the dead. He vindicated Him.

The sentence passed by an earthly court and carried out by Roman soldiers was reversed by a higher court. It was reversed by a heavenly court. That's Peter's next point. The God who delivered Him over by His predetermined plan raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death. That too was prophesied, as Peter shows by quoting Psalm 16, his second text, and a text that was very important to the apostles. Later, in Acts 13, Paul quotes that text to prove the resurrection of Christ. It is a psalm of David, but it has statements that clearly could not have been about David.

David expresses his confidence in the Lord. He will live in hope, he says, "Because you will not abandon my soul to Hades." Now, that's the hope that every believer has in the Lord. And so, we can live this life with real hope and with confidence because of what Christ has done on the cross and because He triumphed over death, he triumphed over the grave and the resurrection. We will not be abandoned, and that's what David writes of next, of what Christ has done. He obviously goes beyond himself when he writes, "Nor allow your holy one to undergo decay." That is about the decay of the tomb, which happens to all of us who are buried.

Everyone who's buried goes through corruption, goes through decay, but it would not happen to the Lord's holy one. That cannot refer to David because his body did undergo decay and Peter points that out. David, he said in verse 29, "both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day." His tomb was just south of the city.

In fact, there is a tomb that's located there in Jerusalem, the ruins of a tomb that you can explore. I've been in it. It's not much of a tomb, but it's called the Tomb of the Kings, and some suspect that that's the tomb that's referred to here. But it was intact in their day, and they knew just where it was, and they could have, had they wanted to, gone over to that tomb and examined its contents, and they would've found that David's body was there, that it had suffered decay, that it had turned to dust.

So he was speaking of someone else, and Peter says he was speaking as a prophet. He was looking ahead to the messiah who would die, but be preserved from the corruption of death through the bodily resurrection. But that raises the natural question, if He is not in the grave, if He has been raised from the dead, where is He now? What's become of Him? Why isn't He here in the temple preaching this sermon

rather than Peter? And Peter answers that in verse 33, "He is at the right hand of God." And from there, He has poured out the Holy Spirit. That's the reason for the amazing phenomenon that they were witnessing. Christ has ascended into heaven. He was enthroned at God's right hand.

David had written about that as well in Psalm 110, which is the next Psalm that David cites. "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" Again, the language of the Psalm points beyond David. He was not invited to sit at God's right hand. He did not ascend into heaven. The one invited to share the throne of God is the messiah very obviously. David acknowledges that by calling Him my Lord, who will rule. His enemies will be made a footstool for his feet. Jesus had already applied that text to Himself in Matthew 22, applied it to Himself before the religious authorities, and Peter applies it to Him here. And as the crowd listened, as His words sunk in, they were sobered by what they heard because it meant that the one they had rejected, God had exalted to the position of ruler over the universe. More than that, it meant that Jesus was more than a man. He's God. He is enthroned in heaven above the angels. He is equal with the Father. He is at His right hand.

Peter and the others were eyewitnesses to these things. They had witnessed the resurrected Lord. They had seen Him ascend into heaven. And the things they had witnessed were foretold by the prophets and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. All of this could lead to only one conclusion, and Peter makes it in verse 36. He said, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ." And when Peter says, "God has made Him both Lord and Christ," he does not mean that God made Jesus something that He had not been. Does not mean that God adopted Jesus as His son. He means that at the time of His ascension, God openly acknowledged Jesus to be what He is, both Lord, meaning divine – he's the son of God – and Christ, the messiah. He exalted His son to what was His by right. He triumphed at the crucifixion, and having triumphed there, he ascended into heaven as the God-man. He is the messiah ruling over the people that He has purchased and ruling over all the earth, and as the triumphant one, He has given the spoils of victory to His people by pouring out the Spirit upon them. And so, Peter in this way explains what was happening the day of Pentecost; fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, why it's happened.

Because Christ has triumphed. Christ has gained the victory at the cross. He has been raised from the dead as an expression, as the proof of God's approval of what He's done. In fact, He has ascended into heaven. He has taken His seat at the right hand.

Now, this what Peter's sermon and it is a model sermon, as I said. It was a clear, well-reasoned exposition of scripture. Its purpose was not to entertain or to impress people with his knowledge or his rhetorical style. He shows a great deal of knowledge in the sermon. It may well have been delivered eloquently. I don't doubt that it was. I'm sure that it was preached with fervency. It would've been a hard sermon to fall asleep in. But chiefly what he did was given a reasonable explanation of Jesus Christ. He reminded the audience of the miracles He had done that authenticated His ministry. Those could not have been done except through God. Then he reminds them or tells them of the crucifixion and the resurrection. They, the apostles, had witnessed these things. The scriptures had prophesied it.

