

Peter's Sermon

by Welcome Detweiler

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a united, biblical, and Christ-centered message in guiding us to salvation, and warns against trying to earn salvation through good works.

Duration: 36:11

Scripture: Ezekiel 13:2, Joel 2:28-32, Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:22

Topics: "Evangelism", "Spiritual Unity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of delivering a united message when preaching the word of God. He uses the example of Peter's sermon after the day of Pentecost, where Peter stood up with the eleven disciples to address a confused crowd. The speaker emphasizes the need for Christians to seize opportunities to share the message of salvation, just as Peter did. He also highlights the power of prayer and the importance of testifying and exhorting others to turn away from a sinful generation.

Transcript

Delightful to be in the capital city, where all of the rules and regulations are made to govern this wonderful state, where you have penitentiaries and the city is teeming with sinners. And that's what I like about Raleigh, a place where you can find sinners. I'll tell you one thing, there's not one sinner living in the city of Raleigh that cannot be saved.

That's terrific, isn't it? Every last one of them has an opportunity to be saved if they want to. I want to congratulate the folks in this audience who have already used their better judgment in planning for their summer vacation at the Skyland Bible Conference. And for those of you who prefer to hang around with sinners instead of being with Christians, I want to mildly scold you for not using your better judgment and not having your registration in before you have to go on the waiting list.

You see the ushers at the close of the service and make plans very early for the best possible vacation that you could spend at the Skyland Bible Conference, the last ten days of June and the first three days of July. Now before we turn to the Holy Scriptures, let's bow in a word of prayer, shall we? Our gracious Father, we thank Thee for Thy goodness in bringing us together, for Thy goodness during the past week watching over us, protecting us, and we thank Thee for the delightful land in which we are living where there are still many privileges and freedoms that we can enjoy. We thank Thee we have an open Bible that we can gather thus without being molested by the authorities as is the case in some areas of the world.

We ask Thy blessing on Christians who are living there and we pray in spite of the restrictions, Thou wilt bless everyone who has trusted Thy Son as Lord and Savior. We ask now that Thou wilt quiet our hearts and help us to forget the things of the past week and even the plans of the coming week that we may lay them aside. We want to hear Thy voice speaking to us from Thy precious word and we ask that Thou wilt bless us.

We read from the Scriptures and at this hour Thou wilt speak to our hearts and especially if there should be those in our company who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we pray Thou wilt especially speak to them and that before this meeting draws to a close, some may trust our blessed Savior and find peace and joy that they have never known before. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Scripture reading is taken from Acts chapter 2. Acts chapter 2. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord at one place, and suddenly there was a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how here we every man in his own tongue wherewith we were born, Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers of Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Crete, and strangers of Rome, Jews, and proselytes, Cretes, and Arabians.

We do hear them speak in our tongue the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter standing up with the eleven lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Galilee, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words.

For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

Down to verse 22. 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.

Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should beholden of it. Verse 32. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereup we are witnesses.

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 unto my right hand, until I make thy

foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Christ, of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are apart, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify, and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand. Among them that the most popular Sunday noon meal in the southern states, in North Carolina especially, is southern fried chicken. And I had reason to believe it after I arrived.

But it wasn't very long after that I found out they didn't tell the truth. That southern fried chicken is not the number one or the most popular meal for the Sunday noon. It is eclipsed, excelled by roast preacher.

And southern fried chicken is simply the second most popular one. I read to you this morning a recorded sermon. It would have been wonderful to have lived in those wonderful days when Jesus Christ was here on the earth, and then the days that immediately followed, as we read of that wonderful day of the day of Pentecost.

But it's not your fault that you were born too late. But we can be thankful that these sermons were recorded. And this morning I have no intention of roasting Simon Peter.

He was a rugged man. I think he would be too tough to roast. So let's just forget about that.

But I think it might be profitable if we inspected his sermon. I'm not sure that there was a program typed out, and that this was planned at all. There was a lot of excitement around Jerusalem that day.

A little while before, our Lord Jesus Christ promised that he would send a comforter, the Holy Spirit. When he made that promise, he said, it will happen not many days hence. And no one knew when that would happen, but it happened ten days later, when the Holy Spirit came down.

