

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

PETER'S SERMON, OR THE FIRST GREAT REVIVAL: (Acts 2:14-41)

OUTLINE

Key verse - 38

I. The Attitude of the speaker (v. 14).

1. Peter stood up.
2. He lifted up his voice.
3. He asked for their attention.
4. He had the support of the other apostles.
5. He explained their enthusiasm (v. 15).

II. The source of the speaker's message.

1. The Word of God.
2. He chose his texts from prophecy.
3. He showed that it was foretold that:
 - a. The Holy Spirit should be poured out.
 - b. All classes should be influenced.
 - c. All classes shall become witnesses (v. 18).

III. The speaker's theme was Christ.

1. Christ was a man (22).
2. Christ was a perfect man (22).
3. Christ's deity was demonstrated by signs and wonders (19-20, 22).
4. Christ's death was according to the will of God.
5. Christ was raised from the dead (24).
6. Christ ascended on high (34).
7. Christ was exalted to the right hand of God (33-36).
8. Christ received the Holy Spirit (33).
9. Christ poured out the Holy Spirit (33).

IV. The effect of the message.

1. They were convicted of sin (37).
2. They became disciples (37).

V. The appeal of the speaker.

1. To exercise faith in Christ (21).
2. Warned them that they should repent (38).
3. Seek forgiveness in the name of Christ (38).
4. They should be baptized (38).
5. Promised the gift of the Holy Spirit (38).
6. The inclusiveness of the promise (39).
7. To separate from the world (40).

VI. The result (41).

About three thousand were added. Members were added day by day. The Gospel was carried by the converts into the various nations of the world. God only can tell the result.

The Holy Spirit had demonstrated His presence within the Christian Church. The multitudes within the city of Jerusalem, hearing the sound and seeing the tongues as of fire had gathered in amazement at the place where the disciples were. Now that the Holy Spirit had come upon them, the disciples lost no time in beginning to preach Christ and the wonderful works of God. They were enabled to speak to various groups so that everyone heard and understood in their own language. The crowd seems to have gathered within the reach of one voice and the other disciples remain silent while Peter speaks. That which is recorded of Peter's sermon is merely a synopsis. He testified and exhorted with many other words. But what we have indicates that it was a remarkable sermon. Its content, its directness and its appeal grows on one as he studies it.

1. Peter stood up. This was a new attitude for a minister to assume. It was the custom of the Rabbis to sit. When Jesus delivered His Sermon on the Mount He sat. After reading the Scripture in the synagogue before He began to preach He sat down. That was His customary attitude of the teacher. But we are told that the Herald stood. Peter was a herald - a herald of the good news which He was about to proclaim to the world.

2. He lifted up his voice. This may seem to be a natural thing for a man who wanted to address several thousand people. It was that, but it was more. He was in earnest and wanted his message to be heard with convincing effect. He wanted to speak with all the enthusiasm at his command. He believed that the Holy Spirit, who was manifestly present, would make the message effective, but he desired to be as perfect an instrument in His hand as it was possible for him to be. The fact that a minister may depend upon the Holy Spirit to convert man is no excuse for a weak, indifferent manner of delivery. Peter did not so believe or act.

3. He asked for their attention. “**Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words**” (2:14). It is important that people shall listen to the Gospel message. If the minds of men are elsewhere, or engaged in something other than the sermon, the message cannot reach them. There is many a man who attends church who gets little of the message, though he is in full possession of the faculty of hearing. The Spirit may be present with the speaker and others, but is not admitted by him. He misses the Lord’s blessing.

4. He had the support of the other apostles. The eleven were standing up with him. They were thus giving their assent and support to his testimony. Others in attendance upon, and in sympathy with, a speaker add to the effectiveness of his message. When the Salvation Army speaker stands upon the street and gives his testimony for Christ, the group of supporters with him who nod their assent and add their testimony to his, have a far greater place in the work than merely to aid in the singing. Many witnesses are better than one in convincing those who hear.

