

## **Acts 2:37-47: Evangelism -Word and Deed**

**“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for everyone who believes” - Romans 1:16**

**Intro:** On this St. Patrick’s day it is highly appropriate that we should be preaching on Evangelism -Word and Deed. I am not going to recount the story of Patrick, who brought the gospel to the Irish but I will address his methodology a little later on today.

That said, let us remember in the narrative what has happened thus far in Acts. Jesus has risen, ascended, (and enthroned). The disciples waited as He said and the Spirit descended on them. They spoke in many languages and Peter, last week, gave an explanation to the people. He also charged them with killing Jesus.

Now, this morning, we get to see the results of the message and get a picture into how the earliest church operated. We will make the case that it serves, at least in some ways, as an example for the church moving forward all the way up into our day, 2000 years later.

### **I. Explanation of the Text**

#### **A. Section 1: v37-42**

“Pierced to the heart” v37a

-sword of the word Hebrews 4:12 “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, PIERCING to the division of soul and spirit, joint and marrow and discerning the thoughts and intention of the heart.

-cut used 2x Acts 7 Stephen’s message, two different reactions

-some are drawn irresistibly

-others are enraged.

“What should we do to be saved” v37b

“Repent and be baptized” v38

Repent is the Greek word “metanoia” meaning to turn around. Stop and go a different direction. Repentance is always a requirement as a response to the gospel. This is a common theme that will be repeated in the book of Acts and we will indeed take it up later as we continue to unfold the narrative. But for now, it is important to see that it is the normal response required to the hearing of the gospel. See also Mark 1:15 “repent and believe.”

Baptism was a common idea for the Jews as a sign of repentance. John, the forerunner, was baptizing in the river Jordan for example when people responded to his call to repentance. We will pick up a couple of theological questions related to baptism in a few minutes.

“you and your children” v39

-household conversions or salvations:

Acts 11:14; 2x in Acts 16; Acts 18:8;

-Fulfillment of the promises in the OT: Gen. 6:18; Exodus 20; Psalm 103:17;

“as many as the Lord will call to himself” v39

-election, some are called, others are not.

-notice that all who are called are saved.

-not all are saved, therefore, not all are called

-Golden chain of redemption in Romans 8:28ff

“be saved...” v40 this is where we get the language of “being saved” “are you saved”

Those who received the word were baptized. V41 about 3000 souls.

-notice that previously Peter called them to repentance and baptism (v38). Here, the act “receiving of the word” is synonymous with that action and they were indeed baptized.

V42 Summary statement 1: They were continually devoting themselves to:

1. The apostle’s teaching. Biblical instruction, not funny stories, goofy antics, or shallow sentimental hallmark stories.
2. The fellowship -literally “in the fellowship”. Think coop or “the fellowship of the ring” where people gather around and participate in a common goal or idea. See vs 44-46 for examples.
3. The breaking of bread -could mean meal or Lord’s Supper. The later seems to be the most probable here. Notice that
4. The prayers -Jewish hours of prayer at the temple were 9am and 3pm. The early Christians were probably gathering at these times as well. Although, we know that later was not continued in this way, prayer was indeed an major emphasis. I mentioned before and reference it again for the sake of accuracy that Luke has intentionally highlights prayer as a theme in every other chapter of Acts (16 occurrences).

## **B. Section 2: 43-47**

Fear came on every soul v43a

-FOTL mentioned in Proverbs at least 14x.

-Prov 1:7

-We will pick up the study of Proverbs in our Monday Morning Men's Study as soon as we are done with Hebrews sometime in May – June.

Signs and wonders v43b

-definition of a signs and wonders, a sign points to something else. The phrase is meant to be taken as a whole. They are the same thing, not two different things.

-see v33

-the purpose is to authenticate the claims being made. In this case, that Jesus was risen from the dead.