The resurrection was the fulfillment of prophecy, as was the ascension of our Lord. That is the explanation for the amazing outpouring of the Holy Spirit. His sermon was scriptural. His sermon was logical. And his sermon was bold. It was given in the belief that scripture is sufficient. It's all we need, and it was given, this sermon, with the conviction of Isaiah 55:11, that God's word will never return to Him empty. And with that confidence, that conviction, having declared Jesus Christ to be the messiah, Peter fearlessly makes the application. This Jesus, he says, who is both Lord and Christ, this Jesus, you crucified. When the crowd heard that, Luke writes, "They were pierced to the heart." They were brought under deep conviction. They were pierced, as with a sword. That's what the word of God is. It is powerful. It is effective. When it clearly and uncompromisingly proclaimed, it is a living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and it affected the people.

If what Peter said were true, then they were guilty of rejecting and crucifying the messiah, the one they had hoped for. Now, He was gone enthroned in heaven. And so, they feel the loss of having missed Him, but also the weight of guilt for having rejected Him and the dread of justice was upon them. And so, they cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Just like Saul did on the Damascus road, "What shall I do, Lord?" And the Philippian jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" "Brethren," they say, "what shall we do?" And so, Peter answers in verse 38. "Repent," he said. "Peter

said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'

Salvation comes through faith and repentance. Repentance is emphasized here, but it is essentially the same as faith. It is the negative side of that act, a turning from sin, a turning from self. Literally, it is a change of mind. It is doing an about-face. And it is the important word here in Peter's command. It's a mistake to link the word forgiveness with the command be baptized. Some do, of course, and they argue that a person must undergo water baptism in order to be saved and receive the Holy Spirit. There's a church just behind my house that has that as one of its distinctives. It is a church that holds to the five points of Arminianism. They believe that you can lose your salvation, and in order to get salvation, they believe you have to undergo water baptism.

Now, if all we had were this text, they might have a point, but it's not all that we have. We have numerous texts that prove salvation by faith alone and we have significant examples of that fact as well. At the end of John's gospel, he states the purpose of it in chapter 20, verse 31 that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. There's no mention of baptism there, only faith. Believing is the way to have life in His name. Romans 1:17 is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4 and the main theme of the book of Romans, "The just shall live by faith." Romans 4:3, which is a quote from Genesis 15:6, Abraham believed God and it was credited to him or reckoned to him as righteousness.

So in both the New Testament and the Old Testament we have the same theme, the same principle; salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone. The book of Galatians has that as its great theme as well and pronounces anathema, pronounces a curse on those who add a ceremony or a work to faith for salvation, and there are many other texts that teach that salvation is through faith alone.

The thief on the cross was not baptized, but he was promised paradise. And Cornelius and his friends in Acts 10 are a very significant example of the same. Peter came to Cornelius's house in Caesarea. It was filled with gentiles and he preached to them. He spoke about Christ, about His ministry, about His crucifixion and resurrection. Then he said in verse 43, "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." No

mention of baptism. But the next verse, verse 44, states that "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message." Only later, after they had already received the Holy Spirit were they baptized. So obviously baptism is not necessary in order to receive the Holy Spirit and forgiveness.

Paul made that clear by his example to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15 in verse 2, he describes, "The gospel that they receive," that is, the gospel that they believed, as that by which also you were saved. So they were saved by the gospel that he preached, but in chapter 1, verse 14, he said, "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius," then adds in verse 17, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel."

Now, if the gospel included baptism and it must, if it is necessary for salvation, then Paul's statement, "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel" makes no sense, nor does Ephesians 2:8-9, which prohibits any work at all from salvation. It's all of grace, through faith, not of works. He says lest any man should boast, not of a ceremonial work, or a moral work, any kind of work; it's all of grace through faith.

One of the important principles of interpreting the Bible is the principle that scripture interprets scripture. We interpret ambiguous passages by clear ones. There are 66 books in the Bible, but it's really one book because it has one author, the Holy Spirit, and it's consistent. We may find principles or texts that seem to conflict with other ones. We don't build a doctrine on the obscure or the ambiguous texts. We interpret them by the clear ones and that is the principle that needs to be applied here.