The book of Acts is well-named a book of action, because in this book you have Jesus Christ going up, the Holy Spirit coming down, and the church going out to proclaim a message of the gospel. There was a tremendous excitement around there, and among them, people said, these men are telling us about the love of God and all the things that we need to know. And we have come from different places and have different languages, and these people are speaking so that we can hear it in our own tongue.

No gibbering, just plain speaking in various tongues. What mean of this? When Peter heard them say, what mean of this? He heard them say, I suppose some of them are drunk. Maybe that's what's wrong.

And Peter, on the spur of the moment, said, this is a good time to preach a sermon. I think there's a lesson to be learned for all of us who are Christians, because there is a possibility that in a week's time, there are a number of opportunities to tell people about our wonderful Savior that we overlook, that slip through our fingers, that we do not take the advantage. But not so with Simon Peter.

Look at this crowd of people. They're confused. They are raising the question, what mean of this? I'm going to tell them.

And he stands up and starts to give us this wonderful sermon. I want you to notice a few wonderful things about this sermon. First of all, it was a united message, because I read that he stood up with the eleven.

There were eleven men just behind him, and they were backing him up. I'm not sure if any of them said amen or not, but they certainly were standing there in order to say, this is the message that Peter is preaching, and we are right behind him. Now let me just suppose that there had been confusion that day, and after Peter is finished preaching, John steps up and says to the congregation, gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen, you have heard something that is no doubt wonderful to you, but Peter is wrong, and I want to correct it before I have an obligation to straighten you out, that Peter did not tell you the truth about everything, and I want to correct you.

And John gives the correction. After he is through, James stands up and says, friend, I feel solemnly I have a moral obligation to you, to tell you that what Peter has said, and what John has said, is not really the way of salvation. You listen to me.

And then the fourth one gets up. What a disaster on that day. One of the things that makes this so wonderful is, when you read at the end, the results of that one sermon.

Not bad. Three thousand people converted. It must have been a good message.

And one of the keys to the success of that message was, it was a united message. Now you say, that would have been ridiculous for those others to get up and correct them. Would it? I want to bring you down to 1981, today.

Is it not true that today there will be many, many people standing before an audience, and preaching, and carrying the Bible, some of the King James, and some other versions, but a Bible. They are reading a few verses. They are explaining the way of salvation.

And there are people in that audience who have gone from one church to the other, and they have said, I am totally confused. One man says this. The other man says something entirely different.

And I can almost sympathize with young people who are saying, what in the world are we supposed to believe? And some of them are saying, I am going to sit tight, and do nothing, until they all get together. And once they all preach the same message, then I shall be interested. To whom shall we give the credit for this confusion? Ah, you already know.

That subtle devil has been busy, and he has been successful. And he has confused the minds of men today. There is no subject in all the world that is more confusing than that of religion.

Everyone is saying, Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears. I have a message telling you one thing. And the next person says it is not true.

Well, it is delightful that we have a Bible. If we didn't, we would have to listen to all these confused voices. If you are here this morning, and you have reached that point where you are saying, I don't know what to believe, you may have to come to that place where you will plug your ears to every voice of every preacher, and go right down to first-hand information.

You do have a Bible. I hope so. And you will be responsible to God for having a Bible which does not confuse you, but which will tell you the clear, plain way of salvation.

And that brings me down to my second point. It was not only a united message, it was a biblical message. Remember that Peter on this day did not have a Bible as big as the one I am carrying.

He did not have the New Testament. He had only the Old Testament. And from the Old Testament, he explains what happened.

He is turning to the book of Joel, and he picks out a few verses there of things that were predicted, and he is saying, this is what Joel said would happen, and this has been fulfilled today. He is bringing to them the word of God. And I hope that the American people will someday wake up to the fact that there is nothing worth listening to except to listen to the plain teaching of the word of God.

Everything else will be very confusing, and this is the only thing that will bring us out into the daylight. In the Old Testament, you have chapter after chapter beginning like this. Thus saith the Lord.

The prophet Ezekiel and all the other prophets, over and over again, they are getting messages from the Lord, and then they say, thus saith the Lord. And really that is what we need to hear, the voice of God regarding all of these matters. It was not only a biblical message, one that he got from the scriptures, but it was a Christ-centered message, because in verse 22, I read, 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 buy him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know, he, him being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. I am not sure if Peter was interested in holding his crowd or getting a bouquet of flowers after he was through preaching, because if he had, I could have told Peter, Peter, you've got a wonderful audience, but you've got to be careful. Don't mention the name of Jesus.