Communal living v44-45

-not communism because it was not mandated or forced

-voluntary sharing as there was need (v45)

-will come up again in chapter 5:1-16

Summary Statement 2: cf v42 “daily” and “one accord” see 1:14

1. Public “in the temple”
2. Private “house to house” -we will deal with this very specifically in a moment.
3. Gladness and sincerity of heart
  - a. Joy of our salvation
  - b. Genuine devotion and affection
4. Praising God v47
5. Favor with all people
  - a. Jesus (Luke 2:52)
  - b. Parallel to hospitality is winsomeness
6. Daily salvations

C. Questions:

1. Who are “all who are **far off**” (v39)?

- a. Gentiles -Is 57:19
- b. Jews scattered throughout the world “all people” Joel 2:28-29
- 2. Who were the **3000** (v41)? Men and women and children or just men?
- 3. What is the “breaking of bread” (v42&46)? Eating together or Lord’s Supper?
- 4. What were the prayers?
- 5. Meetings large or small? Did all attend? How did they work and do this?
- 6. Mode of baptism?
- 7. Is 2:42 meant to be an early order of worship or just a summary statement?
- 8. How were the proceeds divided out in v44-45? What standards did they have?
- 9. What were the praises in v47? Ch 4:25 has them singing Psalms.

### **III. Theological Issues:**

1. Baptism as a **requirement** for salvation: Contra the Church of Christ denomination, v38 is not a proof text for the absolute necessity of baptism for salvation. The CoC fails to understand how to properly interpret Scripture and gives equal weight to the narrative sections as it does to the later didactic teaching contained in the letters written to the churches of the New Testament. Additionally, they completely disregard any precedence in church history and completely ignore the wisdom of former believers.

However, baptism is generally necessary. That is, for someone to claim that they believe and don’t get baptized calls into serious question their understanding of what it is they claim to believe. Do you believe Christ is Lord? Then obey him.

2. The occasion or timing and mode of baptism: Is baptism only for people who have made a profession of faith or is it also for the children of believing men? This really is a much bigger issue of how God views the family and ultimately how He views the world. There are three primary circles of authority in the world according to God and the first is the family. The second is the church and the third is the government. We in our western, highly individualistic society have placed an over emphasis on the individual in terms of our understanding of the framework of society. That said, it is absolutely necessary for individuals to be born again (John 3). A modern understanding of this phenomenon is regulated *only* to the individual and does not see people in the greater framework of the premodern understanding of the world which first includes the family with its associated structure of Father, Mother and children.

Therefore, we, as historically informed and Biblically committed Christians, hold to the ancient practice of credo/pedobaptism. That is to say that we believe in baptizing not

only first-generation professing believers (in that sense we are all credo Baptists), but we also believe in baptizing the infant children of men as visible members of the covenant community as ancient Israel did regarding circumcision and as virtually all the church for 1600 years did. In our opinion, to disagree with this idea would not only be Biblically incompatible, but it would also be inconsistent from a historical perspective and with the system of theology taught in Scripture that understands the threefold division of the world. See WCF chapter 28 for more information.

3. **Irresistible** Grace v39 “People everywhere must call upon the name of the LORD for deliverance, but He must first call them and enable them to respond.” -Peterson Acts p.156; see also WCF ch 10
4. Evangelistic **Methodology**: should preaching or communal/relational evangelism be the most utilized mode of spreading the good news? The answer is that it is definitely both without exclusion of the other. In other words, evangelism should be word AND deed. Not just word. Not just deed. Word without community leads to a hyperindividuality that is unhealthy, isolated, and stillborn. Community without word results in shallow, overly sentimental, and immature with no real power. There have been some who in a false attestation to St. Francis of Assis, say, “preach the gospel and if necessary, use words.” This is not only a false dichotomy but it also fails to recognize that the gospel is inherently verbal. There is no news without speech. There is no direct and specific communication without words. The gospel contains information about God and us. It can be demonstrated by deed, and in this case it was in miracles (v43) and in hospitality (v42 & 45). Furthermore, it must be demonstrated but it cannot be hollowed out into only a demonstration without explanation. That is why, last week, I stressed that we all need to first KNOW the gospel and secondly to BELIEVE the gospel. You can’t believe what you don’t know and you can’t announce the message that you haven’t memorized and internalized. Again, see Peter’s sermon here in Acts 2:22-36 and Paul’s explicit presentation in 1Cor 15 for reference. Additionally, Peter does the same thing in the very next chapter of Acts. Paul presents the same outline of the gospel in his messages both to Jews and gentiles following his preaching in Acts 13 and the rest of the book.