5. He explained their enthusiasm. He said: “**these are not drunken, as ye suppose**” (2:15). The day had only begun, it was the third hour of the day or nine o’clock in the morning. One could not be drunken with new wine so early in the day. If they had been drunken from a debauch of the night before they would not be there. There is a significance in the charge that they were drunken with new wine. It would take much more new wine to make men stagger with drink than of old wine. Evidently, therefore, those who mocked charged them with being only in the first stages of drunkenness, such as new wine would cause, which would make them talkative and enthusiastic and joyful. This little touch of the inspired writer, in recording the exact words of the mockers is of value to us today in portraying the manner in which witnesses who are Spirit-filled will act and speak. They will speak freely of Christ. Their tongues will be loosed when speaking of Him and of the wonderful works of God, more than when discoursing concerning any other topic. They will be enthusiastic and joyful in appearance, so that others seeing them will know of the joy which Christ brings to the human heart, when men give themselves wholly to Him.

THE SOURCE OF THE SPEAKER’S MESSAGE

1. The source of the speaker’s message was the Word of God. Peter selected texts from different portions of the Word of God, but always from the Word. Peter had often read the words of the prophets, “**Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?**” (Jeremiah 23:29). He knew that God’s word would not return unto Him void, but that it shall accomplish that which He pleases. As the Godavery river has been turned, by British engineers, to irrigate and refresh stretches of barren territory in India; so the Scripture used by the disciples and applied by the Holy Spirit refreshes and supplies the needs of men in every land.

2. Peter chose his texts from prophecy. He regarded prophecy as his greatest source of proof that Jesus was the Son of God, the Saviour and KING. He saw in prophecy a remarkable description of the wonderful occurrences of that very day. Other prophets had spoken of the coming of the Spirit but Joel had spoken more clearly than any other of the Pentecostal out-pouring of the Spirit. The margin of our Bibles points out the fact that the twenty-eighth verse of the second chapter blends quite naturally into the first verse of the third chapter.

This paragraph began a new chapter and a new thought. It foretold a day hundreds of years in advance of the days of Joel. Only by the Spirit of God, who knew all things from the beginning, could this day have been predicted so accurately. Joel said: **“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered”** (Joel 2:28-31).

He foretold therefore (1), not only that the Holy Spirit should be poured out, but (2), that all classes should be influenced. The Spirit would not confine His special presence and power to priests and prophets, but he would fill sons, daughters, young men, old men, servants and handmaidens with His power. This was manifestly true. Despised Galileans, Mary the mother of Jesus, and the daughters of Philip, were filled with the Spirit and prophesied.

To prophesy, in the New Testament sense, meant mainly to speak for Christ, but this included all classes. “I am bound to confess,” said G. Campbell Morgan, “that there was a time in my evangelistic work when I was always a wee bit afraid if a man of position and culture came into the inquiry room. But the Lord gave me one of the wonderful illustrations of the absurdity of my fear. I was conducting special services in a town in the midlands, and there came into the room a rag-picker who had grown hoary in the service of Satan. But God had shown him his heart-hunger and I felt at home when I knelt by that man and spoke to him of the blood that cleanseth from all sin. Presently some one touched me on the shoulder and said, ‘Here won’t you speak to this man.’ I turned and there kneeling next to me was the mayor of the city. I happened to know that six weeks before the mayor had sentenced this rag-picker to a month’s hard labor. He had been out two weeks and there they were side by side. I had to turn from the rag-picker and talk to the mayor, and here I found that salvation was sufficient in this case also.” When God calls to save, and when He calls to serve, He is no respecter of persons.

(3) All classes of men shall become witnesses: **“And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy”** (2:18). The evidence that God would pour out His Spirit upon servants and handmaidens was partly fulfilled at that hour. All of the disciples had been speaking with tongues. Peter himself was a fisherman from Galilee. He would be looked upon as a servant by the Pharisees and scribes.

