

Save Yourself

Acts 2:40: “And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”

The Acts of the Apostles has a special place in the New Testament and the history of the Church. The gospels conclude with the completion of Christ’s earthly ministry and His Ascension to Glory. Acts reveals how, after ascending to Heaven, the Lord Jesus was in the position to shed forth the Pentecostal Power for the spread of the Gospel.

As in the gospels, so in Acts we have the record of many

conversions. The apostles and other preachers pointed men and women to Christ and many responded, abandoning their old life and turning to Christ in faith and repentance. In some cases we can read the very sermons the Lord made effective to the salvation of sinners. The most significant of all, perhaps, is the one recorded here in chapter two.

NB: In an age when so many counterfeit gospels are proclaimed, producing so many counterfeit Christians, we do well to return to God's Word and learn again what the message of Jesus Christ is all about and how it should be preached.

Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost begins at V.14. But we shall concentrate our attention on his concluding remarks, and the summary of his preaching made by the sacred writer in V.40: "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

The Holy Spirit had fallen in mighty power upon the apostles, just as Jesus had promised (Acts 1:4-5, Luke 24:29). So they spoke the Word of God with great boldness in all the languages that were represented by the multitude gathered in Jerusalem for the Holy Feast (Acts 2:6-11). The reaction of the crowd was mixed. Some were amazed and curious. Others mocked

and said the servants of God were drunk.

Then Peter explained what happened. They were not drunk, for it was too early in the day and the places that sold strong drink were not open. What the people had witnessed was the fulfilment of prophecy uttered by Joel, in which God said – “I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh...” (Joel 2:28-32).

Having explained the wonder, Peter then went on to preach Christ, charging the people with blood-guiltiness for putting Him to death. He told them that the One they murdered was alive again and from His position in Heaven had

poured out the Holy Spirit. He was their Messiah, but they had rejected Him. Even their own Scriptures condemned them.

The testimony of the servants of God was a condemnation too, inasmuch as they were eyewitnesses of these things. Again, He whom they had rejected was in the position to judge them. “He is on the right hand of God the Father, and His enemies shall be His footstool,” Peter declares.

What a change the Lord brought about by this message! As the man of God preached, doubters were enlightened and mockers were convicted. V.37 : ““They were pricked in their heart, and said unto

Peter and to the rest of the apostles,
Men and brethren, what shall we
do?”

The reply was simple, and Peter calls the people to repentance upon the basis of Christ’s work and the promise of forgiveness. However, that’s not where his preaching ended. He continued to witness and to urge his hearers to come out on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not told exactly what he said, but it is clear that he did not let them rest content in the fact that their guilt had come home to them. Conviction was not enough. They needed to be converted!

So it is with sinners here. Some of you have felt, in the past, and

perhaps even today you still feel a measure of conviction. But conviction doesn't save men. Even the damned feel conviction. Therefore, we could not be urgent enough in pressing home to you your need of salvation, for which you must run to Jesus Christ today! Oh, that you might hear and heed this most solemn word and "save yourselves from this untoward generation."

Peter's message is relevant because all unregenerate men have this in common, that they are rejecters of Christ-crucified. "I would never have done what the men in Peter's day did. I would never have called for Christ to be crucified," is how many respond.

Though you were not there that day when the rabble called for Jesus to be destroyed, yet you still share in their sin. How so? By refusing Him as the only way of salvation, by your clinging to your own way, by your indifference what you do is “crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:6).

So this message is for you. Sit up and take notice! You need to be saved from yourself.

You need to be saved from the world. Did you know that this present world can do nothing for you in respect of your eternal welfare? The spirit of the age is contrary to

holy things. It is not on the side of God and truth.

This generation is *untoward*.

“*Untoward* is said of anything which will not go toward, that is straight onwards, but will go now on this side, now on that, making a crooked path” (R. W. Evans, B.D.).

This generation:

- An ignorant generation – Judges 2:10.
- A rebellious generation – Psalm 78:8: “A stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.”

- A corrupt generation – Proverbs 30:11-13: “There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.”
- A generation more interested in sensation than true spirituality – Matthew 12:39: “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.”

- A generation ashamed of the Lord Jesus - Mark.8:38: “Ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation.”
- A persecuting generation – Luke 17:25: “But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.”

So the world is not toward, but away from God, moving anywhere but in His direction. It is *untoward*. And every sinner, whatever his predominating error, contributes to this. That which makes a man untoward makes a generation so. Furthermore, no amount of righteous men can change the fact that this is an “untoward generation.” A

righteous Lot couldn't make Sodom holy.

