

The Lord Jesus Christ and His Church

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[0 : 00] Sermon is here in the book of Acts. A few weeks ago, we're in chapter 2 today, verses 22 to 41. Acts chapter 2, verses 22 to 41.

Amen. God raised him up, losing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced, and my flesh also will dwell in hope.

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life. You will make me full of gladness with your presence.

Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being there for a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

[1 : 57] This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 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.

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? 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.

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. And with many other words, he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about 3,000 souls. This is God's holy and authoritative word. God, we pray that you would speak to us as you spoke through Peter on that day of Pentecost, that you would move among us in power, that you would bring conviction, that as we hear the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, that our hearts would be cut to the heart, that we would be cut to the heart, that we would be filled with your spirit, that there would be repentance, faith, baptisms.

[3 : 48] We look to you, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you have ever walked into a Christian bookstore, or actually any bookstore, you know that there's a glut of self-help books out there.

But what you might not be aware of is that there's also a glut of church-help books out there. There are hundreds of books that purport to have the silver bullet of church growth.

You have to create an inviting atmosphere and a welcoming experience. You have to have a better and bigger musical production. You have to make your sermons shorter and tell more stories and talk less about the Bible.

You need to be more woke and relevant for your culture. You have to canvass your neighborhood and talk about the issues that they care about. You have to have certain kinds of small groups.

You have to have a better assimilation strategy for getting first-time visitors to become regular attendees and then eventually members. There are all kinds of ideas out there. Some are more

helpful than others.

[5 : 04] And pragmatically speaking, all of those strategies work. The problem, however, is that though they are effective in gathering a crowd, they cannot grow a church because the church grows by the Spirit-empowered preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Even the records of the best church growth experts pale in comparison to what happens here in Acts chapter 2, verses 22 to 41.

In Acts 1, verse 15, the church was about 120 people. But in Acts chapter 2, verse 41, there were added that day about 3,000 souls. 25-fold growth in one day.

But we see no brilliant human strategy or production at all. Only a bold proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ among people whom the Spirit of God was working in.

And throughout the book of Acts, Luke provides summary statements that tell us about the state of the church. And if you examine those statements, they often use language like this. Acts chapter 6, verse 7 says, And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly.

[6 : 21] When the word of God increases, the number of the disciples multiplied. Acts chapter 12, verse 24, The word of God increased and multiplied.

Acts chapter 19, verse 20, So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. This is because the church grows by the Spirit-empowered preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So in verses 22 to 36, we see the gospel proclamation. And in verses 37 to 41, we see the church's growth, the people's response to the gospel proclamation.

In the preceding passage we talked about last week, Peter cited Joel chapter 2 to explain the sound like a mighty rushing wind and the divided tongues as a fire that came upon the people and how they spoke in other tongues, other languages.

And we saw that this was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, that in the last days, the Spirit of God would come upon all of his people in power. And at the end of that citation, he said in verse 21, And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[7 : 30] And now he pivots from that point on, starting in verse 22, to get to the meat of his sermon, to explain who this Lord is that we must call upon in order to be saved.

He says in verse 22, Peter addresses the Jews from every nation that are in the audience as men of Israel, and then he introduces Jesus as Jesus of Nazareth, a man.

In other words, Jesus was a man, just like you men. This is the reality of Jesus' incarnation, that the Son of God took on human flesh.

He became a Son of Man. He was born in Nazareth. Or, he grew up in Nazareth. In our passports, we have our birth date and a place of birth.

And Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, the only begotten Son of God, had a birth date in human history, and he had a birth place on earth. That's the mind-boggling reality of the incarnation.

[8 : 46] But this man, Jesus, though in one sense he was an ordinary human being, in another sense was extraordinary. Because it says he was attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know.

God himself testified to the kind of man that Jesus was. By doing mighty works and wonders and signs through him. And notice that Peter doesn't even feel the need to prove this, to demonstrate this.

He doesn't have people stand up to give testimonials. He doesn't say, hey, Mary Magdalene, you, yes, you, you've been, you know, healed by Jesus. You've had seven demons cast out of you.

Why don't you come on up here and tell this crowd about what happened? Peter doesn't do that because he doesn't need to. He says that God did these mighty works and wonders and signs through Jesus in your midst, as you yourselves know.

This is taken for granted. If you look at the controversies between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders in the Gospels, like in Matthew 9 or 12 or Mark chapter 3, Jesus' naysayers never questioned that Jesus did miracles.