These are Jews, and they hate Jesus. They've been told by their rabbis that Jesus is an imposter. He was an illegitimate child of Mary.

He is not the Son of God. He is not the Messiah. And if you bring up the name of Jesus, and especially to say Jesus of Nazareth, who coined that expression first? I think it was Nathaniel.

Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said, Jesus of Nazareth, a despised village. If he had said Jesus of Jerusalem, it would have sounded much better, but of that little joint called Nazareth. Peter, don't mention him, because these people hate him.

You are waving a red flag in front of a wild bull, and they're going to probably mob you. Peter says, I've got an obligation. I'm going to tell them that Jesus Christ is the Savior, and I'm going to preach Jesus Christ to this crowd.

I wouldn't be a bit surprised if there were a number of people in that audience who heard about the death of Christ. How could they possibly not hear about it? This was the number one conversation in the community for a number of days. And when they heard that he was raised from the dead, that they couldn't find his body, there must have been some among them who said, wouldn't it be dreadful if he was the Messiah, and we crucified him? Wouldn't that be horrible? Oh, but what they say he wasn't.

But I have some doubts. Suppose he was. And then they heard something else.

A cloud received them out of their sight. They saw him ascending up into heaven. Now, that's strange.

Witnesses saw him. This person who was on the earth, who healed some of our relatives, opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped the ears, even raised their dead. We saw some of these miracles ourselves.

We listened to our rabbis and to our educators, and we just accepted that he was not the Son of God, that he was not the King of the Jews, he was not the Messiah. But maybe he was. And if so, I tell you, we've got an obligation on our hands.

We have done something that the world has never done before. If he was God's Son, and he never sinned, and we nailed him to a cross and killed him, and cried, crucify him! We don't want him, he's not fit to live. If he is the Son of God, we're in trouble.

And Peter goes on to say, ye have crucified. He had a right to say that. I'm not sure if they were all Jews in that audience.

There may have been Gentiles mixed in with them as well. If we come to the subject of who is really guilty of crucifying Jesus Christ, then we will have to say the whole wide world. It was the Jews who first thought of the idea, and went to Pilate and said, this man is not fit to live, we want him dead.

But the Jews alone are not guilty of crucifying Jesus Christ, for the Roman soldiers were involved in it. And when you read everything in your Bible regarding his death, you will have to admit, every one of us were represented there, and we are guilty of crucifying Jesus Christ, God's Son. How will God deal with the human race, who thought of his Son to that extent, and crucified him? Peter goes a little farther.

He says, you have crucified him, but God raised him from the dead, indicating again, and fortifying that tremendous thought that came into their minds. Maybe he was the Christ. He said he was raised from the dead.

There is additional proof that we have done something dreadful. It was a Christ-centered message, but it was also a gospel message, and there is a big difference between a gospel message and a Christ-centered message. I have heard plenty of sermons that were Christ-centered, that were not gospel messages.

I heard one today, this morning early, a man who talked about Jesus Christ, and as he talked about him, in the concluding moments he said, our duty is to live like Jesus Christ lived, and if we shall follow his footsteps, we shall have an abundant entrance into his kingdom at a future day. Where does that come from? That comes from the devil. He had a Christ-centered message, but he did not have a gospel message, and the devil likes to get just as near to the scriptures as possible, because he can deceive more people.

An awful lot of preaching today will be Christ-centered, but will not be a message of the gospel. And I want to say to anyone in this audience, if you have been trying to be a good person, your neighbors will appreciate it. Everyone should appreciate it.

But if you have been trying to be a good person with a view to obtaining God's salvation, I have the solemn obligation to tell you, stop it right now. You're wrong. You're insulting God by trying to earn

salvation by being good.

You can't do it, and you must admit you've been trying for a little while now, haven't you? And you're wrong in your calculation when you say, I'm making progress. So far as man is concerned, maybe you have improved. You have cut out some of those things that bothered you.

But as long as you are trying to save yourself, you are spoiling the whole plan of salvation. There is only one possible way for you to be saved, and that is not through a Savior who was here and showed you how to live. He didn't come to show sinners how to live.

