

7—Acts 2.37-41—Pierced by the Word

- I. Introduction
 - a. It's strange how you can feel what seems to be physical pain in your heart from guilt. This can happen when someone points out what we have done wrong.
 - b. In (Heb. 4:12) we hear how God's word can find its way to our hearts... ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
 - c. God's word cuts to the heart. It wounds and heals. This double action is necessary. We cannot be healed by the word until we are wounded by the word. Our text this morning displays the piercing power of the gospel.
- II. Main Point
 - a. The main point of this section is that the Lord and Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, demands a response. These verses include the response to the word spoken by Peter that Jesus is the Lord and Messiah.
 - b. Will they call on him for salvation?
- III. Outline
 - a. The Gospel Pierces
 - b. The Gospel Demands
 - c. The Gospel Forgives
 - d. The Gospel Advances
- IV. Exposition
 - a. When Peter ends his explanation about Jesus being the Lord and Messiah who was raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God, something happens. The Word of God Pierces their hearts.
 - i. So, here we are in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. A multitude of devout Jewish men have brought their baskets of firstfruits as an offering to the Lord that are much like Cain's offering with no faith. They hear a sound that is confusing to them. What they hear are the glories of God in their own native languages from people who should not otherwise know this language. Some are amazed and others believe they are drunk.
 - ii. Peter explains what it is that they are seeing and hearing. He insists that this event is the fulfillment of God's promise to pour out His Spirit.
 - iii. Peter says that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. He then explains to these religious men who the Lord is. The hope had been that God would send the promised Messiah to save His people. Peter identified Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and Lord. He claims that God had delivered him up and they had crucified him at the hands of sinful men. But God raised him from dead and exalted him to His right hand. That meant that Jesus was both Lord and Christ.
 - iv. What pierced them? You killed the promised Messiah who you have been waiting for your whole life. Can you imagine how they felt?
 - v. Our text begins with this image of being pierced in the heart with a spear!
 1. The words spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit pierced their hearts. Jesus had promised that...(in Jn. 16:8-9)...when the Spirit comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me. These people do not believe in God even though their hands are full of the firstfruits to offer them to God.
 2. Being pierced by the bad news must come first. The gospel cannot be good news unless one realizes the danger they are in. Conviction of sin brings about the sting of guilt. Only the Holy Spirit of God can do this as the gospel is shared.

3. This same word for pierced was used in Isaiah 6 where he saw the Lord high and lifted up. (Isa. 6:5) Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined (pierced)! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."
 - a. The very same thing happens in our text this morning while Peter speaks the word of God. That should encourage us to speak the Word knowing its power along with the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.
- vi. When you share the gospel, this is what you hope happens. The power of the gospel is on display. When the Holy Spirit shines the light in the darkness of our hearts, the pain of guilt cuts.
 1. They ask Peter, "Brothers, what shall we do?"
 2. There's never a need to manipulate or water down the gospel. Share all of it and leave the results to the Lord. As we will see in a moment, God is the One calling sinners to himself.
- b. The Gospel stings but it also sings. What I mean is, the gospel exposes the problem of sin but it also offers hope. The only hope we have is to respond to its requirements. The Gospel Demands
 - i. Peter replies to their guilt laden question in verse 38, "Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ."
 1. Peter doesn't lead the group in prayer. No, each one must call upon the name of Jesus.
 - ii. I think these are more appropriate commands for our day as they were here. Many claim to believe but do not repent.
 1. What is repentance? I'll say this first. Repentance and faith cannot be separated. They are two sides of the same coin. You cannot turn to Jesus for salvation without turning from your sin.
 2. Also, it tied very closely with being pierced by the word. Strictly speaking, this word for repentance means perceiving afterward with the implication of being too late to avoid consequences. In other words, they have "suddenly recognized their error."
 - a. And that is true. For God to be just, he cannot overlook sin. There MUST BE consequences. However, for those who will repent and believe, those consequences are swallowed up in the Cross of Christ.
 - b. But I don't think "accept Jesus into my heart" is very good way to explain the gospel demand of repentance. Because the way I see that playing out in some people is accepting Jesus into my life as an addition to their family and their life (as is with no intentions of changing) instead of repentance where we turn from our life and ways to trust and follow Jesus' ways. Jesus brings us into his family and we come alone and empty-handed.
 - c. Repentance and faith in Christ is a reorienting of your life!
 3. Our way leads to death and hell. Repentance is the response to guilt for our sin. You see that your path is crooked. The response is turning around. It's following Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life.
 4. There's a very vivid picture of this in (Eph. 2:1-3) And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience - ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

