

Assess Yourself– Acts 2:37-41

If you're visiting with us for the first time, welcome. It's our joy to worship and learn together, and we're glad you're here.

I also want to welcome those of you watching via livestream. I hope you'll be able to join us next week.

➤ Let's turn in our Bibles to Acts 2:37-41.

We're working our way through the book of Acts under the theme of Compelled, because that's what we find here. People compelled by the Spirit . . . Compelled by the gospel, and compelled by the need to spread it.

And *this* particular passage is part of the Apostle Peter's sermon on the heels of *Pentecost*.

That day when God sent his Spirit to fill and indwell each and every believer.

And in it, *in* his sermon, he tells us about Jesus. Who he is, and why.

Followed, by the crowd's response. Here in v37-41.

Which provides an example for how *we* should respond to Jesus. And a means of assessing ourselves as we do.

IOW *their* response is a standard by which to measure *ours*. Hence the title.

➤ So let's start with v36, and go from there.

Let all the house of Israel therefore know [“therefore” indicating his *conclusion* about Jesus; and the “house of Israel” referring primarily to God-fearing Jews of old].

Know for certain [he says] *that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified*. IOW Jesus is the one. Lord and Savior. And you killed him.

Notice their response:

[37] Now when they heard this [this truth about Jesus and their part in his death] *they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”* *[38] And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* *[39] For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off [both in distance and time], everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”* *[40] And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”* *[41] So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

It's a shining example of what to do in light of the gospel. In light of the truth about Jesus.

And therefore a means to assess our *own* response. Our *own* lives.

An assessment I've framed with 8 questions. Starting with this one:

1. Am I convicted about sin? (v37a)

Generally speaking in life, are you convicted about your sin? Those at Pentecost were.

It says in v37, *they were cut to the heart*. As in, convicted, crushed, grieved, vexed.

Which is vital. At least for anything good. Anything eternal.

No conviction about sin, no *salvation* from its consequences.

And no conviction, no *sanctification*. Why would you make right what's wrong in your life, if you're not convicted about it? *Cut to the heart*.

➤ When you sin, do you feel sorrow? Do you *ache* because of how you offended God?

Does it nag you and plague you until you confess it? Or is it no big deal. Water off a duck's back.

Or maybe you just *ignore* your conviction. Rationalize it. Stuff it. Suppress it with drink. Mask it with drugs. Or perhaps *withdrawal* is your thing.

Staying away from people, especially other *believers*, instead of getting together.

Staying home instead of coming to church.

Binge watching instead of worshipping. Playing instead of praying.

Assess yourself. Search your heart, and ask God to do the same.

2. Do I ask for help? (v37b)

[37] Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

They asked for help. *“Brothers, what shall we do?”*

And we should do the same.

Now, I'm not talking about help with *directions*, the way from here to there. The thing your husband wouldn't do in the days before GPS. I know you went there.

I'm talking about the way from here to *there* (heaven). *The Way*. The way to *life*. The way to Jesus.

I'm talking about the way to discipleship. The way to live your faith and walk your talk.

I'm talking about asking for help to love more, know more, speak more, and do more.

Is that *you*? Do you ask for help in life, or “go it alone?” Thinking you don't *need* any help? I hope not. Because that's the exact *opposite* of those at Pentecost.

They needed help, they wanted help, and they *asked* for help.

And we should do the same.

It could be a question about how to apply the Bible. It could be an impasse in your marriage. How to handle an issue in our culture. Who knows!

The point is, there's no shame in not knowing something, and asking for help.

Especially in spiritual matters. Matters of life and death.

Assess yourself.

3. Do I believe the gospel? (v41)

That's the idea of v41 – *those who received his word were baptized*.

Received, as in accepted as true. Believed for themselves

Those who *received* what Peter had to say about Jesus, followed through.

But it started with *belief*. Belief in *Jesus*. That he was and is both Lord and Christ. Ruler of our lives and Savior of our souls. And *gave* his life, so we could have it.

