

ghA New Lord, part 2 of Easter Response  
April 5, 2015

Several years ago, my wife broke her ankle. The good news was that the bones had not shifted and she did not need surgery to put pins in. The bad news was that she would have to be extremely careful with it for at least 6 weeks while the bones mended because if they shifted, then she would need surgery. She left the hospital with a big plastic boot on her ankle and a walker. Friends loaned us a wheelchair.

Neither the walker or wheelchair would fit through some of the doors in our home. So it was quite a job of maneuvering the chair and walker to help her through the doors many times a day. We had to consider the ankle as she moved around the house, switching to the couch, and later, getting out into the car. We kept asking ourselves, "How will we do this or that and keep the ankle from twisting?" Through diligence and caution we made it through the critical time without the need for surgery.

This is a picture living the Christian life. We must be constantly aware of Jesus and how our words, our actions, and our behavior will affect Him.

Last Sunday we started a sermon series on responding to Easter. Easter is the celebration of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These are the three most important events in human history because they are the only events that can affect where you spend eternity.

Mankind was headed for destruction. We needed a Savior. Because God loves us so much, He sent us the Savior we needed. He sent Jesus. Jesus lived a perfect life, without sin, making Him an acceptable substitute for our sins. And that is what he did. He died in our place, to pay the penalty for our sins. God then proved His acceptance of Jesus by raising Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is confirmation of Jesus' death for all sins.

How should we respond to such wonderful news? What kind of response does He expect of us?

There are several parts to a correct response. The first part of a correct response is what last week's sermon was about. Here is the main point.

**The response that God is looking for first is that you believe in Jesus.**

This is more than believing that He lived and died. Most of the world believes that He lived and died. Muslims believe that He lived and died. Believing in Jesus also includes believing that He was sinless, that He died for our sins, that God raised Him from the dead and that He is now Lord and Messiah. The correct belief includes **believing all that Jesus said and did.**

This morning we're going to look at the second part of the correct response to Easter. This second part is a result of the first part. They are not two options that you can choose from. The second is based on the first, not instead of the first. It is part of a correct response. We read of this in Acts 2.

In Acts 2 we see a crowd who is listening to the missionary Peter tell about Jesus. It is obvious at the end that the people are convicted of their sin and the truth of Jesus. They realize they had a hand in Jesus' death and they are scared of being opposed to God. We will start in verse 36, as Peter comes to the conclusion of his message.

**Acts 2:36-38 (NIV)** "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ (Messiah)."

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart (convicted of their guilt) and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized (immersed), 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."

We are going to look at the three points of Peter's reply to their question. He speaks of repentance, baptism, and the Holy Spirit.

Upon choosing to believe in Jesus, a correct response to Jesus requires you to repent. **The word repent means "to turn"**. That means you are turning from and turning to. **You must turn from your life of sin, which is all about you, and turn to Jesus, which is all about Him.** Remember, He is the Lord of all the earth. Life revolves around Him, not you. He is to be the center, the focus, of our lives.

Until you become a believer in Jesus your life revolves around someone other than Jesus. Your life might revolve around your parent, or your kids, your wife, husband, or significant other. It might revolve around your boss, the bully down the block, or someone you are trying to impress. Most people center their life on themselves. Their lives revolve around self. This is sin. This is rebellion against God, who created us to revolve around Him. He is the most important person in the universe.

Repentance means turning away from your current focus and place Jesus at the center of your life. You must make Jesus Lord of your life. "Lord of your life" means that your life now revolves around Jesus. He must be considered in everything you do.

Remember my wife's ankle? We were constantly thinking about her ankle. Well living for Jesus means a constant attention to Jesus. How will my life today reflect good or bad on Jesus? Which choices will reflect well on Jesus? Which words will show that I honor Jesus?

Jesus as Lord means we make Jesus the center of our life. That is a radically different life than the life of a non-Christian. The problem with too many Christians is that their lives are hardly different at all from non-Christians. They are not focused on living for Jesus. They are still focused on living for self. Jesus is more an addendum to their lives than the central focus. Maybe you need to still repent today.

Peter said to repent. He also said to be immersed. **The word baptism is simply the Greek word brought into English un-translated.** I preached about this two weeks ago. You can find that sermon on our website. **The Greek word *baptidzo* means to immerse (usually into water).** Peter says that a correct response to Jesus is to turn to Jesus with your life and then be immersed into the name of Jesus.

Repentance and baptism cannot be separated. Turning to Jesus and being immersed into His name go together. The first is an inside decision. It is a decision of the will. It is

very, very personal decision of your will. You communicate that decision in prayer to Jesus.

Following that decision, you are to share the news of your decision with others. Baptism is a public demonstration of turning your life over to Jesus. Jesus commands us to be baptized as an initial step of publicly identifying with Jesus. When you are baptized into someone's name, you are accepting what that person teaches and stands for.

When you are immersed into something what happens? You are affected by what you are baptized into.

