

PETER, PETER, SERMON SPEAKER

ACTS 2:14-24 AUGUST 7, 2019

We are back in the book of Acts this evening. Acts 2, beginning in verse 14.

Presidents give a *ton* of speeches - hundreds if not thousands in their terms. Generally there are only a few that are given particular attention. The State of the Union always draws a few more listeners than usual. The inaugural addresses also. Particularly a president's *first* inaugural address, where vision and temperament are being scrutinized by the millions who listen.

Presidential trivia is always fun to read through and the factoids about inaugural speeches did not disappoint. For example: Ronald Reagan's first in '81 was the *warmest* in history - it was 55 degrees. The coldest? Well, that was Ronald Reagan's *second* inauguration: just 7 degrees! So cold that Congress had to pass a last-minute resolution to give permission to use the Rotunda for the event.¹ There's also a huge variety in the *length* of inaugural addresses. George Washington's second address was the shortest at just 135 words. The longest thus far is William Henry Harrison's disastrous, 8,400 word speech which, various sources record, took between 90 minutes and 2 hours to deliver in 48 degree weather.² Historians debate over how much of a toll the speech took on Harrison, but we do know he refused a coat when he was speaking and was dead 31 days later.

In Acts 2 we have the very first sermon of the Church age. It is the inaugural address of a new dispensation. This book is full of sermons, each with its own length, style and audience. Each is significant and powerful. Some are more famous than others, but here we have the very first. And it was delivered spontaneously. Peter hadn't *planned* to deliver a Bible study that day. He didn't come with notes or an outline. The *Holy Spirit* spoke through him. According to verse 40 only a portion of what Peter said is recorded for us, but, by the end, three thousand people will have been born again and the Church is suddenly established.

It's a remarkable sermon, especially when we consider who was delivering it. But, as we'll learn from Peter, in the *Church* age, God's power is not reserved for the accredited or the powerful or the prominent. It's given to *all* of us to trust in the Lord. What was begun in Acts 2 continues today through our lives as members of Christ's Body here on the earth as we go out preaching and living in the power of the Spirit.

For time's sake, we're going to take the sermon in two parts. As we move through Peter's study we want to notice its *information* and the *features*, but we also want to allow him to preach it to us as well and consider the *implications* of his message for our own lives. God's word is alive and that means this *sermon* is alive and has something to speak even tonight to each of us.

When we last left off, the believers were gathered together on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit fell with noise and flames of fire and the miraculous speaking of other languages. A huge crowd had gathered and, in verse 14, Peter begins to speak to the audience.

Acts 2:14-15 - ¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵ For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day.

¹ <http://blogs.britannica.com/2009/01/inaugural-addresses-the-longest-shortest-dumbest-and-most-memorable/>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inauguration_of_William_Henry_Harrison

Some scoffers in the crowd wrote off what was happening as simple drunkenness. It was a silly suggestion. They were *probably* down in the temple complex. This was the first hour of public prayer. And, during feast times, it would've been unlawful for them to eat or drink *anything* before the morning sacrifice, let alone be drunk.³

We see a dramatic change in our man Peter: A few short weeks earlier he had been frightened of a servant girl, denying Jesus, hiding behind locked doors. Now, having been restored by the Lord and filled with the Holy Spirit, he is bold and taking advantage of an opportunity to preach about his Messiah. He energetically demands their attention, not just in verse 14 but again in verse 22. He speaks, not because he's worried about their reputation. He doesn't threaten to sue them for libel. Rather, he declares that he has something to say, something important.

Acts 2:16 - ¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

Before we get into Peter's first section, we want to note what is happening here. Remember: a powerful set of phenomena had just occurred. People were *miraculously* hearing the sound of rushing wind and seeing these tongues of fire floating over heads and then listening to unschooled Galileans speaking a wide variety of languages they had never learned. Peter *immediately* stands up and starts to explain these phenomena using the *Bible*. These experiences were rooted in Scripture and had *purpose*. Now, we want to be dynamically Spirit-filled as individuals and a Church. We *believe* our God is miraculous and does supernatural things in our midst. However: If some experience happens at a church gathering or in your personal life, it *must* be able to pass the test of Scripture. If it's spiritual, if it's *true*, it will be defensible using God's word. If it is outside the boundaries and precedents of Scripture, then it is *not* an experience we should be interested in. And, I want to note here before moving on, throughout the rest of this chapter we never see the Apostles say, "Ok, now everyone stop talking so we can get back to this experience." The manifestations were over. In fact, it reads this way: That they were experiencing this incredible moment of spiritual power, manifested in miracles and signs, and that was *interrupted* by a Bible study! Consistently we see that the believers in Acts were *not* chasing experiences, they were simply in communion with the Lord and allowed Him to take the lead.

