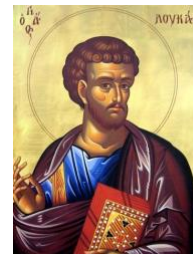


**"Acts of the Apostles: Lesson 5" by Faber McMullen, Union Grove Baptist Church ©2018**



"Peter's Call to Repentance"

This morning we look at the first sermon ever given in the Church. We learned last week that the age of the Church began at Pentecost. We looked together at the events of the day when the Holy Spirit was poured out on a small band of people who had believed in their hearts that Jesus was the promised Messiah and that He had died as the perfect and final sacrifice for their sins.

**ke•ryg•ma**  
[ki-rig-muh]

1. noun: the preaching of the gospel of Christ, especially in the manner of the early church.

**one eighty•y**  
[wuhn ey-tee]

1. noun: a reversal of direction.  
2. noun: a complete reversal in thinking or behaviour.

In the passage for today we see Peter preaching the first sermon to the Church. This is the first great *Kerygma* heard by the Church. *Kerygma* is the Greek word for the preaching or proclamation of "the bottom line of the faith." After being baptized and filled

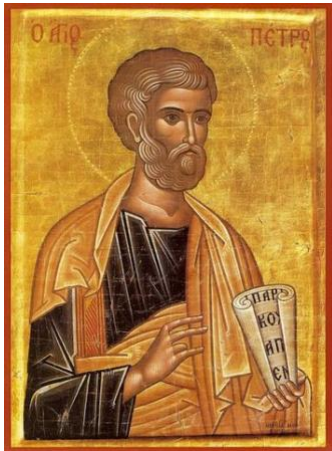
with the Holy Spirit, Peter gives a pure presentation of the Gospel. His sermon defines the Gospel, and it clarifies the personhood and the ministry of Jesus. It declares the meaning of His finished work to us, as individuals, and to the whole world. *Kerygma* preaching is preaching that demands a response. As Peter presents these truths, the crowd no doubt remembers "that Jesus" who was crucified. They now understand that they were the cause of His death and that they are the beneficiaries of His death. The text tells us that the message cut into their hearts and they responded in belief, repentance, baptism, and unity with the Church of Jesus here on earth.

Last week we received a copy of an odd sermon. It was a sermon preached at a Unitarian Church. The person who sent it had visited Union Grove and must have been offended to hear that we preach this same *Kerygma* as taught by Peter two thousand years ago. At Union Grove we preach Christ's miraculous birth, His substitutionary death for our sins, and His resurrection to exalted glory. Ours is not a faith based on our feelings or our mood as set forth in the Unitarian sermon. Rather ours is a faith based on the grace of God and the free gift of eternal life to those who believe. God's love does not depend on what mood I am in. The finality of Jesus' work on the cross does not depend on the mood I am in. My and Kelton's job each week at Union Grove is to teach the Bible in a way that motivates a response not only in ourselves, but in the hearts of all who listen. Our job isn't to just teach you so that you'll accumulate new information, but rather to point out the meaning of a selected text and to help each of you understand how to apply the truths of the text to your hearts.

Please stand with me as we read a portion of the second chapter of Acts.

## *Peter's Sermon*

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. <sup>36</sup> "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." <sup>37</sup> 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?" <sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> 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." (Acts 2:14, 36-39, NKJV).



Please open your Bibles to Acts Chapter 2 verse 14 and let's take a few minutes to take Peter's sermon apart and figure out how it might apply to us. Peter sort of starts with a joke as an attention grabber. He tells the crowd, "Hey guys, all of this stuff you've heard today in your own languages is not the result of people being drunk. It's too early in the day for that. It's only nine o'clock in the morning." Peter then develops the theme of his sermon in six stages. Theologians have labeled this ancient Jewish manner of teaching as *Kerygma*.

