

A WALK TO THE CROSS (And Beyond)

The Key Question Acts 2:37-41

The most crucial question anyone can ask is...“*What must I do to be saved?*” A wrong answer to that question...no matter how sincere a person’s personal beliefs may be...is the *path to eternal tragedy*.

Knowing how *vitaly imperative* a correct answer is to this question...Satan has put forth his greatest efforts to *confuse the issue*. The result has been an overabundance of wrong answers. Although *superficially based* on the Bible...*every deception* is in fact a *perversion* of biblical truth.

- **Religious or Legalist**...they believe that *salvation comes through a works-righteousness system*...over-zealous religious activity. An example would be...salvation comes through keeping of the Law...the Ten Commandments.
- **Moralist**...they believe that *as long as good deeds outweighs bad ones*...in God’s scales, people will be all right for eternity. They emphasize that man is basically good.
- **Jews**...they believe that *salvation is based on their religious and nationalistic racial heritage*.
- **Universalists**...they believe that *everyone will go to heaven*. That no loving God would ever cast anyone to hell...especially, for eternity.
- **Ritualist**...they believe that *salvation comes through observing religious rituals*.

Every *false religion* known to man falls into one or more of these deceptions...**Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus**. Even **Catholics, Orthodoxy**, and some prominent **Protestants** teach forms of these *deceptions*.

They all fail to understand that...*salvation* doesn’t come through *rituals* or *over-zealous religious activity*, but through *faith* and *faith alone* in Jesus Christ.

“For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

~Romans 10:10

I. THE QUESTION: (vs. 37)

Peter charged his listeners with *not only rejecting their Messiah*...but being the very ones responsible *for executing Him*...the One whom God had made both **Lord** and **God** (vs. 36).

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart (vs. 37a)...

Pierced...Gk. *katanusso*, means *to penetrate...to strike or prick violently...to stun...to stab*. It pictures one being *convicted* or *smitten in their conscience*. It depicts *something sudden and unexpected*.

“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.”

~John 16:8-11

Conviction is the key used by the Holy Spirit *to open the heart* to salvation.

And (they) said to **Peter and the rest of the apostles**, “**Brethren, what shall we do?**” (vs. 37b)...

Their question had a *ring of desperation* about it. If the Jews had crucified their Messiah and He was now exalted, what was left for them to do? What could and must they do in response? Stunned by their *inability to evade the indictment* that they were *guilty of atrocious behavior before God*, they were *overcome with grief and remorse* ...they *came under conviction*.

An *indictment for sin* is an essential part of any Gospel presentation. People need to be *convicted of sin* before they will *see the need* for a Savior. No matter how *morally upright* they may be (a good person in their own eye), all unbelievers are *guilty of the vile sin of rebellion against God and rejection of Jesus Christ*.

“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent.”

~Acts 17:30

Genuine conviction is produced by the **Spirit of God**, in conjunction with the **Word of God**.

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

~Hebrews 4:12

II. THE ANSWER: (vs. 38)

Peter said to them, “Repent (vs. 38a)...

Repent...Gk. *metanoeo*, means to *acknowledge a change. A change in the heart...a change in direction...a change in purpose. Turning from sin to God.*

Repentance is the essential component of a **genuine conversion**.

- **John the Baptist** called for *repentance* (**Matthew 3:2**).
- **Lord Jesus Christ** called for *repentance* (**Matthew 4:17**).
- It’s an *off-repeated theme* in the **Book of Acts** (**Acts 3:19; Acts 5:31; Acts 8:22; Acts 11:18; Acts 17:30; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20**).

“Repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

~Luke 24:47

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”

~Ephesians 1:7

“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions.”

~Colossians 2:13

“I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake.”

~I John 2:12

True repentance involves more than just *fear of the consequences* for sin. *False repentance dreads the consequences of sin...true repentance dreads sin itself. True repentance hates sin* for what it is...*an affront to God*. Knowing that sin is evil and that God hates it motivates the *truly repentant* person to forsake it. *Genuine repentance* thus forsakes sin and turns in total commitment to Jesus Christ. It *changes the direction* of one’s life.

“He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.”

~Ephesians 4:28

Specifically, it’s a turn in how they *see* and *respond* to Jesus of Nazareth, and to *acknowledge* Him as *Lord* (= God) and *Christ* (= Messiah). This is the *true repentance* that brings *salvation*.

It’s difficult for modern believers to grasp the magnitude of the change facing **Peter’s** Jewish hearers. They were part of a *unique community*, with a *rich cultural and religious history*. They were *fiercely nationalistic*. The nation had rejected Jesus as a *blasphemer* and *executed* Him. Now **Peter** is calling on them to *repent* and turn their backs on all that and embrace Jesus as their Messiah.

By the way...there is also a *repentance* needed in the Christian life *in relation to specific sins*. This is a repentance that has *nothing to do with salvation*...but is *essential* in the *believer’s walk* with Jesus as *Lord*.

And each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (vs.38b)...