Acts 2:17-18 - ¹⁷And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

What jumps out here is the *wide* access being made available to *all* of God's people. Think about it: In the Old Testament there were hard lines drawn between those who had more and less access to God. Of course, God would often interact with individuals *outside* of, say, the priestly class. But what do we see throughout the history of Israel? You had the priests. You had the nation, masses of people, and then you would often have 1 or 2 or a handful of prophets. If you wanted to hear from the Lord, you had to hear it through them. And even *they* did not have the kind of communion with the Holy Spirit that is made available to *everyone* in the Church today. One commentator pictured it as a few drops being sprinkled on them while we enjoy the overflowing flood. That may not *feel* true when we read about Elijah or Jeremiah, but it *is* true. God has *poured out* His Holy Spirit on male and female, young and old alike. *All* have a place in His work. *All* can be used for His glory. In fact,

³ Horatio Hackett *A Commentary On The Original Text Of The Acts Of The Apostles*

God *intends* for all of us to experience this filling and the life that comes with it. Based on Peter's declaration here, we should *expect* that God be doing dramatic spiritual work in our lives. We're not allowed to *remove* ourselves from this part of the plan. And if we *are* removed from it, it's not because we're not *important* enough to be a part of God's work, it's because we've somehow *quenched* the Holy Spirit in our lives. The New Testament is clear that each and all are given the Holy Spirit. Each and all are gifted to serve. Each and all are given callings and good works to discover and walk in. We should expect the Holy Spirit to be ministering to us and through us.

Now, does this mean we should chase after particular manifestations, like the ones listed by Joel and Peter? Well, while we see in the Bible that those sorts of things *are* still part of God's work, what we *don't* see is the Apostles chasing after those things specifically. Because one of the sub-themes of Peter's sermon is that the miraculous works of God are *His* to choose and accomplish. We cannot *schedule* a prophetic word. We cannot *develop* the ability to have spiritual visions. God accomplishes those things when He wills, we do not experience them like the X-men harnessing their powers. And we do not see the Apostles gathering to have a "vision quest" or a "tongues night." They just don't. Rather we see them *expecting* God to do work in and through their lives as they simply follow Him, obey Him and live the Christian life. God *did* amazing things, but He did so according to *His* plan and design. It's His work of pouring out, not our work of digging up.

Acts 2:19-20 - ¹⁹I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

Here we see that Joel's prophecy continued and includes events that, *clearly*, have not happened yet. There's a lot going on here, but here's where we'll start: First of all, take note that the very first sermon of the Church age was centered on *prophecy*. Specifically, the *literal fulfillment of prophecy*. That idea continues in the following verses. So, these miraculous things happen, the people want to know what's going on, Peter explains, "Well, this is a literal fulfillment of part of what Joel spoke about hundreds of years ago." Then Peter goes on to speak about a coming judgment that is accompanied by cataclysmic changes in the cosmos. We harp on this a lot, but it's important: There is *no reason* to believe that unfulfilled prophecies in the Bible will not have a literal, future fulfillment. In fact, we *have* to believe they will based upon an honest reading of passages like this one.

Peter cited Joel to explain what God was doing in the lives of His people - those who believed. But then he *continued* citing Joel to explain what was in store for those who *are not* God's people. "Here's what's going on with us, but I've got some bad news...here's what's going to be going on with *YOU* if you don't get saved!" And we know that Peter had their salvation on his mind because of the very next verse:

Acts 2:21 - ²¹And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.'

The Day of the Lord is inevitable, but it is not inescapable. God has provided the way by which a person can pass from death to life. The solution is very simple: They must call on the name of the Lord. And, notice, before we move on, this issue of eternal salvation was the most important thing. This was the first message of the Church age. Peter didn't talk about the oppression of Rome or civil unrest or how to be emotionally happy. He spoke to them about eternal life and the judgment to come.

But, these listeners might ask, who is “the Lord?” And what is His name? You see, Peter’s message *to this point* is not sufficient. It’s not enough to simply know God exists. Now Peter turns to *Jesus Christ*, proving that He *is* Lord and Messiah, the *one and only way* by which people can be saved.