That's the *word* here in v41. The gospel. And those at Pentecost *received* it. Believed it.

The question is, do you? Do *you* believe the gospel? Not *did* you, but *do* you? Right now.

Are you in a present state of ongoing belief, that Jesus is your Lord and Savior?

If not, if you're riding on the laurels of your past, you've got a problem.

Because the Bible says that *we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end*. Heb 3:14.

No perseverance, no salvation. If you don't *currently* believe, you never really did.

➤ I was recently given an updated copy of **Evidence That Demands A Verdict**.

Originally written by *Josh McDowell*, it's now expanded by he and his son. And since its publication in 1972, it has sold over 3 million copies worldwide. But most impressive is the content. Ranging from evidence for the truthfulness of the Bible, to evidence for the Lordship of Jesus. And it's overwhelming and conclusive. Removing every stumbling block except stubbornness and irrationality.

But you still have to receive it. You still need to make a decision. You still have to believe.*****

So how about it? Are you in a present state of ongoing faith and trust? Assess yourself. And if you're not, now would be a good time to renew it.

4. Am I quick to repent? (v38)

Are you quick to *confess* your wrongs, and *change* your wrongs?

Are you? B/c that's what *Peter* advocated. Repent. On the spot.

V38 – “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Repent and express it. Proclaim it. *Confess* your sin, and have a change of *heart* about your sin, that shows. That's the idea.

And they did. That very day. They repented. Quickly.

How about you? Have *you* repented of your sin and sinfulness? Believing that Jesus would forgive you, wash you, and redeem you because of his death for you?

And do you *continue* to repent when you sin? Receiving his forgiveness anew?

Getting right with him all over again. Restoring your fellowship and experiencing his grace? I hope so.

And I hope you're *quick* to do so. Quick to repent. Because our sin grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit *within* us, inhibits our prayers *from* us, and affects those *around* us. Not to mention *isolates* us, makes us susceptible to Satan's *influence*, and robs God of his *glory*. Failing to repent, and repent quickly, is no small thing. Assess yourself.

5. Am I sure that I'm forgiven? (v38)

V38 again. *“Repent and be baptized every one of you [Peter said] in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

It's a jammed packed statement to say a lot. Especially about forgiveness.

But what he's *not* saying, is that we need to be baptized to receive it. Baptized to be saved. He's *not* saying that.

And we know that, b/c if he were, that would make baptism a work. Something tangible we *do*, to earn a better standing with God. Which the Bible says *doesn't* work.

2 Timothy 1:9 – [God] *saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works*, [not because of the tangible things we do] *but because of his own purpose and grace*. We're not saved by works, but grace. God's grace. His *favor* toward us.

And Eph 2:9 says the same. Salvation is *not a result of works*.

So Peter *can't* be saying that we need to repent and be baptized to be forgiven and saved, but that baptism goes hand in hand with salvation, as an *expression* of it.*****

Baptism is an *expression* of our belief and repentance and forgiveness, not a *means* to it. Always let the clearer portions of Scripture, like 2 Tim 1:9, interpret the less clear.

And always make sure that the theology you hear or espouse takes into account the *whole* of Scripture, and is consistent with it all.

➤ That said, Peter promises forgiveness, and the question is, are you? And are you *sure*? And I'm not just talking about when you were *first* saved. I'm talking about now. I'm talking about when you sin and repent in the course of your life. Are you *confident* that God has forgiven you?

Or another way to ask it is, “Do you *feel* forgiven?” Not that feelings are everything. In fact most of the time they lead us *astray* in spiritual matters. Hear me on that. But in this case, they often indicate whether or not we trust God's Word. *That if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* (1 Jn 1:9)

Do you trust him in that? If so, you'll feel it. When you genuinely repent of your sin, and trust God to forgive you, you'll feel it. Like you did when you were *first saved*. You'll *feel* the relief. You'll *feel* the joy. You'll *feel* the freedom.