Peter doesn’t allow for any *“secret believers.”*

“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”

~Matthew 10:32-33

Baptism would mark a *public break* with **Judaism** and encourage them to *identify* with Jesus Christ. This was a *crucial identification*...and the cost was high for such a confession.

For the forgiveness of sin...this phrase has been greatly debated over the centuries in the church...and there is tremendous disagreement over its meaning.

- **Baptismal regeneration**...there are those who believe and teach that *baptism is necessary for salvation* (**The Church of Christ**).
- But this *contradicts the Biblical teaching* that *salvation is solely by faith* (**John 1:12; John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Romans 3:21-30; Romans 4:5; Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:9; Galatians 2:16**).
- Throughout the **Book of Acts**, *forgiveness is linked to repentance...not baptism* (**Acts 3:19; Acts 5:31; Acts 26:20**). As a matter of fact...the Bible records that *some who were baptized were not saved* (**Simon...Acts 8:13, 21-23**)...while *others were saved with no mention of their being baptized* (**Luke 7:37-50; Matthew 9:2; Luke 18:13-14**).
- In **I Corinthians 15:3-4**, Paul summarizes the Gospel ...and there is *no mention of baptism*.
- **Paul’s own testimony and witness**...in **I Corinthians 1:14-16**, Paul rejoiced that he had baptized no one except **Crispus, Gaius**, and the *household of Stephanas*. This testimony is *incomprehensible if baptism is necessary for salvation*. Paul would, in essence, be saying that he was thankful that *only those few were saved* under his ministry.
- In **I Corinthians 1:17**, Paul clearly *differentiates* and *distinguishes baptism from the Gospel* where he says...
“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.”

~I Corinthians 1:17

The *order* is clear in Scripture. *Repentance is for forgiveness...and baptism follows that forgiveness...it doesn't cause it* ([Acts 8:12, 34-39](#); [Acts 10:34-48](#); [Acts 16:31-33](#)). It's *the public testimony of what's taken place on the inside*. It's an important *step of obedience* for all believers ...and it should follow as closely as possible *after one's conversion*.

Biblically, the purpose of baptism:

- *Submission*...true repentance will inevitably manifest itself in total submission to the Lord's will and teaching.
- *Identity with Christ*...His death, burial, and resurrection.
- *Fulfill all righteousness*...why Jesus told **John the Baptist** that He needed to be baptized.
- *Witness to the Church*

And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” ([vs. 38c](#))...

Salvation doesn't only bring *forgiveness*, but with it, **the gift of the Holy Spirit**.

Gift...Gk. *dorea*, refers to that which is *free* and *unmerited*. There are *two gifts* mentioned in Scripture... the **Holy Spirit and Eternal Life**.

III. THE RESULT: ([vs. 39-41](#))

For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off ([vs. 39a](#))...

The promise...is the *Holy Spirit*.

For you and your children...refers to **Israel** and *the generations to follow*. This fulfills the promise in the Old Testament that they would receive the Holy Spirit.

For all who are far off...refers to the **Gentiles**.

“Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

~Ephesians 2:11-13

As many as the Lord our God will call to Himself ([vs. 39b](#))...

This describes God's *sovereignty at work* in *salvation* ([John 6:65](#); [Matthew 11:27](#); [Luke 19:10](#); [Romans 3:11](#); [Romans 8:29-30](#); [I Peter 1:3](#)).

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”

~John 6:44

A *biblical view* of *salvation* doesn't exclude either *human responsibility* or *divine sovereignty*...but allows them to remain in godly tension. *God draws*...but we *must respond* to His *irresistible grace*.

And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!” ([vs. 40](#))...

And with many other words he solemnly testified... **Luke** has given us only a *short synopsis* of **Peter's sermon**. Obviously, it lasted far longer than the few minutes that it takes to read this passage. It's likely though, that **Peter** engaged in *a dialogue with the crowd* following his sermon, as the statement **kept on exhorting them** indicates.

Be saved from this perverse generation...

Perverse...Gk. *skolios*, means *bent* or *crooked...evil* and *unrighteous*. This echoes what Jesus said when He described them as an *“evil and adulterous generation”*... along with other *descriptive adjectives* ([Matthew 12:39](#); [Matthew 12:45](#); [Matthew 17:17](#); [Luke 9:41](#); [Luke 11:29](#); [Mark 8:38](#); [Mark 9:19](#)).

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls (vs. 41)...

Today, the church *seeks to make coming to Christ as easy as possible*. Many today would be *appalled* that Peter made the cost of coming to Christ so high. He said that they would have to turn their backs publicly on their culture...that they would risk becoming outcasts among their own family and society.

Yet...those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls...willingly displaying their identification with Christ.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- Everyone will stand before God one day. How one deals with this *key question* will determine where they will spend *eternity*.
- *Salvation* is by *faith* and *faith alone*. Not by any *works* or *effort* by mankind.
- **The progression of God’s plan:**
Repentance leads to *forgiveness...forgiveness* brings *salvation...salvation* brings with it *the gift of the Holy Spirit*.
- *One’s witness* to believing is to be *baptized*.