[10 : 00] They questioned how Jesus did miracles. They accused him of using the power of the prince of demons to cast out other demons. But of course, that's an absurd argument because Jesus was driving out demons and healing people.

So Peter is here starting out with what the crowd already knows. It doesn't need to be proven. Everyone there knows that Jesus was attested by mighty works and signs and wonders. That's not in question.

But then when he begins to challenge them in verses 23, 24, he doesn't mince his words. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

God raised him up, losing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. In his description of Jesus' trial in Luke chapter 22 and 23, Luke portrays the Jewish leadership as really driving Jesus' condemnation and eventual crucifixion.

And here, since he's speaking to Jews who were in Jerusalem at the time for Pentecost, Peter holds them responsible for Jesus' death. You crucified and killed him.

[11:17] It's possible, even likely, that some of the people who were witnessing the events of Pentecost were the very people who were among the mob that yelled, crucify him, crucify him.

But the Jews are not solely responsible for Jesus' death. Peter says, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. The phrase lawless men does not merely mean immoral men or law-breaking men.

It refers to those who are outside the law, Gentiles. In other words, Jews, as well as the Romans, the Gentiles, were responsible for Jesus' execution.

Both are to blame. And though they are the immediate cause of Jesus' death, they're not the ultimate cause, and we see this in verse 23. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

There's a wonderful interplay here between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. The Jews and Gentiles are responsible for their unjust killing of Jesus.

[12:28] But all of that happened according to God's definite plan and foreknowledge. The divine sovereignty and human responsibility are like two ends of a guitar string that needs to be held taught for it to make sound.

As soon as you try to resolve that tension by letting go, it becomes useless. On the one hand, if you find yourself thinking and saying things like, well, God wouldn't do something so despicable as giving up His own son to death, putting Him forward as a sacrifice, God didn't do that.

Humanity killed Him and then God used it for good. If you find yourself saying things like that, then you're letting go of the divine sovereignty side of the string. because Romans 3.25 says, God put Him forward as a propitiation by His blood.

Romans 8.32 says, God did not spare His own son but gave Him up for us all. It says here in Acts 2.23 clearly that Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. On the other hand, if you find yourself thinking and saying things like this, it's ultimately God who put Jesus on the cross so the Jews and Gentiles really had no choice, then you're releasing the human responsibility side of the string.

[13:54] It's a mystery that must be held in tension. Both are true. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

And when you hold these truths in tension together, it offers wonderful comforts for the Christian. The worst things that other people have done to you, a malicious gossip that made you lose your best friend, a vindictive co-worker that made you lose your job, a domineering relative who abused you, whatever they did to you, they are fully responsible for what they have done and they will be held accountable by our just God.

So God is not to blame for it. At the same time, you can rest assured that even the most heinous and harmful things that people have done to you did not happen outside of God's definite plan and foreknowledge.

God is not to blame for it. It's not that God was unaware that it might happen or that He was powerless to do something about it. Imagine such an ignorant and impotent God.

He would not be God at all. He knew it was part of His definite plan. Why? Because it will make you more like Jesus. Because it will prepare you for the glory that He has in store for you.

[15:24] Because He loves you. Because we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to His purpose. So God put Jesus forward as a propitiation by His blood that we might be justified through faith in Jesus.

God did not spare His own Son so that He might spare sinners like us. That was God's plan of salvation all along. And though it says that the Jews crucified and killed Jesus by the hands of Gentiles, it says in verse 24, God raised Him up losing the pangs of death because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.

Notice the contrast between verse 23 and verse 24. You crucified and killed Him but God raised Him up. The phrase losing the pangs of death teaches us that death is a form of captivity. It keeps men bound. We must be freed from it. We must be freed from it. Losed from it. The administrative maximum facility in Florence, Colorado, known as the Alcatraz of the Rockies, is the most secure prison in the world has ever seen.

It's classed as a super max prison which means it's more secure than a maximum security prison. Each prisoner inside is under 24-hour supervision and are confined in single cells 23 hours per day which is made of poured, reinforced concrete.

[16:57] Their one hour per day out of the cell is unpredictable and can occur at any time in the day and the windows of their cells are so narrow, four inches to be exact, it's impossible for them to make out even where they are inside the complex.

And they made it like this so that no prison would even plan an escape. They can't even plan an escape. No one has ever attempted to escape from this prison.

And yet, even this prison has only a 27-year history and has kept only hundreds of people within its concrete walls. But that's nothing compared to death.

