

## Three Thousand Respond to the Gospel (Acts 2:37-41)

© 2013 Tony Garland<sup>a</sup>

---

### Context

1. **Feast of Pentecost**
2. **Jews of the diaspora visiting Jerusalem**
3. **Hear the wonders of God proclaimed in their native languages, but by unlearned Galileans**
4. **Peter explains the miracle and its relationship to the identity and work of Jesus**
  - A. **Psalm 16** - "The Christ" was not only David's offspring, but also his Lord
  - B. **Psalm 110** - God's "Holy One" would not be subject to decay
  - C. **This man Jesus, whom they crucified, was resurrected as predicted by their own Scriptures concerning the Messiah**

---

### Today's passage: the climax of Peter's gospel presentation (Acts 2:37-41).

Picking it up from verse 36...

*"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.<sup>1</sup>*

---

### Cut to the Heart

1. **κατενύγησαν [katenygēsan]** from **κατανύσσομαι [katanyssomai]**: to be pierced through, be stabbed, be pricked, to be deeply moved, taken aback, to agitate the mind vehemently.
2. **The LXX uses this Greek word in Psalm 109:16** for which the English translation

is “broken in heart”

3. “acutely distressed” - NET <sup>2</sup>

4. “came under deep conviction” - HCSB <sup>3</sup>

5. Response: *What shall we do?*

6. The convicting work of the Spirit

A. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me;* (John [16:7-9](#))

- I. “Convict” is ἐλέγξει [elenxei] from ἐλέγξω [elenxō]: to bring to light, rebuke, expose, show one’s fault.
- II. Exell: “This is the only passage in which the Saviour has expressed the process of the Spirit’s action in regenerating the world. It forms Christ’s own history of the silent progress of the spiritual life. The first step in the Divine life is the sense of sin. That sense is excited by the conviction of the heart’s unbelief in the Christ who died. . . . Mark the mission of the Comforter in . . . awakening the sense of sin.”<sup>4</sup>
- III. Calvin: “It ought to be observed, that in this passage Christ does not speak of secret revelations, but of the power of the Spirit, which appears in the outward doctrine of the Gospel, and in the voice of men. For how comes it that the voice proceeding from the mouth of a man penetrates into the hearts, takes root there, and at length yields fruit, changing hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, and renewing men, but because the Spirit of Christ quickens it? ”<sup>5</sup>

B. *Jesus: I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.* (Luke [5:32](#))

- I. None are righteous. What Jesus is saying is that those who see themselves as sinners will be cut to the heart.
- II. The beatitudes: *blessed are the poor in spirit . . . blessed are those who mourn . . . blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness* (Mat. [5:3-6](#))

III. Burkitt: “Learn hence . . . that the Spirit of God is the author of conviction of sin, and that all convictions of sin do either mediately or immediately flow from him.”<sup>6</sup>

C. Mabana Chapel Statement of Beliefs, The Doctrine of Salvation: C. *God the Spirit applies [salvation] by convicting men of sin, by giving them faith to believe, and by causing them to be born again (John 3:1-7; 16:7-11; Ephesians 2:8-9).*<sup>7</sup>

7. Can there be true salvation where there is no conviction of sin?

A. Spurgeon: “In the beginning, the preacher's business is not to convert men, but the very reverse. It is idle to attempt to heal those who are not wounded, to attempt to clothe those who have never been stripped, and to make those rich who have never realized their poverty. As long as the world stands, we shall need the Holy Ghost, not only as the Comforter, but also as the Convincer, who will “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”. [*The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 44, p. 421.]”<sup>8</sup>

B. The First Great Awakening (early 1700's, in England and America)

I. A spiritual awakening which occurred during the ministries of George Whitefield, Solomon Stoddard, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley and numerous others.

II. Jonathan Edwards on the convicting work of the Spirit: “A faculty of reason remains since the fall, but it is greatly impaired and blinded. So natural conscience remains, but sin, in a great degree, stupefies it, and hinders it in its work. Now when God convinces a sinner, he assists his conscience against the stupefaction of sin, and helps it to do its work more freely and fully. The Spirit of God works immediately upon men's consciences. In conviction their consciences are awakened. They are convinced in their consciences. Their consciences smite them and condemn them. . . . The heart of man is not prepared to receive the mercy of God in Christ, as free and unmerited, till he is sensible of his own demerit. Indeed the soul is not capable of receiving a revelation or discovery of the redeeming grace of God in Christ, as redeeming grace, without being convinced of sin and misery. He must see his sin and misery before he can see the grace of God in redeeming him from that sin and misery.”<sup>9</sup>

