

January 3, 2010

THE THIRD COMMAND OF THE GOSPEL

Acts 2: 37-41

I have been preaching a series of messages that stemmed from a question found in Acts 2: 37. **It** came from those hearing Peter preach the Gospel at Pentecost.

Look at Acts 2: 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?”**

Sinners who ask such a question (in response to the Gospel) are those hearing something **RADICALLY** different than anything they have heard before. **They** are seeing a (dramatic) **CONTRAST** between what they previously believed about Christ, about God, about His way of salvation and what they are hearing declared in the Gospel.

They are (obviously) agreeing with what they are hearing. **And**, they are (obviously) understanding that they cannot go on in what they previously believed. **Thus**, the question, “What shall we do?”

The Gospel does not leave such sinners hanging. **It** gives them clear instructions. **It** gives them clear commands.

We see two of those commands in Acts 2: 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.”**

The **FIRST** command of **THE** Gospel to every sinner who hears and claims to believe it is **REPENT**. **Elaborate**. **This** is a **MUST!**

The **SECOND** command of the Gospel is to those who hear, believe and **REPENT**. **The** command is **BE BAPTIZED**. (**I.e. Be IDENTIFIED** with the Christ of the Gospel and others who have believed and **REPENTED**.)

But, there is one more thing the Gospel commands.

Look at Acts 2: 40, “**And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”** Literally, “be saved from the wicked and perverse of this generation.”

This is the **THIRD** command of the Gospel to those who **CLAIM** to believe it. **It** is to those who have believed and **REPENTED**, (**I.e. those who have been TURNED TO** the Christ of the Gospel, **FROM** the “christ” of their imaginations). **It** is to those who have

been BAPTIZED, (Identifying) openly and publicly with THE Christ of the Gospel and those who preceded them in BAPTISM.

The FIRST thing we want to consider today is: **WHAT** (exactly) is being commanded in this **THIRD** command? **WHAT** is Peter commanding these Jews of his generation, and, thus, believers in every generation?

The command is about DELIVERANCE. **It** is about being RESCUED. **The** verb translated *ōsave yourselvesō* is in the passive (just like *ōbe baptizedō*). **It** should read *ōbe savedō*. **The** sense is be DELIVERED, be RESCUED. **Those** (of you) who have been DELIVERED from the *ōchristō* of your imaginations and TURNED TO the Christ of the Gospel, **(you)** CONTINUE to be RESCUED from those of your generation who preach *ōanother jesusō* and promote *ōanother gospelō*.

And, it says *ōfrom this untoward generationō*. **Literally**, be SAVED, be DELIVERED from the *ōuntoward* of this generation. **Thus**, the command is to believers in EACH successive generation.

The word *ōuntowardō* is not a word we use in our conversation. **It** means *ōwickedō*. **It** means *ōperverseō*. **And**, Peter is not speaking of MORAL *ōwickednessō* or MORAL *ōperversenessō*. **Believers** should seek to be moral and upright in every area of life. **But**, here, Peter is commanding these to a Spiritual battle.

Peter is commanding these as Paul commanded the believers at Corinth, not to be *ōunequally yoked together* (i.e. united in fellowship and worship) with unbelievers.

Look at II Cor 6: 14-18, **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?**

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

Those who have believed THE Gospel are to REPENT. **And**, those who have REPENTED are to be BAPTIZED.

And those who have been BAPTIZED are to *ōBE SAVEDō*. **I.e.** **They** are to be DELIVERED; they are to be RESCUED from those of their generation who preach any other *ōjesusō* than the ONE declared (distinguished and identified) in the Gospel.

I have spoken at length about (Initial) REPENTANCE and (believer(s)) BAPTISM in other messages. **They** are both ONE-TIME acts. **They** are NOT repeated.

But, being DELIVERED, being SAVED from the ðwicked and perverseö of this generationö is not ONE-TIME. It is ON-GOING. **This** is that REPENTANCE that continues throughout the life of a believer.

We CONTINUALLY need to be DELIVERED from those who err in Doctrine. We CONTINUALLY need to be RESCUED from those who preach ðanother gospelö.

Look at what Paul wrote to the Galatians in 1: 6-9, “**I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:**

7 **Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.**

8 **But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”**

9 **As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”**

Also, we CONTINUALLY need to be DELIVERED from those who preach (another) öjesusö.

Look at 2 John, verse 9 - 11, “**Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.**

10 ¶ **If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:**

11 **For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”**

THE Gospel is a SPECIFIC message, which (rightly) declares the ONE (true) Christ. **In** every generation it stands in OPPOSITION to those promoting their öideaö of Christ.

Paul and John and Peter are in agreement. **They** are ALL commanding believers, (those who are resting their salvation in the Christ of the Gospel), to be DELIVERED, be RESCUED from those who come preaching/promoting any OTHER Gospel, any OTHER ögodö, any OTHER öchristö.

