

ACTS

Part 5 – “They Were Cut to the Heart”

Acts 2:14-41

Main Idea: The Holy Spirit has been poured out on all God’s people that they may now proclaim the good news of Jesus with power and urgency.

Peter’s sermon may be broadly divided into two sections:

1. An explanation of the phenomenon of speaking in the tongues of the nations (2:14-21).

- Peter refers to Joel’s prophecy (2:28-32) as an apologetic for what was happening at Pentecost. It is important to understand that Peter is not merely appropriating Joel’s words. Rather he is affirming that what Joel prophesied was originally intended to refer to this very moment in redemptive history. In other words, Peter is not reading a meaning back into Joel’s prophecy but properly interpreting that prophecy. This outpouring of the Spirit is a sign of the last days which have now dawned. What is more, the Spirit of God has now been poured out on all God’s people rather than just the prophets and priests.
- Joel’s promise that a day was coming when sons and daughters and servants would prophesy is a reference to the moment of miraculous speech that Luke describes in 2:4. The phenomenon of miraculous speech should not be considered normative. Rather, just as in the case of all turning points in redemptive history, temporary miraculous signs were given to confirm this new reality to God’s people. The disciple’s miraculous speech was God’s way of punctuating that particular moment and signaling that there had been a significant step in redemptive history.
- As Dennis Johnson notes: “In Numbers 11:25, it is noted that the Israelite elders prophesied only at their initial reception of the Spirit: ‘They did not do so again.’ Similarly in the New Testament, Paul insists that, whereas all Christians have received the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), only some have received the power to prophesy as a constant gift (vv. 29-30)” (*The Message of Acts*, 63).
- The Spirit has been poured out upon all God’s people for the purpose of gospel proclamation. The proclamation of God’s Word is no longer the result of receiving direct revelation from God (as did the prophets and apostles) but by boldly testifying to the mighty works of God in Jesus Christ.
- The phenomena described in verses 19 and 20 are probably references to those signs that occurred in connection to Jesus’ crucifixion.

2. A proclamation of the gospel (2:22-41).

- Once again Peter proves to be competent in dealing with the text of Scripture. In proclaiming the dying, rising, and exaltation of Jesus he takes his hearers to the heart of their own Scriptures. As we have already noted, Peter is not reading into the Old Testament passages something that was not originally there. On the contrary, Peter is faithfully exercising the very hermeneutic prescribed by Jesus when He claimed that “Moses and the prophets” (the O.T.) spoke of Him.

Two implications from Peter’s Sermon:

<h4>1. The Necessity of Gospel Proclamation</h4>
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a) Christ as sin-bearing substitute

Vs. 23 – “...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

- Peter does not give a highly developed doctrine of the cross at this point. But what he does say makes it clear that the crucifixion of Jesus was orchestrated by God for the purpose of providing a substitutionary atonement for sinners.

b) Christ as risen Savior

Vs. 24 – “God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”

- Luke’s record of Peter’s words place the bulk of the content on the resurrection. This should not be understood as indicating that the resurrection is of greater importance than the cross. Indeed they are two sides of the same coin, so to speak. Both the death and resurrection of Jesus were indispensable for our salvation.
- In Jesus’ resurrection is the guarantee for our resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection is the first fruits of the restoration of the entire created order.

c) Christ as exalted Lord

Vv 33-36 – “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

*The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.*

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

- Peter helps his listeners understand that Psalm 16:8-11 could not possibly be a reference to David because David’s grave is well known. His body did see corruption. Therefore, from the time David wrote it, Psalm 16 could have as its subject only one man – Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit does not take us beyond Jesus to something “deeper.” Jesus is the point of the Spirit’s coming. It is the Spirit who opens eyes and hearts that they may proclaim “Jesus is Lord.”

2. The Urgency of a Right Response

A good sermon, particularly the proclamation of the gospel, will urge upon the hearers a sense of urgency. The gospel is not just information to understand. It is the message of salvation which must be believed. The gospel presupposes the necessity of a proper response. Peter urges his hearers to respond in two ways.

a) Repentance and Faith

- Repentance and faith go together. The repentance that Peter calls for is a change of mind which rejects sin and unbelief. Peter has pointed out that many of those gathered in Jerusalem that day had shouted “crucify” not many weeks before. Their sin placed them at odds with God. Therefore reconciliation with God is necessary. This is why the Father put forth the Son as a sacrifice. Now the people must repent and believe.

b) Baptism

- Christian baptism (in contrast to that of John) was a new thing. For the believer, baptism represented what they had experienced: that Jesus’ blood had washed away their sin. Baptism serves as a sign and seal of God’s covenantal promises. And in keeping with the practice prescribed by God, the children of believers receive the sign of the covenant because God’s covenantal faithfulness extends to them as well.