A world-famed musician, standing before a great audience, took up a violin, and played upon it so remarkably that his listeners sat in rapt attention. One string of the violin broke. He played on as though nothing had happened. The second string broke and though the audience was amazed still he continued to play as before. Then the third string broke, leaving but one, and while the people held their breath, he played on beautifully. At last the fourth string broke and the great musician raised his violin and bringing it down with all his might dashed it to pieces. The people thought that in anger he had ruined a very valuable instrument. He then told them that he had purchased that violin for three dollars; that he had used it to show them that it was not so much the instrument as the master hand that played it which determined the quality of music.

Christ can use any voice which is willing to be used for Him. He has chosen the poor of the world who are rich in faith rather than the noble and mighty, that no witness might glory in himself but in the power of God. That which the followers of Christ should fear most is not the effort to witness, but the failure of not witnessing for Him. Not all are fitted to witness to thousands, as did Peter, but all are fitted for some kind of witnessing for Christ. It may be that one is called to witness to his own family or to his nearest neighbor, but he should never forget that in some capacity he is called upon to witness. He should never forget that if he is a devout believer, humble and penitent, he can broadcast the message of salvation through Christ in every part of the world, for Peter also said, according to Scripture, **“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”** (Rom. 10:13).

Peter quoted from two other passages which were prophetic. One is found in the sixteenth Psalm and the other in the one-hundred-and-tenth Psalm. The former was quoted principally because it foretold the resurrection, the latter was quoted because it foretold the ascension of Jesus. The disciples had been witnesses of these facts, but the prophetic witness was more important because it was the witness of God. The events which occurred proved God true, Christ divine, and the personal observation of the disciples correct.

Peter, and the other apostles with him, could therefore testify with the utmost confidence that Jesus Christ was the Saviour and Lord.

THE THEME WAS CHRIST

Peter’s message centered about Christ. His object was to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of prophecy whom they had long expected. He preached a remarkably full and clear sermon concerning Christ. He began with His incarnation: spoke of His death, resurrection, ascension and present work through His Spirit. He enumerated at least nine important facts concerning Christ and His work.

1. He said that Jesus was a man: **“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know”** (2:22). That Jesus of Nazareth was in reality a man known to, and admitted by all. Peter did not need to pause to argue concerning that fact. He simply stated the fact for their benefit and for ours. His exaltation did not prove that He had always been a spirit or something other than man. They knew Him too well and had seen Him too often to doubt His real manhood.

2. He was a perfect man: **“a man approved of God among you”** (2:22). He was approved of God and perfect in the sense in which no other man was perfect. Job sinned not for a time, but Jesus did no sin, neither was there guile found in His mouth. He was perfect in His death. He fulfilled the type of a sacrifice without blemish, and was therefore acceptable to God as a perfect sacrifice in the place of all who should believe on His name.

3. His deity was demonstrated by signs and wonders:

“And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come . . .Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know” (2:19-20, 22). They knew that His coming had been heralded by angels from on high. They knew that the Lord had spoken from heaven declaring that Jesus was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. They knew that He had caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, and those possessed of demons to return to their right minds. They knew that at His death the earth had quaked and the sun had been darkened. He had risen from the dead, ascended on high and a cloud had received Him out of their sight.

The most precious blood had been shed, that had ever been poured out because it was the blood of the Son of God. The sun could not shine in its presence and had been turned into darkness. From our standpoint the great day was when Jesus died on the Cross for us. From the standpoint of Jesus the great day was when His work was completed, when He was no longer straitened: **“I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!”** (Luke 12:49-50) and when he should send fire on the earth and begin the demonstration of His power by His Spirit. The great and notable day of the Lord is therefore with us. Signs and wonders have proven that the Holy Spirit has come in power. The most precious blood of all the world has been poured out. The offer of salvation may be freely given to whomsoever shall call on the name of the Son of God as His Saviour and Lord.