*Kerygma* teaching has six distinct stages:

1. **Fulfillment of scripture is a reality.** Scripture is accurate and it can be depended upon. It has been fulfilled in the hearing of the audience. Many of the listeners had heard prophecy after prophecy in the Temple and synagogue, and now they were seeing it happen. Verses 17-21 cite the passage from the Prophet Joel who prophesied that God's Holy Spirit would eventually be poured out on all men.
2. **Jesus is the fulfillment of the scriptures.** The central section of the sermon provides biblical proof that Jesus is the Messiah. It declares that His birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection are all the fulfillment of key scriptures that pointed to Him and Him alone. Verses 22-24 point to Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah and Lord.
3. **Jesus was raised and exalted.** In verses 25-28 Peter uses the prophecies of King David himself to show that Jesus is King even above David and that Jesus is the exalted and long awaited Messiah. David has no clue of whom he speaks, but he says, "<sup>28</sup>*You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.* (Acts 2:28, NKJV). Once Jesus was resurrected and then ascended to heaven, He is exalted at the right hand of God. He himself is Messiah, the anointed one, and He now directs His Church from heaven. In verses 29-32 Peter expounds on the resurrection of Jesus and His conquest of sin and death.

4. **The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is the promised gift of God to the Church.** Verse 33 reminds the listeners of this precious gift of God. It is the sign of Christ's power and glory now on earth.
5. **The Messianic Age will be initiated through the promised return of Jesus to earth. Even today we see sign after sign of the second coming of Christ.**
6. **The Gospel always demands a response.** In verses 36-39, Peter then reminds the crowd that it is they who are responsible for Christ's death. With an understanding of our sin, we can make a decision for Jesus which comes with His total and complete forgiveness. With belief come the benefits of the indwelling Holy Spirit, salvation, and promise of an eternity with Him. The gospel always calls for true repentance; so, what does true repentance really look like?

### **Thoughts about Repentance**

#### **1. The Case of the Unbeliever**

Repenting begins with conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit. It is realizing that you have strayed far from where you are meant to be spiritually. For the unbeliever it is the realization that you are a sinner that is lost without any relationship with the God that made you. The response to the gospel is "Yes Lord, I believe. Yes Lord, I am lost in my sin. Yes Lord, I need a Savior, and yes Lord, that Savior is none other than you."

#### **2. Case of the Believe**

Repentance starts again with conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit. It then is followed by a desire and a willingness to have God do a work in your heart and in your life. People that are unable to repent in scripture are called "stiff necked people." The Bible is full of references about God's own people being unable to move forward and mature spiritually due to their stubbornness and unwillingness to change direction.

*"Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending them. "Yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but **stiffened their neck**; they did more evil than their fathers." (Jeremiah 7:25-26, NASB).*

This idea of a stiff neck was completely familiar to the Jews. Oxen were used for such agricultural purposes as harrowing and plowing (Judges 14:18; 1 Corinthians 9:9). A plow was drawn by two oxen and the plowman needed one hand to guide the plow with a light pole called a "goad." The driver would use the goad on their necks or on the back of their legs to turn, or keep a straight course when the oxen began to deviate from the desired path.

If an ox was hard to control or stubborn in being handled, it was deemed to be "hard of neck" or *stiff-necked (gesheh 'oreph)*. **That means it couldn't be turned or led in another direction.** The term is used by God as a description of those who are stubborn and who have an intractable (not easily governed, managed, or directed) spirit. Such people are unteachable. They may know in their hearts that they are headed in the wrong direction, but they are not responsive to the guidance of God. Stiff-necked people refuse to stay on God's course for their lives, and they are unwilling to correct their course when

they are on the wrong path. They listen to no one but themselves. They don't listen to others and they don't listen to God.

Guys, true repentance includes coming out of your past. I know many in this room are plagued with a troublesome past. Some have been used and abused in some way. Listen to me now. You can't change where you've been but you can change where you're going. Don't stay in a familiar place just because it's familiar. It may be killing you. Just because something's familiar to you doesn't mean it's good for you. Repentance involves letting God truly change your course so that you are in the center of His will. It is better to be where God wants you than to be any place else in the world.

