

THE FIRST SERMON (PART III): IMPERATIVES OF SALVATION ACTS 02:37–40

Introduction

This passage makes it crystal clear what a person must do to be saved. It gives us “The Imperatives of Salvation.”

- I. The people were convicted and cried out, “What shall we do?” (v. 37).
- II. The imperatives: repent and be baptised (v. 38).
- III. The results: forgiveness and receiving of the Holy Spirit (v. 38).
- IV. The assurance to all: God’s promise and God’s personal call (v. 39).
- V. The great cry of Peter: save yourselves (v. 40).

I. Acts 02:37 Conviction

The people were convicted and they cried out, “What shall we do?” Peter’s sermon, the proclaimed Word, was driven home to the hearts of the people.

The word *cut* (katenugesan) means to convict, sting, sense pain and hurt.

Conviction is an emotional movement of the heart. A person senses sorrow over disappointing God. The person’s heart is touched and moved to some degree of brokenness. (See *Godly Sorrow*, 2 Cor. 7:10.) Conviction is being pricked with a tug, a pull, a knowledge, an awareness.

=> It is a sense of sin, of doing wrong, of breaking God’s law, of being disobedient.

=> It is a sense of failure, of coming short, of not measuring up, of disappointing God.

=> It is a sense of needing more and more of the Lord and His righteousness.

Conviction causes people to seek answers, to ask, “What shall we do?”

II. Acts 02:38 Repentance and Baptism

The imperatives are twofold. A person must repent and be baptised. (See *Repent*, Acts 17:29-30; *Baptism*, Acts 2:38; Lk. 3:21; Jn. 1:24-26.)

ACTS 02:38 BAPTISM

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, 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.” Acts 02:38

Baptism is the outward sign, the immediate sign of repentance. It is the physical sign that a person is identifying with Christ. It is the immediate sign that a person is to

show before the world that he is really repenting and is now going to obey and live for God. Baptism and repentance are both...

- outward signs
- signs that have to do with behaviour
- signs that show the world that a person is turning his life over to God

Repentance is a command to change one's life. Baptism is a command, the very first command to follow Christ. Baptism is the first command given to those who are repenting. The person who is really repenting must be baptised. He must give testimony to the world and confess to the world that he is repenting by being baptised in the name of Jesus Christ (see Mt. 28:19-20). Baptism is not an option. It is as much a command as repentance.

***Mat 28:19** "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

***Mark 16:16** "Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*

***Acts 2:38** Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, 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."*

***Acts 10:48** So he ordered that they be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

***Acts 22:16** 'And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'*

Now, note a critical point that is often overlooked and neglected. Just because a person changes his life (repents) and is baptised does not mean he is saved. A person can change his life by the power of his own will, by discipline and self-control, by his own effort and works. And he can very simply request to be baptised. Many people have and will continue to do this. Many live what society calls a good, upright and moral life and they have been baptised. But there is more to being saved than merely changing one's life and being baptised. What is it? It is the very basis, the very essential to true salvation, to being truly forgiven and receiving the Holy Spirit:

=> It is the essential of faith, of believing "in the name of Jesus Christ."

A person who truly believes and really trusts Jesus does repent and is baptised. But just because a person lives a disciplined and controlled life (repents) and has been baptised does not mean he is truthfully trusting Jesus as his Saviour. True faith — the inward work within the heart, the inward work of really believing *in the name of the Lord Jesus* — is the one absolute essential for being saved.

Now note another critical point that is also overlooked and neglected.

=> Just because a person says he believes in Jesus does not mean he is saved.

A person can say and claim anything, and that person can be baptised. But profession and baptism do not save a person any more than a changed life and baptism save a person.

There is more to being saved than professing faith and being baptised. What is it? Again, it is the very basis, the very essential to true salvation, to being truly forgiven and receiving the Holy Spirit.

=> It is the basis, the essential of *repenting* and of doing the very first act of repentance, being baptised.

There is no faith *without true repentance* and there is no forgiveness by God *without trusting or committing* one's life to God's dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the very first act of following Jesus is that of repenting and being baptised. A person who honestly believes in Jesus Christ will do what He said, repent and be baptised.

This is what Peter was saying in this passage. He did not mention faith, but he was not omitting faith nor eliminating belief in the Lord Jesus as essential to salvation. The rest of Scripture cannot be ignored in looking at this verse just as this verse and others like it cannot be ignored by the passages that stress faith alone. Common sense tells us that a person who truly believes something acts upon that thing. *Behaviour follows true belief*. But similarly, common sense tells us that behaviour can be changed by raw effort and discipline. A person can change because he thinks he should change and not because someone else demands change.

Paul stressed the same point in that classic passage of his (Rom. 6:3-4), and the point is very significant. A believer (true believer) is said to be "*baptised*" [immersed] into the death of Christ.

Rom 6:3-4 *Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

Now note what Paul has just said: when a person is baptised, he is "baptised into His [Jesus'] death" in the same way he is immersed (identified) into the resurrection of Christ. Baptism is an act by which one identifies with Christ. He counts himself as having died *in* Christ's death and as having risen *in* Christ's resurrection; as living and moving and having his being *in* Christ even as Christ lived and moved and had His being in God. Christ's death and resurrection and life becomes the believer's death and resurrection and life. The believer treats and judges himself as having been "crucified with Christ, nevertheless living; yet not himself, but Christ living in him" (Gal. 2:20).

In conclusion, history has shown that this point needs to be stressed and re-stressed.