Over the many millennia of human history, death has kept over 100 billion people in captivity. And no one who has ever died has escaped its chains permanently.

Even the few who had been miraculously raised from the dead eventually succumbed to death again because that's our human destiny. As people have sinned and rebelled against our Creator, we can't ever escape this grip of death on our own.

[18:10] That's why people fear death. Do you fear death? Are you afraid of its bondage? Do you fear its pain?

Because if that's the case, you're right to fear it. Because there's no hope of escape from it except in Jesus Christ. God raised Jesus up from the dead so that He never dies again.

And now whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. That's the hope that's given only to those who follow Jesus Christ.

Jesus has broken free from that eternal prison and if you follow Him you can follow Him out.

But how was it that it was not possible for Jesus to be held by death? Peter explains by citing Psalm 16, 8-11 in verses 25-28. For David says concerning Him, I saw the Lord always before me for He is at my right hand that I may not be shaken.

[19:26] Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced. My flesh also will dwell in hope for You will not abandon my soul to Hades or let Your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life.

You will make me full of gladness with Your presence. In this Psalm David asks God for protection from a mortal threat that He is facing and then He ends the Psalm by expressing his confidence in God's deliverance.

But Peter as well as Paul later on in Acts 13-35 interpret this Psalm typologically to be about Jesus because David is a type of Jesus Christ.

He foreshadows Jesus Christ. He's a figure that points to the coming of the Messianic King. So let's look at Peter's explanation in verses 29-31. Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day.

Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne before he saw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ that he was not abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh see corruption.

[20:35] Though David was delivered from that mortal threat that he was crying out to God about in the Psalm, his deliverance was only temporary because he did eventually die of old age. 1 Kings 2, verse 10 tells us that David's buried in the city of David.

You can go and visit it. And his body has been thoroughly decomposed. And for that reason, Peter argues that David was speaking prophetically of a Messianic King who would come from his dynastic line who will overcome death once and for all.

So then a thousand years before Jesus is born, there's a prophecy of his resurrection. It's possible for a spirit-inspired prophetic speech to have double meaning like this.

We see an example of it in John chapter 11, verse 49-51 when Caiaphas talks about how it's advantageous politically for them to kill Jesus so to suppress the movement and not incur the wrath of the Romans.

But that prophecy actually ends up having a double meaning because he says it is better for one man to die for the people. It ends up speaking through the spirit of the death of Jesus Christ as an atoning sacrifice for the salvation of his people.

[22 : 02] And so that's what's happening here in Psalm 16 as well. What David said was true of his own situation but it's true in an even deeper sense with Christ's situation because David was prophesying that the messianic king would be raised from the dead.

Though he would enter Hades the realm of the dead he would not be abandoned there. Though he would die his body would not see corruption he would be raised from the dead to enjoy fullness of life in God's presence.

And Peter along with the rest of the apostles personally witness this. Peter says in verse 32 this Jesus God raised up and of that we all are witnesses.

Jesus' disciples did not anticipate the resurrection because the Jews did not have an expectation for a resurrection like Jesus. They expected a resurrection a general resurrection at the end of the days.

And when they first saw Jesus risen from the dead it says in Luke 24 verse 37 that they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

[23 : 14] Jesus' resurrection is not a mere myth or metaphor. It's a fact of history as real as his death on the cross. This is a distinguishing characteristic of Christianity.

Islam began with private visions that Muhammad had in a cave which can never be historically verified. Buddhism similarly does not stem from historical events but from the personal philosophical musings of Siddhartha Gautama.

The veracity of neither religion can be established from a historical standpoint. But Christianity makes historical claims. This Jesus God raised up and of that we all are witnesses.

This is a historical claim that's either true or false and the entirety of Christianity depends on it. 1 Corinthians 15 14 says if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

And generation after generation of Christians since then have been bearing witness to the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. And it's precisely because Jesus was raised from the dead, precisely because Jesus has ascended to heaven, that he's now able to pour out the Holy Spirit.

[24 : 40] Peter says in verse 33, 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.

And this too is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Peter cites Psalm 110 verse 1 in verse 34 and 35. 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.

So the right hand of someone is a position of honor and power and authority.

It's the place of the second in command, the king's most trusted agent. But this identity of the second Lord, who is this that has baffled Jews for hundreds of years?

Because the subtitle of the psalm says, a psalm of David, and David is the king of Israel. So who is this king that David is calling Lord?