This is an ON-GOING need throughout the life of every believer.

You and I have recently experienced this need for SEPARATION. There are men of our generation who INSIST that Christ was made a SINNER; **that** He was CONTAMINATED by sin; **that** His character and conduct became FLAWED; **that** His Person became SINFUL; **that** He (actually) became a God HATER.

Such doctrine is heresy. **The** Scriptures declare PLAINLY of Christ: **That** He ödid no sinö (I Pet 2: 22); **that** He öknew no sinö (II Cor. 5: 21); **that** He öoffered Himself without spot to Godö (Heb. 9: 14); **that** He died öthe just for the unjustö (I Pet 3: 18).

Christ DID (indeed) bear the LEGAL guilt, and LEGAL defilement of the sins of His sheep. **Their** sins were IMPUTED to Him. **Their** sins were CHARGED to His account. **He** was ðmade sin for us (His sheep)ð by IMPUTATION.

But, in NONE of that was Christø character CONTAMINATED. **In** NONE of that was Christø nature DEFILED. **In** NONE of that was Christ made SINFUL in His Person.

Any who come preaching otherwise are NOT declaring THE Christ of the Gospel.

Such doctrine CANNOT and WILL NOT be tolerated by those who have been TURNED to Christ alone for salvation. **We** MUST test/prove all doctrine by the Word of God. **We** must be SEPARATED (by right Doctrine) from those who insist on preaching that which is CONTRARY to the clear teaching of the Scriptures.

Thank God, He DELIVERED us from such men and such preaching. THAT is the DELIVERANCE being commanded. **Peter** is commanding believers in every generation to BE SAVED; be DELIVERED; be RESCUED from the wicked and perverse (though religious) in your generation that deny Christ and promote ðanother gospelð.

Next! WHO in this world; WHO in this generation can (rightly) expect to experience the SALVATION, the DELIVERANCE, Peter is commanding here? **WHO** will be found in obedience to this command?

The answer is: Those who have been made to see that the (greatest) STRUGGLE is not with those WITHOUT. (**They** are a STRUGGLE.) **But!** **The** (greatest) STRUGGLE lies WITHIN. **The** (greatest) STRUGGLE is in the MIND of believers.

Look at Acts 2: 41, "**Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.**"

"**They** that gladly received his wordð, (**I.e.** **They** that ðgladlyð believed the Gospel they heard; **they** that ðgladlyð turned to the Christ it declared; **they** that ðgladlyð renounced the former (so-called) ðchristð and (so-called) ðgodð of their imaginations).

"**His** wordð is THE Gospel. **To** ðgladly receive his wordð speaks of a RADICAL change of mind. **As** I have already stated, THE Gospel is a SPECIFIC message.

THE Gospel does not just present an ALTERNATE view of the TRUTH. **It** presents the ONLY view that honors a just God and Savior. **It** presents the ONLY message that declares how God can be merciful and gracious to sinners, while at the same time maintaining His strict/inflexible Justice.

A Just God MUST punish sin (ALL sin) with ETERNAL death. **Also**, a Just God CANNOT pronounce any sinner Righteous on the basis of ANYTHING proceeding from that sinner (obedience, reformation, faith, etc.).

How can God punish ANY sinner with the punishment THAT sinner deserves; the punishment His Justice demands, and, yet, give THAT sinner all the benefits and blessings of eternal life (heaven itself)? **How** can God be Just and, yet, Justify the ungodly? **THE** Gospel ALONE addresses this question. **THE** Gospel ALONE answers this question.

The answer is found in the Christ the Gospel ALONE declares. **The** answer is found in the Righteousness REVEALED (only) in THE Gospel. **Explain!**

TRUE believers are those, who have been TURNED by the Spirit of God (unto) the ONE (true) Christ, the Christ the Gospel ALONE declares. **TRUE** believers are those who have been turned AWAY FROM the ðimaginary christö we once looked to. **We** are NOT in UNBELIEF. **The** Spirit of God has ðreprovedö every believer of NOT believing in the Christ God sent, and has TURNED us TO (the) Christ God sent for all of salvation.

And, where the Spirit of God has TURNED a sinner TO the (true) God, the (true) Christ, the (true) Gospel, that sinner can never be TURNED AWAY to any ðother godö, any ðother christö, any ðother gospelö.

Look at 1 John 3: 9, **“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”**

WHO will be SAVED, **WHO** will be DELIVERED from the wicked and perverse of the generation they live in? **Those** who by the Spirit of God are ðabidingö in Christ; **those** who cannot find any hope or confidence elsewhere. **(True)** believers are NOT in UNBELIEF.

But! UNBELIEF still makes up a large part of our thinking. **UNBELIEF** is still THE sin ðthat easily besets usö (true believers).