Acts 2:22-24 - ²²“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—²³ Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

We should not hurry past what Peter said: Among the audience that day were people who were personally involved in the conspiracy to murder the Son of God, at least to the degree of calling for His crucifixion before Pilate. Now, we’re *all* guilty of Christ’s crucifixion, because He bore *all* of our sins. But consider the immeasurable mercy of God. Those who *refused* to believe, even after seeing undeniable miracles and signs. Those who *murdered* His only begotten Son. He sent them *another* chance to be saved. He worked to bring them into His inheritance. The astounding grace of God!

Here, Peter focuses on Jesus’ *life*. Who He was. What He did. And then he moved to discussing Christ’s *death*. And Peter states, incontrovertibly that Jesus’ death on the cross was all-sufficient to conquer sin and death. Jesus’ death *plus nothing* solves with the problem of sin. It is not Jesus’ death plus baptism. Or circumcision. Or tongues. Or anything else. His death paid it all and the *proof* of its sufficiency is that the power of death was defeated. It’s pains were loosed. Death was undone at the cross. But only for those who have a part in Christ’s resurrection. Only those who are rescued by the Savior can shake free of the horrors of death and be raised like He was.

After looking at Jesus’ life and death, Peter next turns to His resurrection, which is central and primary in the sermons of Acts, but we’ll save that portion for next time.

Seeing as we are a church that loves Bible study and place a great emphasis on it, we want to highlight some of the features of this, the first sermon of the Church age.

First of all, the whole thing is rooted in Scripture. Peter went through a passage in Joel. Next he’ll move to a couple of Psalms. And he treats those Scriptures as true and authoritative. He treats them like they *matter*. What has God said and how must my life conform accordingly?

Second, Peter prioritized certain things and *did not* prioritize others. He didn’t spend a bunch of time talking about the experience they had just witnessed. Instead, he spent his time focused on the need for salvation, God’s will and His prophetic plan. It’s not that other topics are unimportant, but they are *less* important. In this situation, for example, the injustices of Roman rule were *less* important than the fact that these people needed to be saved. And they needed to be saved right now! Of *course* other topics would be addressed in other sermons and through the New Testament, but the preaching of the Gospel and the life and death choice of whether a person accepts Jesus was and is the most important thing. It is primary and is our priority.

There is more we could say about the sermon itself, but let’s turn to its implications. This sermon is *still* preaching and it’s preaching to us today. As we know, the result of this little Bible study is the conversion of thousands of people. They heard the message: That they were guilty before God but that God had made a way that they might be saved, and that way is Jesus who lived and died and

rose again and all who call on His name, turning from their sins and believing in Him will, most assuredly, be saved.

Maybe you have the same response that many had that morning: "I want to be saved!" You can be, right now, just as they were. Jesus really did live and die and rise again. He is the only route by which you can be saved from the guilt of your sins, the shackles of death and gain access to heaven. We've been shown how you can lay hold of this salvation: It is faith plus nothing, because it is all of God's grace. It's been His plan from the beginning to offer you this gift. It was His determined purpose. To accept salvation simply means to believe what God has said in His word, trust Jesus to save you as you turn from your sins toward Him in faith. God never rejects anyone who accepts Him.

For those who are already Christians here tonight, the implication of Peter's sermon is that God has poured out His Holy Spirit in an incredible, unlimited measure upon *all* His people. In the Old Testament, only a few people knew the power of the Holy Spirit. But Acts 2 marks the start of a new era of history: the Church age. And, in this Church age, God intends for you to be Spirit filled, not so we can chase unusual *experiences*, but so that God can do great things through us. So He can continue doing the work we see exemplified in this passage and chronicled in the rest of the Book.

Like salvation, the filling of the Spirit was a gift to be received. We don't earn it or learn it. We receive it by faith and the results are not simply a spiritual feeling that, so often, people chase after. Rather, we see the Holy Spirit *transforming* people to be used in God's service. We see the believers here being filled with the Spirit and the result was boldness. A readiness to preach when the opportunity presented itself. We see them subject to the Word of God, finding their place in God's plan according to what He's said. We see them demonstrating unconditional compassion on people who did not deserve it. Christ killers. Yet Peter stood and spoke because he sensed there was a chance to save them.

We want to be filled as they were. So, what should we do? Well, I'm encouraged that the first moments of church history were dramatic and powerful but also pretty *routine* compared to what we do regularly when we gather: prayer, worship, bible study. Throughout the book of Acts we'll see that there was no special incantation, no secret recipe which resulted in the outpouring of God's power and presence in special ways. What we see are faithful, *faith-filled* Christians going about their days in communion with God with servant hearts and then God moved in their midst.

We have a chance now to pray and worship in this gathering and we expect God to continue doing what He began that day in the very first gathering of the Church. Let's draw near to Him and invite Him to do what He wants.