4. His death was according to the will of God: **“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”** (2:23). The current opinion was that Jesus died because He deserved it and that He could not have prevented it. Peter, speaking by the Spirit, says that His death was a fulfillment of the plans of God. Man had not defeated the plan of God but was carrying it out. It was the plan of God, millenniums before, that Jesus should die on the Cross. Peter might have said, as he possibly did, that their sacrifices had been pointing forward to Christ’s death from Adam to that day. This fact did not minimize their guilt. Nor did the fact that they acted under the authority of the Romans, or “lawless men,” relieve them of responsibility for their crime. Peter brought them face to face with the glaring fact that they had crucified the Lord of Glory. And even at this hour it is possible for us to crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.

5. He was raised from the dead: **“Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it”** (2:24). Peter declared that God had raised Jesus from the dead and He set forth three reasons to prove it. First, he said that **“it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”** Being God, as He was, and from the very nature of His Person, it was not possible that death should hold Him in its fetters. Secondly, he showed from prophecy in the sixteenth Psalm that He did not remain in the grave: **“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption”** (v. 27). Everyone knows, reasoned Peter, that David did not speak of himself when he uttered these words. David was buried and his tomb is with us to this day. He spoke of Christ who was raised from the dead and whose flesh did not see corruption.

Thirdly, he declared that all of the disciples were witnesses to the fact that Christ had risen. They had seen Him after He had risen and had been convinced, even the doubters among them, that Jesus had in reality risen from the dead. Peter possibly even added, “we saw the empty tomb. I was in it myself. I saw Thomas examine the holes in His hands where the nails had pierced and the place in His side where the spear had been thrust. No one knew Jesus more intimately than I, and I saw Him so often and was with Him so much that I am sure I was not mistaken.”

6. He ascended on high. Peter reminded his hearers of another Psalm which they had been accustomed to apply to the Messiah. Quoting from the one hundred and tenth Psalm he said: **“For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand. Until I make thy foes thy footstool”** (2:34). They all knew that David had not ascended into the heavens, therefore he must have spoken of Jesus whom God had made both Lord and Christ. Of the fulfillment of this prophecy, Peter would tell them, we are witnesses. We were with Him and He was blessing us when He ascended beyond the clouds. Witnesses from heaven came to tell us that it was Jesus whom we saw ascend.

7. He was exalted to the right hand of God: **“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”** (2:33-36). This also was foretold by the Psalmist. He was to sit at the right hand of God till His enemies should be made the footstool of His feet. He therefore, in place of remaining in the grave today, reigns in power, and one evidence of that fact is the presence of the Holy Spirit whom He hath sent forth in such wonderful power.

8. He received the Holy Spirit. Jesus received of the Father, the promise of the Holy Spirit.

9. He poured out the Holy Spirit. There was no mistaking the fact that the Holy Spirit had been poured out. That fact was demonstrated by signs and wonders and by power which had come upon the disciples. A dead Christ could not be a powerful Christ, but a living exalted Christ could, by His Spirit, manifest His abiding and all-powerful presence among them.

The message of Peter was unquestionably true. There were more than a hundred witnesses there to testify to what they personally saw. The Word of God as expounded fitted the conditions exactly. The Holy Spirit by visible and unmistakable signs demonstrated His presence. He is still witnessing to us through this record, and in our own hearts, and by His continued presence in the Church, that all these facts are true. Some years ago a Russian Jew, named Joseph Rabinowitz, was sent to Palestine to buy land for his people. One day he went up to the Mount of Olives to rest. Someone had told him to take a New Testament as the best guide-book about Jerusalem. The only Christ he had known was the Christ of the Greek and Roman churches, which were his persecutors. But as he read the New Testament he became acquainted with the real Christ of whom his Old Testament Scriptures had foretold, and his heart grew warm. He looked off toward Calvary and thought: “Why is it that my people are persecuted and cast out?”