We CONTINUALLY wonder if **WE** have DONE enough, which causes us to CONTINUALLY seek SOME (degree/amount) of confidence WITHIN. **Our** self-righteous imaginations have not been eradicated. **Thus**, the ðchristö of our imaginations has not been done away. **He** is still there in many forms, in many wrong notions. **Having** been delivered UNTO (the) Christ of the Gospel, we still NEED to be delivered FROM the ðchristö of our imaginations.

This is a NEED (believers) will have and a STRUGGLE we will face as long as we live in this flesh. **It** is the ðwarfareö the Scriptures speak of between the ðflesh and the Spiritö (a ðwarfareö that ONLY takes place in a Regenerated sinner).

Why? Because ONLY those who have been given life and faith and repentance; ONLY those who have been delivered UNTO (THE) Christ of the Gospel have any conflict with the ðchristö the world promotes.

One of the MAIN problems we face in seeking to be DELIVERED from the ðwicked and perverse of our generationð as commanded is: **we STILL** have WITHIN US an ALLY with this ðreligious worldð. **We STILL** have an ALLY (in us) with that world which we are commanded to be DELIVERED from.

Paul wrote of this in Rom 7: 18-21. **Paul** is writing here as a Regenerated, born of God believer, one who has been TURNED TO THE Christ of THE Gospel.

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.”

The MAIN enemy we face in this battle to be SEPARATED is OURSELVES. The REAL battle believers face is to be DELIVERED from our OWN obedience and to rest DEPENDENTLY and COMPLETELY in Christ's obedience.

Look at II Cor 10: 3-5, **“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:**

4 (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”

THE Gospel declares the ONE, true Christ, in order that believers be made more and more subject to HIS obedience ALONE for ALL of salvation. **Those** enabled to see this are those WHO will be DELIVERED from ðthe perverse of their generationð.

WHO will obey the Gospel command to ðbe saved from this untoward generationð? **Those** in whom the Spirit of God will CONTINUE to ðperform the good workð He started.

Look at Phil 1: 3-6, **“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,**

4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:”

WHO will be DELIVERED? **Those** enabled to see the ðpreaching of the Cross as the power of God unto salvationð.

Look at 1 Cor 1: 18. **“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”** Explain!

The Gospel commands those sinners who CLAIM to believe it to REPENT. It commands those who have believed and REPENTED to be BAPTIZED ðin the name of Jesus Christð.

And, it commands those who have been BAPTIZED to ðbe savedö; be DELIVERED from the wicked and perverse (yet, religious) world around them in their generation.

So, HOW are believers to be DELIVERED from the religious world around us in our generation? **HOW** are believers to be RESCUED from those who come preaching ANOTHER ðjesusö; promoting ANOTHER ðgospelö?

Look at Acts 2: 41-42. **“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.”

The ONLY sinners who will ðcontinue in the apostles' doctrineö are those who have been made to see that ðthe apostles' doctrineö is THE Gospel. **It is THE Truth. And, EVERYTHING else is a lie.**

In times of CRISIS, in times of CONCERN, we look to the Word. **HOW** will believers be SAVED, be DELIVERED from the wicked (though religious) generation we live in?

We will find our guidance in the Word. We will find our assurance in the Word. We will find our hope in the Word. **The Word is HOW we will be DELIVERED.**

I'll just point out two ways: **FIRST**, by NOT being ðconformed to this worldö, but by ðbeing transformed by the renewing of your mindö.

Look at Romans 12: 1-2, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.***

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

The SECOND way believers are to be DELIVERED from this religious world is by ðlooking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faithö.

Look at Heb 12: 1-2, **“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,**
2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Those who would be DELIVERED, SEPARATED from this, ðthe wicked and the perverse of their generationö will do so by the Word of God. **It is the Word ALONE** that testifies of Christ, of our ðonenessö with Him, of our ðcompletenessö in Him, of the CERTAINTY of our final glory based on and because of Him.

We look to the Word of God. We find our direction in the Gospel. We find our hope in the Christ the Gospel ALONE declares.

HOW are believers to be SEPARATED from the ðwickedö, the ðperverseö (yet, religious) of the generation in which we live. **We** are to be SEPARATED by the Word.

Those whom the Spirit of God has TURNED to THE Christ of THE Gospel will CONTINUE to be DELIVERED (back) to THAT Christ under the preaching of The Gospel. **We** find hope in God, who FOREVER declares us Righteousness based on Christ's imputed Righteousness ALONE.

ð**Be saved** from the wicked and perverse of this generation.ö **CONTINUE** to be DELIVERED from those who would preach ðanother gospelö, ðanother jesusö. **Hear** the Gospel. **Obey** the Gospel. **REPENT, BE BAPTIZED, BE SAVED** according to the Gospel.

That is the COMMAND of the Gospel to all who claim to believe it.

By Mark Pannell