Now, none of this is to suggest that baptism is optional. I'm not minimizing the importance of baptism. I'm seeking to give correct perspective on it. Baptism is not optional. It is commanded of us, but it is not commanded as a way or a means of salvation, but as a testimony of salvation. Baptism in water is the visible sign of the baptism of the Spirit, of the fact that we have, by the Spirit, been placed in the body of Christ, that we have been baptized by Christ into the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13, that is, in the element of the Spirit, we're all united in the Spirit, and the Spirit has been placed within us. We've been made to drink of the same spirit. And our baptism of the Spirit is illustrated by baptism in water. It is a public testimony of a person's faith and

identification with Christ. That is what Peter was calling for here. He was calling on these people to repent, calling on them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and make a public profession of that, and the people responded to the call. Verse 41, so those who received His word were baptized; and that day there were added about 3,000 souls. And so, from 120, the number of believers increase to 3,120. The church of Jerusalem multiplied 26 times as a result of one sermon. It was a great awakening, a real revival, and what characterized this first sermon of the church was that it was scriptural and it was Christ-centered. That's apostolic preaching.

Paul told the Corinthians that when he came to them, he determined to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Well, that's what we need to do as well. That's what ought to characterize our preaching. We are, as Paul told Timothy, to preach the word, and it is to be Christ-centered. It doesn't mean that that's all we preach, the person, the work of Christ. We are, as Paul showed and did for the Ephesians, to preach the whole counsel of God, and that is the whole of the Bible. That is all the doctrines of scripture. We're to preach that, but all of it finds its fulfillment in some way in Jesus Christ. He is the center of it all. And so, we're to proclaim Christ crucified, resurrected, ascended, enthroned, and coming again. We are to proclaim Jesus Christ as both Lord and Christ, eternal God, and true man. Proclaim Him to the church. Proclaim Him to the world.

It's not enough though to simply proclaim Jesus. There are many different Jesuses being presented today; the Mormon Jesus, the Jesus of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The other day, the two came to my door. It seems like they come to my door often now. I'm not sure why, but – and we spoke briefly. They confessed that Jesus is the savior. Oh yes, He's the savior, but we didn't talk very long before it became very clear that He was a different Jesus from the one I spoke to them of, a different Jesus from the one Peter preached. He preached clearly, preached scripturally, unapologetically, preached fearlessly and said, this Jesus, you crucified and called them to repent. He applied the truth boldly.

One of the deadly mistakes that people make when they listen to the word of God is to think that it doesn't apply to them. Peter said to the house of Israel, this Jesus, you crucified. And gentiles over the centuries have interpreted the cross as chiefly a crime of the Jews. On the walls of Poland they used to write about Jews, calling them

Christ killers. That's an accusation that has been hurled at the Jewish people from the time of the Crusades and perhaps even earlier. It's true that the Jewish people bear guilt. It is equally true that the gentiles bear guilt. It was a Roman governor who condemned Jesus to death. It was Roman soldiers who beat Him and nailed Him to the cross.

In fact, it is our sin that put Him on the cross. We are guilty. And so, I say to you this morning, if you are here without Christ, this Jesus, you crucified. You are guilty and in need of repentance and faith. And this Jesus who was crucified, resurrected, who ascended into heaven, will return again someday, and return as judge. All his enemies will be made a footstool for his feet. And so, what Peter said to his audience, what I say to you is be saved from this perverse generation. Escape, and there is a way of escape, and that way of escape is through Jesus Christ. There is forgiveness in Him. That is the reason God delivered Him over to the cross. That is the reason He sent Him into this world to be crucified, in order to save sinners, in order to save His people from their sins. It happened by wicked hands, that's true, but it was ordained of God. The cross was His plan. He put His son to grief so that the guilty might be forgiven and sinners saved. That salvation is received through faith alone.

So if you are here in unbelief, look to Christ, trust in Him, believe in Him, and receive at that moment the full forgiveness of sins, receive life everlasting. May God help you to do that because only God can bring you to that saving knowledge of Him and may God help all of us rejoice in what we have in Jesus Christ. We have forgiveness of sins. We have life everlasting. We have the Spirit of God, who is the gift that He has given, the spoils of victory that we have as a result of His triumph at Calvary. God help us to rejoice in that and to act upon that and to daily walk by the Spirit. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your goodness, Your grace, grace and love that sent Your only begotten son into the world to die so that all who believe in Him might receive forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. Thank You for Him. Thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who has sealed our hearts, who is permanently a part of our lives, who protects us and guides us. May we walk by the Spirit and live lives that please you, live lives to Your glory and the glory of Your son in whose name we pray. Amen.