He came to die for sinners. And if he hadn't died, you and I would have to go to hell, and that covers every person in this audience. My only possible chance of ever being in heaven is the fact that Jesus Christ willingly died in my place on Calvary's cross.

And 58 years ago, I came to God in honesty, and I said, I've tried to be good. I've tried to keep my sins down to a minimum. I've tried to earn your salvation, and I found out I'm wrong.

I'll never get there. I'm coming as a poor, helpless sinner. I believe he died for me personally, and I will accept him as my Savior.

I want to thank him for dying for me, and God saved me in that moment. And it's the only way you can be saved. Let me repeat, if you are trying to work your way to heaven by being good, and by trying to live the kind of life that Jesus Christ lived, you'll never get there.

Never. You will have to come, as did all the rest that will ever be in heaven, and admit I am a lost, guilty sinner. Some years ago, I was preaching in a city in North Carolina, and I mentioned that unless a preacher sometime in his sermon gets to the cross, the death of Christ, or the resurrection of Christ, or that theme, he hasn't preached the gospel.

There was a man in my audience, and I didn't know about it, who was dissatisfied with his church, and he was going around to different churches just visiting to see if he could find a church, and after he heard that, he said, I'm going to watch for that from now on. And he went to different churches, and a year or so later, he came to me and said, do you remember what you said in this chapel a little over a year ago? I said, no, I wouldn't remember anything. Then he told me.

He said, I went to different churches, and I listened to preachers, and he went for 30 minutes, he never mentioned the cross, he never mentioned Jesus Christ dying or rising again, and I said, he's not going to make it, and some of them, before they sat down, they did say, if you want to be saved, the only way is through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But, he said there were an awful lot of churches that I never heard of, never heard the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And he said, that helped me to decide.

I realized that I am not hearing the gospel, unless I hear that Christ died for my sins, and that he rose again to justify me. Well, shall I go over it again? It was a united message, it was a biblical message, it was a Christ-centered message, it was a gospel message. But better than that, it was a convicting message.

It was a personal message that came right down to the individual, and I've already touched on that. I am sure that there were individuals in that audience, as they heard Peter talk about the death, burial, and

resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the report that he ascended to heaven, more than ever before, they were convinced, we have made a horrible mistake. We are going to pay for this.

God had only one son. He sent him down into this world. He proved himself to be sinless.

He did everything good, and we soiled our hands with his blood. We nailed him to the cross. How will God ever forgive us of this? And some of them may have said right then, we have committed the unpardonable sin.

There will never be salvation to people who have crucified God's son. A convicting message. Now there's a sense in which this happened so many years ago, to our great, great, great, great, great, great grandparents, that we say, well, I don't think I would be guilty of, they could hardly call me guilty of crucifying his son.

I didn't raise my voice, crucify him. I didn't stay away with him. I could hardly be called guilty of that.

No, I'm sure you can. But let me tell you this. If Jesus Christ has been offered to you as your Savior, and thus far you have not accepted him as your Savior, I'm not sure if your condemnation will not be greater than those whose hands were stained with his blood.

You have done the same thing, haven't you? You have turned him down. That's what they said, turn him down. Remember this, every time you come to a service like this, and the preacher is reading from the scriptures how you can be saved through the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and asks you to stop trying to go around some other, climb in some other way, receive him as your Savior, and you do not.

You do not. You are the same as saying, I don't want him. Away with him.

God will someday hold you guilty of that decision. I don't want to stop there. It was more than a convicting message.

It was a converting message, because you can't stop at being convicted. That's not enough. There are a number of people in hell today who were convicted of their sins and recognized, I need to be saved.

A still small voice came to them regularly, perhaps awakened them in the middle of the night, and said, why are you fighting? You know you're a sinner. You know that you could die any day. You know that Jesus Christ could come at any moment, and your chance of salvation would be gone.

Why are you fighting? A still small voice asking you that question, and your heart is in turmoil. I know I ought to. I know I ought to.

But I, I can't. I can't. Why can't you? The devil has been visiting you.

He must. He's the only one that could say to you, I can't. I can't.

I tell you, it's rather solemn to be under the sound of the gospel, because God demands of you a choice at the close of the service. And there are some people in hell who can say, I was convicted. I knew I ought to be saved.