His conviction gave him the answer. "It must be because we have put to death our MESSIAH." He lifted his heart to that Messiah and said: "My Lord and my God."

He came down from the mount a disciple of Jesus Christ. He went home to Russia and erected a synagogue for the Jews, over the door of which is written the concluding statement of Peter's sermon: **"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ"** (2:36).

THE EFFECT OF THE MESSAGE

1. They were convicted of sin: **"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart"** (2:37). The evidence was too great to deny, that He whom they crucified was Lord and Christ. The Holy Spirit was entering their hearts and making them feel that they were sinners. Peter brought the message of the crucified, risen, exalted Lord. He used all available evidence to show them that they were guilty. The Holy Spirit brought conviction into their hearts. If we uphold Christ as Saviour and Lord, we can depend upon the Spirit to bring conviction to hardened hearts.

2. They became inquirers: **"and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"** (2:37). When men are convicted of sin and begin to ask the way, though they may not be in a comfortable state, they are in a hopeful state. Sometimes, even though they are not honest inquirers, the Spirit of God uses the Word to convict men of sin and lead them to Christ.

In an old book which is still extant, there is a remarkable story of two English Lords who entered the British Parliament in 1749. They were Lord Lyttleton and Sir Gilbert West. When they entered Parliament they were skeptics and ridiculed the idea that Christianity was superior to Confucianism or Buddhism. They often met and congratulated themselves on their freedom of thought. One day Sir Gilbert said to Lord Lyttleton: there are two things we must do before our position is entirely secure. We must prove first that the resurrection of Christ was simply a myth, and second that the alleged conversion of the apostle Paul never took place. West attempted to prove the former and Lyttleton the latter. They were to study and write their conclusions and meet again at an appointed time.

Each set himself diligently to his task. West gathered all the evidence concerning Christ's resurrection. But taking into account all the facts he was forced to conclude that Christ actually arose from the dead. He was brought to such deep conviction that he yielded himself to his Saviour and Lord. Lord Lyttleton read the accounts of Paul's conversion as recorded in The Acts, the history of his missionary tours, his imprisonment, his trials, his speeches and his epistles. He, too, was convicted of the truthfulness of the Word; that Paul was really converted as the Christians believed. He said, as did another, "I laid all my good deeds in one heap, and all my bad deeds in another heap, and I fled from both to Christ, and in Him found sweet peace."

On the day appointed the two men met. Each made a frank confession to the other. They both rejoiced in finding the pearl of great price.

They agreed to publish their findings in a book. It may be found today in some of our libraries. It is far better to be an honest inquirer. But God, in His mercy, opens the heart of many a critical inquirer so that he sees and believes. **“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple”** (Psalm 119:130).

THE APPEAL OF THE SPEAKER

1. His first appeal was to exercise faith in Christ. He said in the words of Joel: **“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”** (2:21). The first act of any man who is to become a Christian is to believe in Christ as his Saviour. Before he can repent, ***before he is a fit subject for baptism***, he must have saving faith.

2. He warned them that they should repent: **“Then Peter said unto them, Repent”** (2:38). It is quite easy for us to see that they, who had crucified the Lord, needed to repent. Repentance is just as essential for us, no matter what our aims may be. Except we repent, as Jesus warned us, we perish. We may not be as guilty as those on whom the tower of Siloam fell, but we are guilty of some sins, and there is no possibility of approaching God unless we repent.

3. He told them that they should seek forgiveness in the name of Christ: **“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”** (2:38). A little later Peter told the rulers that there was no other name whereby they could be saved but by the name of Jesus. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. There are still men who wish to pay money for forgiveness; there are still men who think they can work out their own salvation apart from the Cross. There is but one way, the way that Peter pointed out to the first inquirers, that way is through Jesus Christ who died to atone for our sins.

4. He told them that they should be baptized. Christ told His disciples that they were to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. He established the rite of baptism in the Christian Church. To believers it is a sign that they are His.