➤ Unfortunately, many don't. All they feel is guilt. In fact, they're wracked by it. Miserable on the inside and ashamed on the out. Keeping them from God's best, and the certainty of his blessing. The confidence that he can and will use them.

Are you weighed down by backpacks full worthlessness? Feelings of uselessness? Is there a cloud over your soul casting a dark shadow everywhere you go? A shadow of fear, insecurity, and anxiety because of your sin? Such that the darkness keeps you from doing God's work, and living in the light?

If so, it's time to trust in the Lord, put your hand to the plow, and move on. It is. It's time to rest in the truth of God's Word, that having *repented* of your sin, God has *forgiven* it. No longer holds it against you. It's time to trust him, *certain* that you've been acquitted. Positive that you're clean. It's time. God is faithful, and you can be sure.

I don't know where I'd be without this truth. I certainly wouldn't be standing here. It's only because I'm *sure* I'm forgiven that I can preach and lead. Assess yourself.

6. Am I led by the Spirit? (v38b,39)

“Repent and be baptized [Peter said] every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Everyone God calls, everyone he chooses to be saved, to be his own – will receive the Holy Spirit. His power and presence within them.

That's the *promise* to which Peter refers.

It doesn't matter if you were there or not. *At* Pentecost, or *far off*. That generation or this one. If God calls you to himself, his Spirit is yours the moment you respond.

The question is, does it show? Are you *led* by him? Guided. Directed.

You are if he prompts you and reminds you of things. Things of truth.

You are if he gives you strength to persevere. And words to speak.

You are if he comforts you with peace, and bolsters you with hope.

But if he doesn't, you're *not* led by the Spirit.

Especially if you ignore him. Or forget about him.

In fact, that makes you a functional atheist. Someone who checks *off* on the right truths, but lives their life and makes decisions just like everybody else.

Led by nobody but themselves or the culture around them.

It's called functional atheism. And it's the *opposite* of being led by the Holy Spirit.

Assess yourself. Truly. Are you led by the Spirit, or the spirit of this world?

7. Do I heed the preaching of God's Word? (v40)

V40 says – *And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."* And 3000 of them did.

They heeded the preaching of God's Word. They listened to it, and applied it.

How about you? Are you a hearer and *doer* like James says, or just a hearer?

Do you *respond* to what you hear, or ignore it?

Is this a *spiritual* time for you, or a check-off? "Just get it over and get me out of here."

Is *that* you? I fear it is for some of you.

Because your life doesn't seem to change. Your worship remains passionless.

You don't seem to grow. You don't serve. You don't give. And you don't connect.

It's just easy come easy go.

Which is just the *opposite* of those who heeded Peter's preaching at Pentecost.

They listened and acted. Listened and applied. Listened and changed. Listened and loved. Listened and served. Listened and gave. Listened and studied.

How about you? Make an honest assessment.

8. Have I been baptized as a believer? (38a,41a)

Repent and be baptized [Peter said in v38] *every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.*

In the name of Jesus Christ meaning, get baptized as an expression of your *allegiance* to him. Your connection with him. Your love for him.

Don't just get wet for the sake of getting wet, but to express your identification with *Jesus*. That it's because of *him* you're forgiven and saved. Get baptized in *his* name.

Which you can't *legitimately* do, unless you first *believe* in him. The very thing Peter implies in v41 – *those who received his word* [past tense] *were baptized*.

Those who *believed* what Peter said about Jesus and the gospel, were immersed in water to show it. First they believed, then they were baptized.

Picturing outwardly what had *already* taken place inwardly.

And it's so important, that Peter commands it. For everyone. Everyone who believes.

So how about it? Have you been baptized as a believer? Immersed in water to show you're immersed in Jesus?

If not, make plans now. Go online, work through the **Baptism Packet**, and clear your calendar for our next baptism weekend. October 27-28. (July 15th at West Campus)

In the meantime, assess yourself. Search your heart, and make a change. 8 questions.

Prayer – Lord, thank you for this example. Help us make an honest assessment of our life.