I was within an inch of being saved. But I didn't. I didn't.

Time after time, you may have left a gospel service such as this one, and you were almost persuaded. I need to give up the struggle. I need to trust the Savior.

I'm going to bring you to that very decision right now. Unless you will go another step, that final step, where you will receive Jesus Christ as Savior. These men said, men and brethren, what shall we do? They were convicted.

They were crying very similar to the Philippian jailer who was in desperate need. He raised the question, what must I do to be saved? And Paul and Silas had the message for that moment, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. I want to bear upon your hearts the seriousness of men crucifying Jesus Christ in that day.

And also the seriousness of men and women this many years later, who have Jesus Christ presented to them, who will save and keep and satisfy and give you a brand new life. Something that you've never had before. He wants to bless you.

All the assets are on that side. Strange reasoning, that we should listen to a voice that wants to damn us for all eternity. I ask upon you to use your better judgment this morning, because this same Savior that Simon Peter presented to that big crowd in the city of Jerusalem many, many years ago, is being presented to many audiences across the country today.

And he is ready to give new life, new joy, new peace, the sins forgiven. When I go over the list of things that I received the day I was saved, I almost feel like I ought to be a Methodist. I feel like shouting, glory hallelujah.

Imagine, I deserve to go to hell. I've broken God's laws, and God's righteous judgment should send me there. But I'm not going, because somebody who was no relative of mine loved me enough to go to Calvary's cross to stretch out his hands and say, nail me there.

And I shall never understand why he did it. He was a real person. They drove the nails through his hands, through his feet.

They thrust a spear into his side. They plaited that crown of thorns and pressed it upon his brow. And there, in those dark hours, God took my sins and your sins and laid them on his son.

And he died as my substitute, as your substitute, so that we could be eternally forgiven. That's almost too good to be true. This past week, a young man who has been attending the services, I went to his home and I asked him if he was saved.

He said, I don't know where I stand. And we read some scriptures together. He was willing to admit that the Bible is true.

He believed the story of Christ dying on the cross. And I brought him to that point where I said, do you believe he really died for you? He said, I do. I said, do you have confidence in his death enough to say, I believe that his death for me is the only thing that will save me? He said, I do believe that.

I said, will you trust him right now as your savior? And he said, I will. And a smile came through his face, a beard. He drew his moustache and drew his beard.

And he said, I didn't realize he was that sinful. It's wonderful, isn't it? People stumble over it. If God made the way of salvation a little harder, had some strings attached that you would have to do, it would be more appealing, wouldn't it? But he made it by grace, through faith, as a gift.

How do you receive a gift? You simply put out the hand and say, thank you. I wonder if you could do that this morning to our blessed Lord, who died for you. I wonder if you could put out your empty hand of faith and say, thank you, Lord Jesus, for dying for me.

And this morning, I'm going to do something I've never done before. I'm going to trust you as my savior. Let us pray.

And before I close the meeting in prayer, I want to offer to help you. I don't feel that my responsibility has been fully discharged until I offer to help you at the close of this service. There may be some problems that are standing in the way, and I would love to help you at the close of the service.

So when the meeting is dismissed, I'll remain at the front, and I would love for you to come to the front and simply tell me, I would like to have this settled this morning. But right now, you don't have to wait that long. I wonder if there's one person who would be willing just to stand up where you are to say, you have spoken to me, the Spirit of God has spoken to me this morning, and I do want to trust him.

And by standing up right now, I want to confess I'm going to receive Jesus Christ as my savior. Would you like to stand just where you are? Just remain standing for a few moments. Anyone to whom God has spoken would like to rise to your feet and say by this, I want to say I will accept that wonderful savior who died for me.

Anyone? This is your moment of decision, and the decision you make now may decide whether you'll be in heaven or in hell for all eternity. Our blessed Father, we thank thee for that day when Peter presented Jesus Christ to that wonderful audience, and we thank thee for everyone who closed in with the offer of salvation. We thank that the same Savior is available today, and we ask thy blessing on any who may be in our service this morning who have not yet received him.

We pray thou wilt make them miserable until they realize their need and trust the Savior. We commit thy word to thee. Thank thee again for thy wonderful love to lost guilty sinners.

We give thee thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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