[25 : 58] When he says, the Lord God said to my Lord, this is exactly the argument that Jesus himself used in Luke chapter 20 to prove that he is the messianic king that David is calling Lord in that psalm.

Peter makes the same point but from a different angle. He argues that David could not possibly be the Lord that's in view in that psalm because God says to him, sit at my right hand because David never ascended into the heavens.

Israel kings reigned at God's behest but they never sat at the right hand of God's heavenly throne. So this it's a reference to Jesus the Son of God the messianic king.

And so Peter concludes in verse 36 let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified. Jesus is both Lord and Christ. God has made him Lord. That means he's given all authority in heaven and earth to him. He has been raised above every name God has subjected all things under him.

[27 : 14] That's what it means to be made Lord. God has also made Jesus Christ which means anointed one. He is the promised messianic king who brings forth the kingdom of God.

And this according to Peter is what Pentecost is all about. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is for Peter proof that Jesus is the risen and ascended Lord.

Because only such Lord could pour out the Spirit of God as they were witnessing at the time. Jesus said in John 16 verse 13 and 14 when the Spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all truth for he will not speak on his own authority but whatever he hears he will speak and he will declare to you the things that are to come he will glorify me for he will take what is mine and declare it to you this is the wonderful thing about the Spirit of God the Spirit of God does not glorify himself the Spirit of God always glorifies the Son of God wherever the Spirit of God is powerfully present Jesus is central and his name is exalted even at Pentecost when the Spirit of God appeared as divided tongues as a fire and rested on each believer

Peter's sermon does not focus on the experience of the Holy Spirit nor on the wondrous signs but on Jesus Christ whom the Spirit of God points to a truly Spirit empowered church is always a Christ centered church Jesus is what the Bible is all about and Jesus should be what our church should be all about the name Peter is mentioned 156 times in the New Testament Paul 158 times even the word love only occurs 259 times but the name Jesus occurs 917 times his title Christ occurs 529 times the word God occurs 1317 times there are four books in the New Testament entirely dedicated to the life the person and work of

Jesus Christ the church is a gathering of God's people and if we are not preaching this crucified risen and ascended Christ then we have no business being in business at all do you proclaim the risen Lord Jesus Christ with your family members with your friends with your neighbors it's scary yes note that speaking in front of thousands of people probably didn't come naturally to Peter who was a fisherman by trade Peter was also very aware that just a few weeks ago they killed Jesus his master he knows that he is inviting their scrutiny and persecution when he stands up to proclaim the gospel but the spirit of

[30 : 46] God enables him to do it and when he does faithfully the church grows that's what we see in verses 37 to 41 it says in verse 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 the Jews in the audience are pierced in their conscience when they hear Peter say that Jesus that they crucified was the messianic king who had come to save them when the movie passion of the Christ first came out which portrays the suffering and death of Jesus Christ I remember there was a lot of debate and controversy with some people accusing the film of inflaming anti-Semitism because of its depiction of Jewish involvement in the killing of Jesus while still others expressing concern that it's well if you're going to argue that you could also argue that it fuels anti-Italianism through its depiction of Roman officials but all of this is missing the point because

Christ died for us according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God as Jesus said in Matthew chapter 26 verse 53 he could have appealed to the father and he would have at once sent him more than 12 legions of angels to deliver him in 2 Samuel 24 we see one angel of the Lord stretch out his hand and 70,000 men die with pestilence imagine the damage that 12,000 angels can do and yet Jesus doesn't call for the legion of angels instead he goes to his death like a lamb before shearers that silent that Jesus said about his life in John 10 18 no one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord

Jesus willingly goes to the cross Jesus willingly lays down his life because it's the only way to save sinners like you and me and so that's why the hymn how deep the father's love is correct behold the man upon a cross my sin upon his shoulders ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers it was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished his dying breath has brought me life I know that it is finished and when the spirit of God brings this truth to bear on your heart you also will be cut to the heart have you come to terms with this the careless hurtful words that you said the haughty judgmental eyes with which you scorned others the anger resentment unforgiveness that you have harbored the gossip and slander that you whispered the greed which you defrauded and stole this lustful heart that you indulged the selfish pride and vanity in which you