If you are stubborn, repent of your stubbornness. Stop arguing with God about His will for your life. There are things that He wants you to leave behind and it is habitual sin to remain feasting on those wrongs. There are places He wants you to go and you are too mired down in what happened to you or what you wish God's will for your life had included.

### **Repenting is Not Just Lamenting**

First, I want to focus now on what repentance actually is, what it means, and how it happens in our life. Repentance is the Greek word *metanoëó* (pronounced *metania*). People have sort of misconstrued it to mean many different things. Some have said that to truly repent means to really be sorry for your sins. Another old word for that is lamenting about something. Let me start off by saying that lamenting is not repenting. You can lament and never repent. True repentance may involve lamenting, but true repentance involves a decision to change direction in your thoughts, words, or deeds. Judas lamented that he had betrayed Jesus but he was not repentant. Many are sorry for getting caught or they are sorry for the consequences of their sins but they have no real heart desire to change.

We have all heard of the abusive spouse involved in sin (often drunkenness) who becomes abusive, and can't even remember it. If they realize it, they might say, "I'm done. I'll never get drunk again and I'll never do this to you again. I am so sorry." And what happens? They're at it again by next Friday night. Real repentance isn't just being sorry for something you've done. It always involves real change, even if it's just slight and incremental.

You can spend all your life lamenting but you won't experience a change in your life until you repent. Some are so stubborn that they just won't allow God to make a real change in their lives. These are "stiff-necked" people. Another strange thing is how committed people can be to something that is destroying them. If they could be that committed to God's will for their lives and God's desire for change in their lives they would have a totally different life. But they won't allow God to turn them in a new direction.

Second, I want to make sure you don't confuse repentance and God's correction with condemnation. I don't want you to leave this service and go home to beat up on yourself and then allow the devil his own special time to beat up on you too. It is easy to hear about the need for change and then go down a laundry list of umpteen million things that

need to be changed in your life. You end up hating yourself for what you're doing. That is not the point of this sermon.

### **Repentance is about "Correction." It is NOT about "Condemnation."**

When we first come to faith we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. We are saved once and for all. We can never become "unsaved." You can no more lose your salvation than you can stop being your parents' child. It is a matter of status and position in Christ. Once you've been saved, God sets about to do a work in you to grow you into exactly the person He means for you to become. This involves correction. Scripture tells us, "*My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.*" (Hebrews 12:5a, 6 NIV).

God disciplines those that He loves. If we respond to His correction with self-condemnation, then we are not receiving what God wants to do in our lives. It is not about condemning us but about correcting and changing us. As you mature spiritually you will become grateful when God shows you something that needs to be corrected in your life. Don't fall into the condemnation trap. You have been justified by Christ. You are not condemned by Christ. The devil can't condemn you and you have no right to condemn yourself.

I have taught you before that confession of sin is agreeing with God that something in your life is sin. Well, repentance is a similar sort of thing. It is agreeing with God that you have a problem, and going the additional step of asking Him to change you because you realize you are helpless to change yourself. Paul the Apostle spoke about this in that dialogue where he says he can't stop doing the stuff that he shouldn't do and he's not doing the stuff that he should be doing. In that passage he finally sort of throws up his hands and says, "*Oh wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" (Romans 7:24-25a, NKJV).

In Philippians 3:12 Paul says he knew his faults and he knew he had not arrived to a place of perfection, but he kept on pressing on. Leave here this morning ready to press on, not feeling pressed down. When you feel condemned you get pressed down. You are unable to press on. Don't concentrate on everything that is wrong with you. When God shows you something wrong with you, just agree with God and ask Him to work on you with His Holy Spirit in order to bring about a change in you to be just who you are supposed to be. Just keep agreeing with God. Changes can be so minor that they seem imperceptible. God has brought you here to change you. My part is to help you grow up so you can have what Jesus died to give you; He came that you might have life and have it more abundantly. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

God is the potter. You are not. Leave it to God to change your heart and put you on His course for your life. Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at
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