- ⇒ A person can repent, change his own life and be baptised (by his own effort and works) without ever trusting Christ, without really believing in Christ.
- ⇒ But a person cannot trust, cannot really believe in Christ without repenting and following Christ in the very first act of repentance, that of being baptised. True faith and honest belief always mean that a person repents and is baptised. To believe is to follow (obey) Christ and to be baptised.

Heb 5:9 *And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”* □

III. **Acts 02:38 Results of Baptism**

The results are twofold, being forgiven of sins and receiving the Holy Spirit.

1. Forgiveness of sins (see *Forgiveness*, Acts 2:38).
2. Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (see *Holy Spirit*, concluding points, Acts 2:1-4).

ACTS 02:38 REMISSION, FORGIVENESS (APHESIN)

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, 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.” Acts 02:38

Forgiveness means to send off, to send away. The wrong is cut out, sent off, sent away from the wrongdoer. The sin is separated from the sinner.

There are four main ideas in the Biblical concept of forgiveness.

1. There is the idea of why forgiveness is needed. Forgiveness is needed because of wrongdoing and guilt and the penalty arising from both.

Rom 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom 8:1 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

2. There is the idea of a *once-for-all* forgiveness, a total forgiveness. A man is forgiven once and for all when he receives Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Belief in Jesus Christ, which includes true repentance, is the only condition for being forgiven once and for all.

Mat 26:28 *“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.*

Rom 4:5-8 *However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”*

Isa 44:22 *“I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”*

3. There is the idea of forgiveness that maintains fellowship. Fellowship exists between God as Father and the believer as His child. When the child does wrong, the fellowship is disturbed and broken. The condition for restoring the fellowship is confessing and forsaking the sin (Psa. 66:18; Prov. 28:13; 1 Jn. 1:7).

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, 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.”*

Luke 3:3 *He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

Luke 24:47 *“And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*

4. There is the idea of a *releasing from guilt*. This is one of the differences between a man forgiving another man and God forgiving a man. A man may forgive a person for wronging him, but he can never remove the guilt that his friend feels. And often he cannot remove the resentment he himself feels within his own heart. Only God can remove the guilt and assure the removal of resentment. God does both. God forgives and erases the guilt and resentment (Psa. 51:2, 7-12; 103:12; 1 Jn. 1:9).

Isa 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

Isa 43:25 *“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”*

Micah 7:18 *Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.*

Jer 31:34 “No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Jer 33:8 I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me. □

IV. **Acts 02:39 Assurance of Salvation**

The assurance to all is God’s promise. Note the promise is...

- “for you”: the Jews.
- “to all who are far off”: the Gentiles; any who are away in distant lands; any who are spiritually away from God, no matter how far away.

But note the condition, the one essential. The promise is assured to those whom “the Lord our God will call.” (See *Call*, Acts 2:39.)

ACTS 02:39 WILL CALL (AN PROSKALESETAI)

“The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Acts 02:39

God has to call because man is dead to God and resists the gospel. Man’s deadness and resistance are seen in the very word *call*. The word *call* has both the idea of initiative and deadness and of constraint and resistance. For example, the calling of a person to simply come involves both actions...

- of pulling him to come.
- of being dead (unaware and not knowing or resisting the fact that one was to come).

Man, self-centred and rebellious toward God, likes to feel independent. Consequently, man is dead to God and resistant to the pulling call and quickening power of God.

The person who comes to Christ is a person who has been called by God, a person who has experienced the divine initiative. A man...

- does not act alone and come to Christ
- does not come by his own effort and energy
- does not come by his own works
- does not come by his own mind, thoughts and will
- does not come by his own labour and good deeds

A man, a dead spirit, can do nothing spiritually just as a dead body can do nothing physically. If a man with a dead spirit is to come to Christ, he has to be *acted upon* and *drawn* by God. Both God and man have a part in salvation.

=> God calls and He attracts, draws, pulls and tugs at the heart of man to come.

Now note: when a man senses the call and pull of God, he must act then and there. He must believe and make the decision to follow Christ, even if he is all alone in the depths of a jungle someplace. Why? Because God's Spirit does not always strive or tug at us. We all know this. We have all felt the call of God before — the tug and movement of His Spirit within our hearts. But we quenched the tug and movement. We rejected the call, and the Spirit of God left us. And the more we reject the tug and call, the less often it comes.

=> We *quench* the Spirit.

1 Th 5:19 *Do not put out the Spirit's fire.*

=> The Spirit does not always contend with us.

Gen 6:3 *Then the Lord said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever; for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years."*

Therefore, when the call of the Lord our God comes, we must believe and "repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ" (v. 38). (See Jn. 6:44-46; 6:65.)

Mat 11:28 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*

Mat 22:9 *'Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.'*

John 7:37 *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."*

Rom 10:12 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.*

1 Tim 2:4 *Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

Rev 22:17 *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

Isa 1:18 *"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*

Isa 55:1 *"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost." □*

V. *Acts 02:40 Salvation through Separation*

The great cry of Peter, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

1. The words save *yourselves* (sothete) mean that a person is to act and do exactly what Peter preached: “Repent and be baptised.”
2. *Corrupt* (skolias) means crooked or bent out of shape. Men are far from being straight and in the shape intended by God. They are crooked and bent, unrighteous and ungodly, sinful and corrupt.

Acts 2:40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

2 Cor 6:17-18 “Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Eph 5:11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

Isa 52:11 Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the Lord. ■