### **III. What to do:**

- A. As was said last week, Verbalize the gospel. We need to **know, believe, and preach** the gospel.
- B. Keener points out that there is an individual as well as a communal aspect to the gospel (v47). We also need to be a gospel community. Practice **Hospitality**, Corporately and as a

Family. Opening ourselves and our homes. The modern notion of the house being a place of individual, private refuge and solace or temple or fortress is unheard of in the mind of the early church.

1. Required of **Elders**. Hospitable is one of the requirements of elders in 1Tim 3; Titus 1:8. That doesn't just mean friendly. It does mean that and we ought all to be friendly people.
2. Social **Skills** -Parents, teach your children to be friendly and communicative. Teach them social skills and etiquette. They should know how to look someone in the eye, shake a hand, and make conversation. Don't talk too much. Ask good questions and LISTEN.
3. **Command** - This is not to be confused with entertaining. This is something that needs to be practiced and obeyed. It is not optional. It is not something that we can take or leave. We are called to be gospel households. This includes hospitality. It's not a personalized thing as if some people are more or less inclined. It is an obedience thing. This is a lifestyle of grace. We are welcomed and so we welcome others. God provided lavishly for us so we do the same for others. We bless with obscene grace. Overwhelming flood of food, conversation and kindness, care and concern. When people come into our homes, their guards get lowered. The apologetic of Christian hospitality overcomes their objections. It is one of the greatest forms of Christian art. It is almost a forgotten but destructive tool against the devil winning souls for the Kingdom of God.
4. Tactics -Inviting, welcoming, being flexible, keeping a presentable house. Generosity. Connection to the word "hospital"

### **Additional Resources:**

"The Gospel Comes With a House Key" -Butterfield

Ligonier Article: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/hospitality>

"Celtic Way of Evangelism" –Hunter

Westminster Standards: 2:37 ..... LC 72, LC 155, LC 172, SC 31

2:37-38 ..... SC 87; 2:38 ..... WCF 28:6, LC 162, LC 166, LC 167, SC 95

2:38-39 ..... WCF 10:3, WCF 28:4, LC 166, LC 177, SC 95

2:39 ..... WCF 25:2, LC 62, LC 63; 2:41 ..... WCF 28:3, WCF 28:6, LC 155

2:42 ..... WCF 21:5, WCF 21:6, WCF 26:2, LC 63, LC 108, LC 154, LC 174,

LC 175, SC 50, SC 88; 2:44-45 ...WCF 26:2; 2:46 ..... WCF 26:2, LC 175

2:46-47 ..... LC 154, LC 171, LC 175, SC 88; 2:47 ..... WCF 25:2

## **Conclusion:**

This is a gospel issue because if God is going to use someone, that person must put themselves in a position to be usable. That doesn't just mean meeting the moral requirements of the faith but being an attractive person in terms of hospitality and social interaction. Notice that v47 says that they had favor with all the people. This is not always the case as when there is a culture that is diametrically opposed to the gospel, but even then, we need to be full of grace and truth.

Sometimes God uses the message itself while other times he uses the expression of the message to draw people to Himself. It is BOTH. Sometimes, people believe then they know that they belong and come to the family of faith. Other times, people belong to the family then believe. Either is fine, normal and good.

## **Acts: 2:37-47 "Evangelism -Word and Deed"**

### **I. Explanation of the Text:**

- A. Part 1 (vs37-42)
- B. Part 2 (vs 43-47)
- C. Questions:
  - 1. Who are "all who are far off" (v39)?
  - 2. Who were the 3000 (v41)?
  - 3. What is the "breaking of bread" (v42&46)?

### **II. Theological Issues:**

- A. Baptism as a requirement (v38 & 41)
- B. Occasion and Mode of Baptism (v41)
- C. Irresistible Grace (v39)
- D. Evangelistic Methodology

### **III. What to do:**

- A. Verbalize the gospel (1Cor 15)
  - Know, believe and preach the gospel
- B. Practice Hospitality, Corporate and Family
  - 1. Required of Elders (1Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8)
  - 2. Social Skills
  - 3. Command (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2; 1Peter 4:9)
  - 4. Tactics