have lived to make much of yourself and not much of God your sins and my sins held Jesus on his cross the beloved son of the father the holy one of God the righteous one the blameless one dying on a vile filthy cross for you and me brothers and sisters what shall we do there's only one appropriate response Peter says in verse 38 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 we see here three distinct yet inseparable aspects of conversion first repentance second baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and third finally as a result of those two things the reception of the Holy Spirit first we must repent turn from our sinful ways and turn toward Jesus in faith to repent is to acknowledge that you have been going in the wrong direction and to turn around to repent is to regret our former rejection of Christ and to accept him as our Lord and Savior repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin when you repent of your rebellion against Christ then you are simultaneously pledging allegiance in faith to Jesus Christ that's the first thing but that's not all secondly Peter says 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 the Greek verb to baptize literally means to immerse for Jews immersion in water for the purpose of purification from ritual impurities was a habitual thing did it often it signifies the washing away of our guilt and the purifying of our conscience so we could approach [37 : 03] God with a clear conscience and it says we are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ earlier Peter said in verse 21 everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus shall be saved to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ is to call upon Jesus and acknowledge that he alone can save us from sin and when we are baptized in the name of Jesus we are taking on his name we're coming under his authority and by doing so we become members of the church which is the body of Christ in this way Romans 6 3 to 4 also describe baptism as a union with Christ's death and resurrection we're dying to ourselves and now living to Christ in the newness of life by the power of the Holy Spirit and this public and corporate dimension of baptism is very important baptism is an outward expression of an inward faith

I'm going to talk about this because we actually have baptism service coming up we'll probably do some baptisms on Easter on resurrection Sunday first Sunday of April baptism Christians sometimes talk individualistically about salvation as if personal repentance and faith is all there is to it but the Bible associates our personal repentance and faith with corporate baptism in the body of Christ an outward public profession of faith is important because the Christian faith is a public faith because Christian faith is not a matter of personal opinion but it's a matter of universal truth John 12 42 to 43 says this nevertheless many even of the authorities Jewish authorities believed in Jesus but for fear of the

Pharisees they did not confess it so that they would not be put out of the synagogue for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God you see the contrast there between believing and confessing there were Jewish authorities who believed in Jesus secretly but for the fear of what the Pharisees might do to them and they might be afraid of getting kicked out of the synagogue they never confessed the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God meaning they were not true followers of Christ because they were ashamed of Christ and his words they loved the glory of man this is why Jesus says in Luke chapter 12 verses 8 to 9 and I tell you everyone who acknowledges me before man the son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God but the the baptism and not a private recitation of the sinner's prayer is used to mark the beginning of a

Christian's life nowadays it's become fashionable among some missiologists missiologists are scholars who study missions to suggest that in the name of compassion the Christian converts in hostile Buddhist and Muslim countries should be allowed to delay their baptism or to not make their baptism public or to alter the form of baptism entirely in a manner that fits their native culture and religion so that it doesn't look like a Christian baptism in order to help them avoid being persecuted and perhaps killed by the members of their own families while that is a legitimate concern the solution that they propose is tragically misguided the Lord Jesus will not acknowledge before men before the heavenly divine heavenly court those who refuse to acknowledge him before a human earthly court Jesus is clear in

Matthew 10 36 to 37 a person's enemies will be those of his own household whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me becoming a Christian entails a radical reorientation of

one's entire life top to bottom how then can a Christian hide that being a Christian entails obeying Christ's command to evangelize tell others about him how then can a Christian be a Christian in secret the early church grew under persecution these Jews understood very well that they were following in the footsteps of a crucified king and that's the cost that one counts when he or she decides to get baptized it's a transfer of citizenship into the kingdom of God it's a declaration of allegiance to a new king and the result of baptism

[43 : 22] Peter says is the forgiveness of your sins forgiveness is a commercial metaphor that conveys the remission of debt God grants us loan forgiveness because of our disobedience and rebellion we've amassed a debt of sin that we can never repay but God mercifully forgives our debt accepting Jesus' payment on our behalf on the cross the idea that baptism results in forgiveness of sins makes us as Protestant Christians uncomfortable but it shouldn't because it's not baptism in and of itself or baptism by itself that saves Christ commands baptism God does impart his grace through the means of baptism but it's not a rigid formula where no one can be saved without it for example in Luke 23 verse 43 Jesus assures the criminal that's being crucified next to him that he will be with him in paradise even though obviously he has not been baptized 1

Corinthians 1 14 Paul says Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel why because apart from faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ baptism does nothing we also see in Acts chapter 10 verses 44 to 48 that the gift of the Holy Spirit can fall upon a group of believers before their baptism prompting Peter to say well can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people who receive the Holy Spirit just as we have so baptism is not a magical ritual that saves in and of itself apart from repentance and faith nor is it a rigid formula without which no one can be saved but when it is accompanied by genuine repentance and faith baptism is the usual and ordinary means by which God marks our new birth and imparts his Holy Spirit the individual repents and believes the church baptizes the