I was watching an episode of *Man vs. Wild* the other day. The man needed to cross a swampy bog, but was afraid it might not be shallow enough or firm enough to hold him. So he took off all his clothes except his undershorts and tried walking across the bog. He took two steps and disappeared from view. He completely sunk into the bog. He was totally immersed in the slimy, mucky, rotting bog.

When he climbed out he was covered head to toe in muck. He looked and smelled awful. He smelled like a rotting bog. If you immersed yourself in oil, you would have a slippery time of it. If you immersed yourself in honey, it would be a sticky situation. The point is that whatever you immerse yourself into should affect how you live following that.

Too many people get baptized in water but have not really immersed themselves into the name of Jesus. Immersion into the name of Jesus means that you become covered with Jesus. And everything you do will be different because of that. Jesus will affect all you do and all you do will affect Jesus. So you must be thoughtful about what you say, what you do, and how you live.

Repentance and baptism are connected. If you go through the outward ritual of baptism, but have not given your life to Jesus, then your baptism is meaningless. You are still not a Christian. You can be dunked in water every day and it means nothing if you have not turned your life over to Jesus as Lord.

Likewise if you decide to turn to Jesus with your life, but have not obeyed Him in baptism, there is something missing in your decision to follow Jesus. You are not yet all in. You are holding something of yourself back.

A correct response to Easter is first to believe in Jesus as Savior. Then we must repent of sin, turning our lives over to Him as Lord and be immersed into His name. Now you are to live for Him.

How are we to succeed? We can succeed like Jesus did. Note the promise from God that Peter reveals in verse 38.

**Acts 2:38 (NIV)** Peter replied, "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."

This is not a gift from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the gift. Jesus promised His followers, before His death, that when He returned to heaven, He would send the Holy

Spirit. When you become a Christian, God's Holy Spirit comes in you. The Holy Spirit is in you, with you. The Holy Spirit will help you live for Jesus. Look with me at Luke 4.

**Luke 4:1-2 (NIV)** Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

If you are familiar with the following passage, you know that Jesus successfully resisted all the temptations that the devil threw at Him, including one to satisfy His great hunger. The body needs food. The devil offered Jesus a way to have food. But Jesus recognized the sinfulness of doing so in THAT way and said no. Jesus said no to everything the devil offered Him.

You and I need to learn how to resist temptation like Jesus. So what was it that enabled Him to do so? Note first that He was full of the Holy Spirit. That means He was fully open to doing the will of God. So as the Holy Spirit communicated God's will, Jesus obeyed. Note that it says he was led by the Spirit in the desert. The Holy Spirit said to go to the desert and Jesus went. And all the while the Holy Spirit gave Jesus wisdom and strength to resist temptation.

Now if Jesus needed that kind of help, you and I most certainly do also. That is exactly what Jesus promised before His death and what Peter announced to the crowd that day in Jerusalem. That promise is still good today. That promise is for you and me.

So why aren't Christians more successful in resisting temptation? Well the truth is, Christians leak. Not really. The Spirit doesn't literally leak out of us. But we resist the Spirit of God. See what the missionary, Paul, says about this.

**Galatians 5:16-17 (HCSB)** I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want.

Perhaps you have heard the old story about the two wolves. An old Cherokee native American is teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is going on inside of me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil. He is anger, envy, greed, arrogance, resentment, and lies. The other wolf is good. He is kind, peaceable, compassionate, faithful, and trustworthy. The same fight is going on inside of you, inside of all of us."

The grandson thought about it for a bit and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

His grandfather said, "The one you feed."

Paul describes the same battle within himself. With his will he desires to obey God. But too often he fails and gives in to his fleshly desires. But as Paul concludes, we have help for this inner battle. The Holy Spirit can give us wisdom and strength to win this fight. Note that if we will learn to live in the Spirit we will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Paul goes on to describe some of those desires.

**Galatians 5:19-21 (HCSB)** Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar.

But look how you will change when you are led by the Spirit.

**Galatians 5:22-23 (HCSB)** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control.

You know what this war is like. I do too. I went to get a physical last week. They did blood work and the doctor said everything was essentially good. My cholesterol was just a bit higher than he would like, but he wasn't concerned about it. He just wants me to exercise more than I am now.

So I got good news and bad news. Its bad news because my flesh doesn't like to exercise. Almost any excuse sounds good. I've used excuses like I'm too tired, I've been sick, and I have too many other things to do today. One of the "best" is I'm late because I prayed too long.

When it comes to exercise my doctor and my flesh are opposed to each other. They want different things for me. The Holy Spirit and your flesh are opposed to each other. They want different things for you. If you are going to succeed in living for Jesus and honoring Him, you need to be full of the Holy Spirit. You need to be led by the Spirit. Then you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

You need to keep Jesus in mind all day.

**The flesh asks this question: "How will obedience to Jesus affect my life?"**

**One who is led by the Spirit asks this question: "How will my life affect Jesus."**

The Spirit will help you. The Spirit will guide you. Listen to and obey the Spirit of God, for He will give you wisdom and power to resist temptation and obey Jesus.

I encourage you to make this a daily (or more often) prayer of repentance: "**Jesus, I want to live for You. Fill me with Your Spirit. Lead my life for You today.**"

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