We may wonder why Peter asked this great multitude to be baptized the same day that they professed to be followers of Jesus Christ. They were men of various nationalities and from various parts of the world. Why did he not wait until he and the other disciples had time to instruct them? Does he intend to teach that every one is to be baptized so soon as he professes faith in Christ? The conditions were different from other great revivals of which we have a record. Those who listened to this sermon, professed to believe in Christ, and asked for baptism, were already **“devout men”** (v. 5). Peter did not propose to baptize a group of ignorant men who in their simplicity had called upon the name of Christ. They had been taught the law; they knew the Bible; they had been worshippers of the one true God from their youth. Even the proselytes had been carefully instructed in the Word of God. The one thing that these men lacked was Christ. It was not knowledge that they needed, it was a conviction that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God and a willingness to repent and receive forgiveness in His name.

5. He promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit:

“And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (2:38). They could see the evidences of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit as He came upon and spoke through Peter and the other disciples. Peter said, they too, would be able to speak and work with power if they would accept Christ and submit wholly to His will.

6. He said to them, the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call {2:39}. He had told them before, **“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”** The promises of God and the grace of God extend far beyond our comprehension. He extends the call to believe on Him and be saved. Why will we not heed the call? Why will we not accept and be saved?

7. He told them that they were to separate from the world: **“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation”** (2:40). It is not enough to make a mere declaration of faith in Christ. The Christian is called to walk with Him and to separate from the world. Christ made that clear to His followers from the very first. He told them that unless they were willing to take up the Cross and follow Him they could not be His disciples. Peter no doubt explained what that separation meant when he exhorted them with many other words. It is evident that they understood this and that they regarded it as important verses of this chapter. They continued in fellowship with one another and in separation from the world. No man can expect to remain true to Christ who does not leave the world behind and take up his cross and follow Him.

THE RESULT

The result was most wonderful. Not merely one, two or three were convicted, confessed Christ and asked for baptism; but hundreds, yes thousands surrounded the apostles, told them that they gladly received Christ, that they would comply with these conditions and asked to be baptized. Before that remarkable day had closed three thousand had been added to the church of Christ. They still kept coming, day by day, to be added to the church.

We are told that there is rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth. When then must have been the rejoicing in Heaven, about the throne of the exalted Christ, when three thousand sinners repented and were ready to give all honor to their Lord who had so recently triumphed over sin, death and the grave? There was joy on earth among the disciples but there was no doubt far greater joy in heaven.

At the close of this chapter we are told that the Lord added these members. It is important that those who are added to the church shall be added by the Lord. There are often those who are added by man who are no help or strength to the church because they do not yet belong to the Lord. At a convention which I attended recently I heard a well-known minister tell of a church in the city in which he lives which added a large number of members. The pastor had set out to add three hundred members by Easter. He succeeded in adding them. The other day the church was sold. The pastor died and the church died with him. The members had evidently not been added of the Lord.

The total results of that day, and the days following in the early church are not told when we have counted the thousands who were added. The results are astounding even as we enumerate them in that way. But they were far larger than that. These men, devout, earnest, baptized, Spirit-filled members of the church went back to their various nations to tell to their fellow citizens the glad tidings of the Gospel. The Spirit no doubt worked with power through them also. Only eternity can tell the results. Later when Saul of Tarsus went forth to persecute, he went out against the church at Damascus. Before Paul had ever gone to Rome there were disciples there. We think of Paul as a great missionary, and we think rightly, but we have no record that Paul ever in one day saw results such as these when Peter preached.