From such a world, from such a generation we must, by the grace of God and the power of the Gospel, save ourselves. If we would not be destroyed, we must extricate ourselves from the spirit of the age and have it purged from us.

Peter says “save yourselves *from*” it. The Greek preposition ἀπό means ‘away from.’ It occurs in Matthew 1:21: “He shall save his people from their sins.” See Mark 5:34, Acts 14:15.

H. S. Trumbull:

“A man ought not to be carried to Hell by his surroundings. Many a man has lived in a crooked generation, and adapted himself to it most completely. And many a man has lived in a crooked generation, and kept straight all the way through it. If your generation is crooked, that is no reason why you should be.

But if you would keep straight in this generation, or in any other, you have got something to do about it. Your responsibility is for yourself, in spite of your generation. If your generation is crooked, see that you don't crook with it.”

Having considered the exhortation itself, let us now consider the means of exhortation. The text

says, “And with many other words did he testify and exhort...” Preachers should follow Peter’s example, and use the words he used, and ask God for more to press home the Gospel.

“With many *more* words” - this makes us think of the words he had already used (V.38-39). The words he used which are not recorded would not have been exactly the same as those words that are recorded, but they would have been in no way contrary to what he had said. We must have a consistent testimony!

Peter’s words were serious, because he called the people to “repent” (V.38). *Repent* means

change one's mind, including one's view of the truth, of God, of self. In the context it means an entire change of attitude to Jesus, from regarding Him as an impostor to owning and reverencing Him as Lord and Christ.

Repentance is a full surrender to the authority of the Son of God. It is taking your hands of the life that He gave you and handing yourself over entirely to His holy rule and grace. Out of a knowledge of sin, conviction of sin, proper sense of guilt, proper views of the holiness and justice of God, apprehension of His mercy in Christ, there must be a turning from sin generally, and the willingness to give up living without the Saviour.

A word about baptism (V.38).

Baptism is a public confession of Christ as Saviour. But it is not a regenerating ordinance, and it is heresy to say, as the well-known Bishop Brownrigg once said, that “a sinner coming to this sacrament hath all his sins drowned and abolished.”

That’s not the Gospel. That is a lie. Tragically, many people have swallowed this lie. But neither Christ nor the apostles preached baptism as a saving ordinance. Baptism is a sign of faith in the Son of God. That’s why these words are used – “In the name of the Jesus Christ.”

It is vital to understand correctly these words - “For the remission

of sins.” *For* comes from the Greek preposition εἰς (‘eis’) and means *because of*. We often say, “He went to prison for armed robbery”, not “in order that he might be a robber.” So Acts 2:38 – “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *because* your sins have been remitted/*because* of the remission of sins...”

*No trust in water do we place,
‘Tis but an outward sign.
The great reality is grace,
The fountain, blood divine.*

(Upton)

Peter’s words were also sweet words. He said, “And ye shall

receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” The “gift of the Holy Ghost” is the Holy Ghost Himself (Acts 5:32), and not merely something He gives (Acts 5:32). All who are saved receive Him. He is the promise spoken about in V.39. Galatians 4:6: “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

What a gift He is! He is a *permanent* gift, for Jesus said that He would abide with us for ever (Jn.14:16). He is a *purifying* gift, and He enlightens our minds, cleanses our hearts and sanctifies our nature (1 Corinthians 2:12, 6:11). He is a *precious* gift, witnessing with our spirits and endowing us with gifts for our own

edification and the edification of others (Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11).

What men miss who do not have Jesus Christ! This is a truth they must be confronted with. How often we have heard people say, “If I became a Christian I would lose out. I would lose a lot of respectability, a lot of friends.” But ought we not to tell men, “Look at what you are missing by not being saved!”

The promise of the gift of God is, first and foremost, personal. V.39: “The promise is unto you...” Your own salvation is of more importance to you than that of any one else. To save others and after all be lost

yourself would greatly aggravate your misery.

One final thought, Peter's words were Scripture words. He draws repeatedly on the written Word in his preaching. He quotes from Joel 2:28-32 (see V.16), Psalm 16:8 (see V.25), Psalm 110:1 (see V.34).

This shows the place of the Bible in preaching and witnessing. Use the Word itself. And whatever *other words* you use, make sure they are in keeping with this Book.

Now, are you saved? Save yourself. How? Repent and believe the Gospel. How? By calling on His name. Here is His Word for you – do not delay in heeding it –

“Whosoever shall call on the name
of the Lord shall be saved” (V.21).