III. Solomon Stoddard: “Some there be that do deny any necessity of the preparatory work of the Spirit of God in order to a closing with Christ. If this opinion should prevail in the land, it would give a deadly wound to religion, it would expose men to think themselves converted when

they are not. A man that knows there must be a work of preparation will be careful how he encourages others [to believe] that they are in Christ; he will enquire how God has made a way for their receiving of Christ; but another that is a stranger to it, will be read to take all for gold that glitters and if we sees men religiously disposed will be speaking peace to them; he will be like the false prophets, saying, *Peace, peace, where there is no peace*. So men will be hardened. it is a dismal thing to give men sleepy potions and make them sleep the sleep of death. [Solomon Stoddard, *A Guide to Christ*]<sup>10</sup>

#### IV. Edwards' famous sermon: *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*

- a. Church attendance was the cultural norm: congregations were made up of large numbers of the unsaved.
  - b. Based on Deuteronomy [32:35](#): *Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot shall slip in due time; For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things to come hasten upon them.* (Deu. [32:35](#))
  - c. “The impact on the recently lighthearted congregation was as though they suddenly realized they were horribly doomed. “Before the sermon was done,” as Stephen Williams recorded, “there was a great moaning and crying out throughout the whole house. What shall I do to be saved. Oh I am going to Hell. Oh what shall I do for Christ.” Edwards, who had been building the intensity of the sermon, had to stop and ask for silence so that he could be heard. The tumult only increased as the “shrieks and cries were piercing and amazing.” As Edwards waited, the wails continued, so there was no way that he might be heard. He never finished the sermon.”<sup>11</sup>
  - d. The point: the Great Awakening was a work of the Spirit through men like Edwards which brought conviction of sin—in complete agreement with Jesus’ description of the ministry of the Spirit in John [16](#).
- C. The great flaw in many of today’s “gospel presentations”: the sanitization of the offense of the cross in order
- I. Jesus is presented as the way to a better life, a means of healing, a path to personal fulfillment!
  - II. The personal demands of Christ, upon our moral behavior and devotion, are made light of or hardly mentioned.

- III. **Gilbert Tennant: “The application of their discourses is either short, or indistinct and general. They difference not the precious from the vile . . . They comfort people people before they convince them; sow before they plow; and are busy in raising a fabric before they lay a foundation. These foolish builders do but strengthen men’s carnal security by their soft, selfish, cowardly discourses. They have not the courage, or honesty, to thrust the nail of terror into sleeping souls!”<sup>12</sup>**
- IV. **What can this bring about, except a shallow, professing, unconverted “Christianity”?**

---

## Repent!

1. **μετανοήσατε [metanoēsate] from μετανοέω [metanoēō]: change of mind, be converted**
2. **Emphasizes an inward change, in the mind, not necessarily, although there may be, an external response.**
3. **To “think differently.”<sup>13</sup> Used especially of the emotion of sorrow upon moral reflection within the mind.**
4. **Involves thought, one’s will**
5. **A “decision by the whole person to turn around”<sup>14</sup>, the thought process of the person turns to align with what God says about the nature of sin and salvation.**
6. **Repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin.**
  - A. **When coming to faith, repentance must be understood as part of the process by which faith results in trust in Christ.**
  - B. **“If conversion were likened to a coin, repentance and faith would be the ‘heads and tails’ [sic] of the coin. As repentance falls short of salvation without saving faith, so faith falls short of salvation if it is somehow divorced from repentance. [Elmer L. Towns, “Salvation By Grace Through Faith”]”<sup>15</sup>.**
  - C. **At salvation, the “coin flips over” : . . . *let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God (Heb. 6:1b)*<sup>17</sup>**
  - D. **The gospel of John, which was *written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name***

(John 20:31), never mentions repentance. Here is evidence that it cannot be a precondition for faith. Rather, repentance must be understood as a synonym for the change of mind which occurs when one believes.

## Be Baptized<sup>19</sup>

1. An outward sign of an inward change of mind
2. After coming to faith
  - A. Baptismal Regeneration?
    - I. A passage which is often used in an attempt to teach that baptism is required in order to be saved
    - II. Rabbit trail, not our focus today
    - III. v. 38, when read strictly in isolation: (1) *let every one of you be baptized . . .* (2) *for the remission of sins* and (3) *you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*
    - IV. Notice, prior to baptism: “Repent” — a synonym for faith: believing
    - V. *Repent and . . . be baptized* - baptism is considered as a natural step following repentance, but it is the repentance that produces salvation.
    - VI. Sequence in v. 41: those who (1) *received his word* were (2) *baptized*
3. Only after in-depth teaching concerning its significance?
  - A. Nice thought, but not the Biblical pattern
  - B. Ethiopian eunuch - *So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. (Acts 8:38)*
  - C. The household of Cornelius, the centurian - *Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? (Acts 10:47)*
  - D. The jailer at Philippi - *And he took them [Paul and Silas] the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. (Acts 16:33)*
  - E. The NT practice: a heartfelt response, relatively soon after coming to faith.