Holy Spirit regenerates makes alive these three things usually happen in close connection to each other throughout scripture but even when it mentions only one of them it has all three of them in view repentance and baptism go together they usually precede the gift of the Holy Spirit so he says repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit indwelling presence is an indispensable mark of the Christian the Spirit is God's seal on us his stamp of ownership and without the Spirit we cannot fulfill our Christian calling to love and follow Christ there's no such thing as a Christian that does not have the Holy Spirit Romans chapter 8 verse 9 affirms it clearly anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him and as we see throughout the New Testament and especially in 1st John those who have the Holy Spirit confess Jesus Christ and obey Jesus Christ that's how you know that you have the Holy Spirit that's why when a person who claims to be a Christian strays into heresy or apostatizes and denies Christ or engages in persistent unrepentant sin the church disciplines that member and declares that he or she is not a spirit indwelled Christian this doesn't mean that you obey Christ perfectly if you're a Christian but it does mean that you're always repenting and believing you're always growing in obedience if you have confessed Christ and you love Christ and you're seeking to please him with your life that's evidence that you have received this precious gift of the Holy Spirit but if you have not received the gift of the Holy Spirit you must repent and be baptized in the name of

Jesus Christ if you are not yet baptized if you have not yet pledged allegiance to Jesus in this way and put all your faith in him please talk to someone after the service you can come talk to me and we can prepare you for the baptism that's coming up and this invitation knows no boundaries Peter says in verse 39 for the promises for you and for your children and for all who are far off everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself the phrase for your children indicates temporal extent the salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit that Christ offers is not only for the present generation but it's also for future generations the phrase for all who are far off indicates spatial extent the salvation is not only for those who are in Jerusalem but it will reach to the ends of the earth and then Peter casts it all off with another quotation from Joel 2 32 the latter half of which was omitted from the earlier citation from

[48 : 37] Joel it says everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself will be saved once again we see the interplay between divine sovereignty and human responsibility Peter said early in verse 21 everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved but he says here in verse 39 everyone whom the Lord God calls to himself shall receive the promised Holy Spirit and be saved you find

both of those truths throughout scripture and in Joel 2 32 that Peter is quoting on the one hand we issue a universal invitation we plead with everyone to call upon the same time remember that only God saves only those whom he calls get saved if you find yourself thinking or saying things like well there's no point in evangelizing because people whom God has called will be saved anyway or this person will never come to faith in

Christ because he's not part of the elect then you have resolved this tension by letting go of human responsibility but if you find yourself saying things like this well that person's salvation depends on me and my persuasiveness or so many people are becoming Christians because I'm such a great evangelist then you have resolved this tension by letting go of divine sovereignty verses 40 and 41 conclude this narrative and with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them saying save yourselves from this crooked generation and so those who received his were baptized and there were added that day about 3,000 souls every generation styles itself as an improvement over the previous generation but in truth every generation is a crooked generation that rejects Christ and we must be saved from it out of it this in in in this case

Peter's message is well received it says about 3,000 people are baptized but the proclamation of the gospel doesn't always get this kind of reception as we will see throughout Acts sometimes when you proclaim the gospel people throw rocks at you and try to stone you to death but this doesn't make the apostles go back to the drawing board and then say well that didn't work we must have said something wrong what can we do differently next time no you never find the apostles doing that they keep proclaiming the same gospel message because they understand that the church grows by the spirit empowered preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ people change the audience changes but the gospel does not change that many people are added to the church does not necessarily indicate superior methods of gospel proclamation and that many people respond with hostility and persecution does not necessarily indicate inferior methods of gospel proclamation everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself shall be saved and we are witnesses not saviors

God will not judge us by the number of people that are saved through us but by whether or not we faithfully bore witness to Jesus Christ you are a Christian today because somebody bore witness to Jesus Christ to you whether it's your parents or your friend or your neighbor so let's continue to carry this gospel torch handed down to us from the apostles and trust that this gospel as it is proclaimed will bear fruit in our midst this year let's pray together yes Lord grant us the faith the boldness to be faithful witnesses of Jesus and help us never to question for a moment that it is your word proclaimed by your spirit that saves that grows the church help us never lose our identity as a church that we are a church of Christ that ministers the gospel of Christ in Jesus name we pray Amen