Often men think that a revival ought to begin with bringing a great number into the church. It is right that we should seek to bring men into the church as did the disciples. But there is a deeper work than that which we must not ignore. A revival must begin with ourselves. This was true of those who had lived and walked with Jesus and it is much more true of us. “I believe dear brethren,” says Alexander Maclaren, “and I am bound to express the belief, that one of the chief wants of the Christian church in this generation, the Christian church of this city, the Christian church of this chapel, is, more of the fire of God! We are all icebergs compared with what we ought to be. Look at yourselves; never mind about your brethren. Let each one of us look at his own heart, and say whether there is any trace in his Christianity of the power of that Spirit who is fire. Is our religion flame or ice? Where among us are to be found lives blazing with enthusiastic devotion and earnest love? Do not such words sound like mockery when applied to us? Have we not to listen to that solemn old warning that never loses its power, and alas! seems never to lose its appropriateness: **“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth”** (Revelation 3:16).

The disciples had waited upon God and were so guided of Him that they were of one mind. They had repented of their unfaithfulness to Christ. They realized that they had many weaknesses. They were all concerned with their own faults. Each was desirous to be guided by the Spirit and to honor Christ’s message and His church.

In one of Mrs. Walton’s books (*Christie, the King’s Servant*) she records a day of sports among some fishermen in their little village, and the use the minister made of it to impress some important lessons upon them. They had engaged in a tug of war in which the sides were evenly matched. They had pulled for some time before the handkerchief, which marked the center, moved in either direction. They had also used the great rope to pull the heavy crab boat up from the beach, beyond the reach of the waves, for the winter. Each one, fishermen, wives, visitors and friends had taken hold of the rope and pulled. Though it took many hard efforts, yet it moved steadily up from the shore to the spot where they wished it to remain.

What was the difference? the minister asked, in using this illustration to apply a spiritual lesson. In one case you pulled with all your might, to move what? Only a handkerchief in the middle of a rope. The difficulty was, you were divided, one pulling against the other, and the handkerchief rested there in the center and did not move. When you pull against one another you can do nothing. But in the other instance you were pulling together, and with each pull the heavy crab boat moved, and it moved steadily farther from the sea. That is the result of a united effort when everyone is working together and trying his best to accomplish the same important end.

There had been strife among the apostles before Jesus had been taken away. Now they were not concerned as to who should be the greatest, but were concerned as to who could do the most to honor the name of the risen Lord and lead men to bow at His feet. That is the ideal in the Christian church. It is necessary before a revival may be expected in the church.

The disciples had come to the place that they were ready to do whatever God called them to do. They were ready to wait or ready to work. The useful disciple, the one who is ready to promote a revival, is the one who is ready to obey Christ's every command. When the ruins of Pompeii were excavated, the skeleton of a soldier was found at the gate of the city. He had stood on guard, in obedience to his command, even though the ashes and lava fell around him. When the ruins were uncovered he was found as though in life, standing at his position upon guard. He had chosen to be buried alive rather than to desert his post or be disobedient to his orders. We have been called of God to submit wholly to His will. We are to risk life, strength, wealth, all, rather than turn away from the service of Christ. His call is first. His command is most important.

The disciples were praying, they were trusting wholly to the Spirit to make their message effective. Like Paul later, their theme was Jesus Christ. If the disciples of Christ, in all the intervening centuries had continued always to exalt Christ, the history of the church would read very differently today. The church would be fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners.

The message was direct and to the point. It told them not only that they were sinners, but in what they had sinned: **"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain"** (2:23). A general message of the fact of sin is not enough but men must be brought to realize in what they have sinned. Peter's charge was very serious. Might they not leave his presence? However serious the sins of men may be the true messenger of Christ dare not ignore them. We are never safe until we see our sins, confess Christ, repent and turn from them.

In the book to which we have just referred the author made use of that same incident to express another lesson. The minister who had preached to the fishermen had spoken of the manner in which Satan tries to drag men's souls down to the sea of death. He spoke of worldly friends, our evil natures, our longing after wealth, the enticement of vice and various agents of Satan which are pulling downward. He spoke on the other hand of Christian friends who are trying to draw men to Christ.