#### 4. My own experience

- A. Baptized at the age of 1 month and 4 days, in 1957 in England [SHOW CERTIFICATE]
- B. Saved on Easter 1992, some 34 years later!
- C. Baptized in faith on Valentines Day, 1993 - almost a year later
- D. What I wonder now, looking back: What took me so long?

#### 5. What about you? Have you been baptized since you believed upon Jesus?

- A. If not, why not?
- B. Is it realistic to think we will stand for Christ under persecution when we lack the courage to publicly testify of our faith by following Jesus into the waters of baptism?
- C. If, as John emphasized, the real-world demonstration of our love of Christ is found in obedience to the commands of God, and Jesus himself submitted to baptism, can we do any less?<sup>20</sup>
- D. Peter: *let every one of you be baptized (Acts 2:38)*
- E. Not about salvation: about demonstrating our willingness to walk in obedience to even the simple things of God.
- F. The biblical pattern: progress in stages, as we obey and walk in what God has revealed as “the next step.”
- G. Is it realistic to assume He will lead us in greater sanctification and a deeper understanding of the things of God when we withhold our obedience in something so simple?

---

#### As Many as the Lord Our God will Call

- 1. *The promise is . . . to as many as the Lord our God will call (Acts 2:39)*
- 2. Here we meet with the often-maligned Biblical truth concerning the divine calling of those who will be saved.
- 3. As Christianity in our age has become increasingly man-centered, so too has this truth been increasingly rejected by those who should find in it a great source of comfort.

4. **A large topic with many subtleties which is often caricatured by its opponents.**
5. **I plan to deal with it more fully when we encounter another significant passage coming up in chapter 13**
  - A. ***Now when the Gentiles heard [the gospel], they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.* (Acts 13:48)**
6. **Mabana Chapel Statement of Beliefs, The Doctrine of Salvation: A. *God the Father planned [salvation] as He sovereignly chose some, apart from foreseen human merit or response, to be recipients of His grace from before the foundation of the world. God's election does not negate man's responsibility to believe, the Christian's responsibility to freely offer the gospel to every person, or the fact that God desires salvation to all men (John 1:12-13; 6:37-44, 65; Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:3-5; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2:3-4).*<sup>21</sup>**

## Three Thousand Souls

1. **In a single day!**
2. **Did Jesus ever receive such a response — a mass repentance to salvation?**
  - A. ***After feeding the five thousand, Jesus said Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.* (John 6:26)**
  - B. ***Jesus had predicted this in association with the coming of the Spirit, Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.* (John 14:12)**
    - I. ***Because I go to My Father* - this was the precondition for the giving of the Spirit.**
    - II. **The greater works are empowered by the arrival of the third person of the trinity.**
    - III. **Not greater in magnitude, but greater in extent: the work of global evangelism through the convicting power of the indwelling Holy Spirit!**
3. **A seeker friendly message of accommodation? NOT!**
4. ***Those who gladly received his word* - no need for cajoling, coercion, manipulating.**

## 5. Received the gift of the Holy Spirit

- A. **The Promise of the Father - *the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off . . .* (Acts [2:39](#))**
- B. **The Promise of the Father == Spirit baptism (Acts [1:4-5](#))**
- C. **Peter indicated they *shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit* (Acts [2:38](#)) yet no mention is made of corresponding signs as those that occurred earlier in the chapter at the initial pouring forth of the Spirit upon the disciples.**

---

## Summary

1. **The very first evangelistic presentation of the newly-born Church establishes the pattern for preaching during this age.**
2. **The gospel will only be understood as “good news,” which is what the term “gospel” means, to the degree it is presented in concert with the bad news of our universally fallen state before a Holy God.**
3. **True salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit as he convicts men of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Any attempt to divert or dilute these core elements from the gospel message will only interfere with the work of the Spirit in the hearts of men.**
4. **After coming to faith, believers should follow the example of their Lord by descending into the waters of baptism as an external witness of the change God has wrought within their heart.**

