

Acts 2:21-40

Introduction

The Bible is the Word of God. It is powerful and exposes and convicts the hearts of men (**Heb 4:12**). We ought not to be surprised, therefore, when the people listening to Peter on the Day of Pentecost were "cut to the heart" and cried out "What shall we do?" (**Acts 2:37**).

Summary

In Acts 2:37-38, Peter commands his hearers to repent and be baptized in response to their question of what shall we do?

1. Pressing Needs

When the people said, "What shall we do?" they clearly sensed their need.

In vs. 38, Peter gives two explicit answers to the felt need of his hearers on the Day of Pentecost and also to those same felt needs of ours here today

First, there is the need to be forgiven by God.

Many people today constantly minimize or even deny the absoluteness of God.

Instead, they maximize the absoluteness of the self.

God is holy and demands that his creatures also be holy. By nature, men and women, are not holy. They are sinners. Hence, they need forgiveness.

What the people in vs. 37 desperately needed, and what we equally desperately need, and what God, in amazing grace is willing to give, is forgiveness, full and free.

Peter said to His hearers, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."

The second need is to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

The gift of the Holy Spirit is not a second blessing, nor is it something only for some special class of Christian. The Holy Spirit dwells in believers from the day of their first repentance and trusting in the Lord Jesus alone to save them.

2. The Necessary Response

First, they were to repent. Repentance is not just regret. It means turning around; changing your mind so that you are no longer in rebellion (**Acts 26:17-18**).

Secondly, they were to "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." Baptism does not save nor is it the basis on which God forgives sin (**Acts 10:43-45, 16:30-31**).

The name of Jesus and faith in that name is the instrument by which we receive forgiveness, and baptism is the external sign of God's saving work and symbolizes the expression of faith in the name of Jesus.

What is Baptism? Baptism is a sacrament; a holy thing.

Baptism is an ordinance. Jesus Christ, the King, sovereignly institutes this sacrament.

What does Baptism signify? It signifies union with Christ, forgiveness of sins, a cleansed heart and a giving up of our lives unto God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life. It symbolizes a proper saving response to the gospel.

Who should be baptized? Only professing disciples!

The Scriptures teach that those who actually profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects of Baptism. If God has so instructed the church about such a major issue as a Christian sacrament then the decision to practice it or not, and in what manner, is not a matter indifferent nor is it a matter of Christian liberty.

The Regulative Principle of worship teaches that God-approved Christian worship only includes elements and practices ‘instituted by God himself ... ‘limited by His own revealed will ... [and not] any other way not prescribed in holy scripture’ (WCF XXI). Baptism is one of the sacraments, instituted by Christ, governed by the regulative principle, instituted by God, limited by His revealed will and prescribed by Holy Scripture.

This includes the subjects of baptism as well as its mode and meaning.

Yet the only subjects of baptism instituted by God, through Christ, limited by His revealed will and actually prescribed by Scripture, are professing disciples (Matt 28:19-20).

Baptism is the sign of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant is prophesied in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament (Jer 31:31-34; Matt 26:27-28; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb 8:7-13).

The New Covenant does not contain a blessing and curse formula like the Old Covenant. Nor does it include physical descendants as members by default.

The New Covenant is an effectual covenant for every member. This is why none should be considered in the New Covenant unless they publicly repent of their sins and profess faith in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on their behalf.

If you are a Christian and baptized look back and rejoice again in what Christ has done for you, who you are, what it means. Improve your baptism.

If you are a Christian and not baptized you. You ought to be. Christ commands it.

If you are not a Christian, see in baptism, the gospel of what Christ has done for sinners. Here is almost unbelievable good news.

God himself stands ready to forgive sinners and to give them his Spirit.