5. I'm going to share the contrast in a moment. I want to point out from these verses where it begins—you were. If you have **not** turned from following the world, the devil, and the passions of your flesh then the verb tense is different. In other words, you ARE still DEAD.
 6. No, repentance is the confession that our ways are evil and deadly. Baptism is the death of the old person...the old ways and baptism is the resurrection of the new creation in Christ. Baptism is a public declaration that you now belong to Jesus. You are not your own. He is Lord and King. You are his slave not a slave of sin. He paid the price and you have been set free from the bondage of sin.
 7. Baptism declares your allegiance to your Savior and Lord.
- c. Yes, the gospel stings and demands. How we respond to the demands will determine whether Jesus forgives. The gospel offers deliverance from what we rightfully deserve.
- i. Peter demanded, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **FOR** the forgiveness of **YOUR** sins."
 1. Repentance and baptism are the place we died to sin. (Rom. 6:1-4) What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
 2. Forgiveness in the OT was seen as passing over sin. The blood of goats and bulls cannot pay for sin. They were a way of passing over them until payment could be made. Here, the Lamb of God has paid for the sins of his people and therefore, we can now speak of forgiveness in terms of removal!
 3. Forgiveness is a glorious **gift** of God's mercy. We do not deserve it. We deserve death. He forgives us as far as the east is from the west. There is no limit to His forgiveness. Even in this text, Jesus is offering salvation through Peter to those who were responsible for his death. If he will forgive them, then he will forgive anyone!
 4. But he will not forgive those who refuse the demands to repent and be baptized...each one of you. You cannot ride the train of God's forgiveness just because your grandmother walked with Jesus. No, this forgiveness is for YOUR sin. You must take ownership of your own evil and you yourself must repent and be baptized.
 5. Here's the contrast from Ephesians 2 that I promised to share. (Eph. 2:4-7) ⁴ **But** God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-- by grace you have been saved-- ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
 6. Through His merciful gift of forgiveness, we then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We get to walk in His presence. Fellowship with the Lord, even now! We are no longer dead but alive.
 7. And, this promise of the Spirit was not limited to these 120 disciples. The Spirit is available to all who repent and believe in Jesus.
 - ii. Now, as we walk in the Spirit, we carry the presence of God everywhere we go. We are the aroma of Christ in our homes to our children and to those far off.
 1. This idea of 'far off' is not merely geographic distance, though it certainly includes that.

2. It says in Isaiah 57:19 that God will bring peace to those far and near. Paul picks up on this idea in (Eph. 2:13, 17-18) ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.
3. Most certainly, the Spirit has in mind anyone...Gentiles...when he speaks of this glorious salvation in Jesus Christ.
4. Because, I think the promise Peter is referring to is the giving of the Holy Spirit in salvation to (Acts 2:21) ²¹ ...everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord to be saved.'
5. EVERYONE who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.
 - a. Calling upon the name of the Lord is the result of being called by God.
 - i. We see this played out in (Acts 13:48) And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.
 - ii. While repentance is a demand of the gospel for which we are responsible to do, repentance and faith are also a gift from God.
 - b. It also includes the telling of the gospel, which Peter has been doing. It makes clear "they heard this" and "those who received his word" must be present in order to hear. You cannot call upon the Lord if you do not hear the gospel.
 - i. And you cannot hear the gospel unless the Lord calls you. It is a miracle that these men were pierced by the word. If you don't think so, you haven't shared the gospel very often.
 - c. These two calls demand a response. Repent and be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ. Sometimes it takes persistence as we see Peter doing.
 - i. (Acts 2:40) ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."
6. What is this crooked generation? These are the rebellious ones who refuse Jesus as Lord.
 - a. "They needed to be rescued from something more immediate. In order to escape from the judgment of God, Peter's audience needed to be rescued from the corrupting and damning influences of their society." (Peterson 157)
 - b. Many in the crowd in Jerusalem would steer them a different direction. You are okay. You believe in God. Look, you have your firstfruits. You are here at the festival. It's okay. Don't worry about that sting in your heart. And maybe it's a grandmother who would say this to them.
- d. Amazingly, many respond. The Gospel advances as these Spirit-filled disciples proclaim the gospel.
 - i. (Acts 2:41) ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
 - ii. Salvation is a gift to be received. It is the greatest gift every offered to a crooked and broken people. Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and you will be added in to God's Kingdom. Eternal life with God!
 - iii. The additions are added. It is passive which means God did it. He added them.
 - iv. If this doesn't validate the truth that Jesus is who Peter says he is then I'm not sure what will convince you. 3,000 devote Jewish men admitting that they were responsible for the death of the Messiah. They are admitting that their religion will not save them and that sin is their

greatest enemy and if they do not turn from their sins, they will be crushed with the rest of this crooked generation.

V. Conclusion

- a. You cannot avoid Jesus. As we come to the table we are face with a decision. To take and eat which says that our sins were one of the reasons Jesus died on the cross.
- b. (Isa. 53:5) ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.
- c. Do you take and drink? This blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins.
- d. Have you repented and believed? Jesus didn't come to make a deal with you. He makes the demands.
- e. And if you have, you are welcome at the table. If you have repented and believed and been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and are in good standing with your church then come. We are sinners saved by grace. No one deserves this but in Christ you are invited to the table.

(Matt. 26:26-29)

Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."

²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."