Sun Nov 10 08:01:10 2013



[SpiritAndTruth.org](http://SpiritAndTruth.org)<sup>b</sup> Scan Code

---

### Endnotes:

1. [NKJV, Acts 2:36-41](#)
2. [Ref-0014, Acts 2:37](#)
3. [Ref-0304, Acts 2:37](#)
4. [Ref-1280, John 16:8](#)

5. [Ref-0696](#), John 16:8
6. [Ref-1347](#), John 16:8
7. <http://www.mabanachapel.org/beliefs.html>, accessed 20131109.
8. [Ref-0933](#), 206
9. [Ref-1289](#), 62,70
10. [Ref-1302](#), 131
11. [Ref-1348](#), 220-221
12. [Ref-1302](#), 133
13. [Ref-1346](#), 1233
14. [Ref-1206](#), 367
15. [Ref-0055](#), Vol. 7 No. 20, March 2003, p. 33
16. [Ref-1206](#), 367
17. "Conversion is turning from evil (Acts 8:22; 2Cor. 12:21; Rev. 2:21-22) to God (Acts 20:21; 26:20; Rev. 16:9). In Acts 3:19 and 26:20 *metanoēō* and *eipstrephō* are placed side by side; *metanoēō* describes the turning from evil and *eipstrephō* the turning to God."<sup>16</sup>
18. [Ref-1349](#), 42-44
19. "Times without number it has been urged, and as often refuted, that three thousand men could not have been baptized (immersed) during the remainder of that day, and with the supply of water accessible in Jerusalem. It is true that there is no running stream in the vicinity of the city, and there never has been, suitable for the purpose; but from a time long prior to the birth of Jesus the city has been supplied with artificial pools in which the ordinance could be administered even to such a multitude. At the present day, the only one of these which remains entirely suitable for the purpose, and which has been so used in modern times by missionaries, is the pool of Siloam, situated in the valley immediately south of the temple enclosure. . . . The pool now called Upper Gihon . . . is at present the next most suitable place. . . . But the most suitable of all the ancient pools is the one now called Lower Gihon by Europeans, but called the Pool of the Sultan, on account of its size, by the natives. . . . Since a knowledge of these facilities for baptizing in ancient Jerusalem has been spread abroad by the writings of explorers within our own generation, it has become inexcusable in any person of intelligence to raise the objection which we have been considering"<sup>18</sup>
20. Concerning love demonstrated through obedience: Isa. 50:10; Luke 6:46; John 14:15-24; 15:10,14; Acts 5:32; 1Jn. 3:24; 5:2-3; 2Jn. 1:6.
21. <http://www.mabanachapel.org/beliefs.html>, accessed 20131109.

---

#### Sources:

- NKJV** Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- Ref-0014** *New English Bible*, electronic edition (Dallas, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 1998). [[www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org)].
- Ref-0055** Mal O. Couch, ed., *The Conservative Theological Journal* (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Theological Seminary, n.d.). [[www.tyndale.edu](http://www.tyndale.edu)].
- Ref-0304** The Holy Bible : Holman Christian standard version. 2003. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers.
- Ref-0696** J. Calvin *Calvin's Commentaries* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998).

- Ref-0933** Iain Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones - The First Forty Years* (Carlisle, PN: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982, 1998). ISBN:[0-85151-353-0](#)<sup>c</sup>.
- Ref-1206** Verlyn D. Verbrugge, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000). ISBN:[0-310-25620-8](#)<sup>d</sup>.
- Ref-1280** Joseph S. Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator* (London, England: n.p., 1887).
- Ref-1289** Jonathan Edwards, *On Knowing Christ* (Carlisle, PN: Banner of Truth Trust, 1993, 1839). ISBN:[0-85151-583-5](#)<sup>e</sup>.
- Ref-1302** Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987). ISBN:[978-0851514949](#)<sup>f</sup>.
- Ref-1346** James Strong, *The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001). ISBN:[0-7852-4716-5](#)<sup>g</sup>.
- Ref-1347** William Burkitt, *Expository Notes on the New Testament* (n.p.: n.p., 1703).
- Ref-1348** George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003). ISBN:[0-300-09693-3](#)<sup>h</sup>.
- Ref-1349** J. W. McGarvey, *Acts of Apostles* (Cincinnati, OH: The Standard Publishing Foundation, 1863).

---

### Links Mentioned Above

- a** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- b** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.
- c** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0-85151-353-0>.
- d** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0-310-25620-8>.
- e** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0-85151-583-5>.
- f** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-0851514949>.
- g** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0-7852-4716-5>.
- h** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0-300-09693-3>.