One who heard this message felt the call of God. The words of the minister were still ringing in his ears, but he tried to get away from them. Still he heard the words, "What are the depths, the fearful depths, toward which you are being drawn?" That night he had a dream. He thought he saw another tug of war. It was a stormy night, the rain was falling and the wind was blowing. There was a bright light streaming through the darkness. There was a huge cable and he caught sight of someone pulling on the other end. He saw beautiful angels with their hands upon the rope. Among them he caught sight of his mother.

“She seemed to be dragging with all her might, and there was an earnest, pleading, beseeching expression on her dear face that it went to my very heart to look at her. I noticed that close beside her was the preacher” and one or two others. “They were all intent on their work, and took no notice of me, so I walked to the other end of the green, the one nearest the sea, that I might see who were there. It was dark at the end of the rope, but I could see evil faces, and dark, strange forms, such as I could not describe. Those on this side seemed to be having it much their own way, I thought for the weight, whatever it was, was gradually drawing near to the sea; and, lo, and behold, I saw that they were close upon a terrible place, for mighty cliffs stood above the shore, and they were within a very short distance of a sheer and terrible precipice.

‘What are you dragging?’ I cried to them.

And a thousand voices seemed to answer, ‘A soul! a soul!’

Then as I watched on, I saw that the precipice was nearly reached and that both those who pulled and the weight they were dragging were on the point of being hurled over, and suddenly it flashed upon me in my dream that it was my soul for which they were struggling, and I heard of the cry of the pullers from the other side of the green, and it seemed to me that, with one voice, they were calling out that terrible question, ‘What are the depths, the fearful depths, to which you are being drawn?’ And through the streaming light I saw my mother’s face, and a look on anguish crossed it, as suddenly the rope broke, and those who were drawing it on the opposite side went over with a crash, dragging my soul over with them.”

The man awoke in terror and cried out so loudly that those in the house could hear him. He could find no more sleep that night. The next day he went to the minister and professed Christ. They knelt together in prayer and thanked God for His mercy and love. He said afterward concerning that meeting that he felt as near to his Lord, he believed, as Peter and Andrew had been. I know that that night, before we rose from our knees, I crossed the line, and I was able henceforth to take my place amongst the glad, thankful people who can say, humbly and yet confidently, ‘**We know that we have passed from death unto life**’.”

The question that comes to each of you is, have you crossed the line? Have you passed from death unto life? If not, what are the depths, the fearful depths to which you are falling?

We cannot pass the question by in silence. It will face us whether we will or not. “**He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.**” “**Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.**”

May God grant that each of you, who has not done so before, shall believe in Christ, take him as your own, repent, confess His name, and separate from the world. His blood will cleanse you from all sin; His grace is sufficient to strengthen you for every trial; take Him as your Saviour, accept Him as your Lord and your Christ. Accept Him now.

QUESTIONS

(Acts 2:14-41

1. Were there others who spoke on Pentecost besides Peter? (v. 7).
2. Is the whole sermon of Peter given here? (v. 40).
3. What was indicated by Peter's attitude and voice?
4. How does the world look upon the enthusiastic disciple? (v. 15).
5. How does the support of other disciples help a minister? (v. 14).
6. What was the source of Peter's message? What should be the source of ours?
7. In what places were Peter's three texts found?
8. Did Peter give his personal testimony? Should we give ours?
9. According to Joel, as quoted by Peter, what different classes should witness?
10. How has this been fulfilled?
11. What did Peter say was necessary in order to be saved? (21, 38).
12. What was the subject of Peter's sermon?
13. What was the object?
14. What kind of a man did Peter say Jesus is?
15. How had the Deity of Jesus been demonstrated?
16. Did Peter try to relieve his audience of guilt?
17. What were the three reasons which Peter gave to show that Jesus did not remain in the grave?
18. How did Scripture support the witnesses of the ascension?
19. What was the effect of Peter's sermon?
20. What did Peter appeal to the people to do? How many responded?

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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