

# The Unwavering Church

Lives in the Spirit

September 28, 2025

Acts 2:14-41

## Pastoral Prayer

*Almighty God, our Father and King, we exalt You today. Your greatness is unsearchable, Your majesty beyond our reach. From the splendor of the heavens to the smallest detail of creation, everything declares that You are holy, just, and righteous in all Your ways. We bow before You in adoration, blessing Your name forever and ever.*

*And, Lord, as we come into Your presence, we confess our sins. We admit that we have not loved You with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, nor loved our neighbors as ourselves. Too often we have lived as if we were the measure of truth. But we thank You that in Christ, You do not treat us as our sins deserve. As far as the east is from the west, so far have You removed our transgressions from us. We rest today in Your compassion and forgiveness.*

*Renew us, O Lord. Give us hearts that tremble at Your word, that delight in Your statutes, and that walk carefully in Your ways. Open our eyes to see wonderful things in Your law. Fill us with Your Spirit so that our lives reflect the wisdom, purity, and love of Christ.*

*We ask now for Your help and guidance. Keep us from the path of the wicked. Grant us understanding of who we are in Christ and clarity about Your purposes for our lives. Be near to those in this room who face difficult decisions, heavy burdens, or hidden struggles. Strengthen the weak, comfort the grieving, and guide the uncertain.*

*And we intercede for others, Lord. We pray for friends and family who don't yet know You, for those serving in ministry, for believers under oppression, and for all who are in need of Your mercy today. Spirit of God, intercede where our words fail, and align our hearts with the will of the Father.*

*We affirm again that You, O God, choose what is weak to shame the strong, and what is lowly to display Your wisdom. We rejoice that no one can boast before You except in Christ alone.*

*And so we thank You with glad hearts. Thank You that our King has come to us, humble and having salvation. Thank You that He reigns even now, and that His dominion will extend from sea to sea, bringing peace to the nations.*

*Now, Lord, bless Your people. Make Your face shine upon us, be gracious to us, turn Your face toward us, and give us peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## Introduction

I took a class in college called *Sociology of Media*, and in that class we read two books by Neil Postman: *How to Watch the TV News* and *Amusing Ourselves to Death*.

In that last book, Postman points out something we all feel but rarely name. He called it the *information–action ratio*.

In earlier times, almost every piece of news was actionable. If you heard a storm was coming, you brought the animals in and shuttered the windows. If you heard that the harvest would be late, you stretched your grain a little further. News and action went hand in hand.

But today, most of the news we consume has almost nothing to do with us. A coup in a country we'll never visit. A scandal in Hollywood. The minute-by-minute drama of the stock market. We can't act on it. So we scroll, we watch, we nod or shake our heads—but we don't change. The information–action ratio has collapsed. We've become spectators of reality rather than participants in it.

I'd like for you to keep that dynamic in mind as we look at Acts 2:14-41 this morning ... a passage in which Peter shares NEWS ... the GOOD NEWS of Jesus. What I believe you will see is that the gospel isn't news you can ignore or just scroll past. It's not a headline that leaves you powerless. The gospel is the kind of news that demands a response—and through the Spirit, it gives us the power to act.

## Body

### What is the Gospel?

The word *gospel* literally means “good news.” Our English word comes from the Old English *gōdspel*—a compound of *gōd* (“good”) and *spel* (“story” or “message”). It was the way early English translators rendered the Latin *evangelium* and the Greek *euangelion*—“good message” (*eu* = good, *angelion* = announcement). In everyday Old English speech, *gōdspel* could mean any good report, but over time it came to mean the specific announcement of what God has done in Jesus Christ: His life, death, and resurrection for our salvation. That is the ultimate *gōdspel*.

Peter's message in vv. 14-36 is a great example of what the church said when it shared “the gospel” (*euangelion*) with other people. For sure, it was a special moment (Pentecost), and I don't mean to imply that the manner in which Peter preached is THE in which all gospel preaching should take place, but Peter's message does contain the CONTENT of the gospel, and it's helpful to break this down.

### The Gospel Is Good News

When we read Peter's sermon in vv. 14-36, the first thing we recognize is that the gospel is **GOOD NEWS**. The gospel is NOT:

1. **...advice.** It's not a set of steps for how you can climb your way to God.
2. **...religious performance.** It's not keeping rules, rituals, or traditions to earn God's favor.
3. **...moral improvement.** It's not becoming a better version of yourself.
4. **...political ideology.** It's not left or right, conservative or progressive.
5. **...self-help.** It's not tips for a happier life.
6. **...inspiration.** It's not just a moving story to motivate you.

The gospel is GOOD NEWS.

## The Gospel Is News about Jesus

**More specifically, the gospel is news about Jesus:** his life, his death, and his resurrection.

**Verse 22** is GOOD NEWS about His life.

*This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know.*

The word "attested" means that God—through Jesus' miracles and wonders and teachings and interactions with people from every walk of life—publicly and clearly communicated Himself and what He was doing.

**Verse 23** is GOOD NEWS about His death.

*Though he was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him.*

That's pretty shocking. Peter says that Jesus' death was not an accident or a tragedy. It was simultaneously an unjust act carried out according to the sovereign plan of God. What the Jews and Romans intended as evil, God intended for good. The most unjust act in the universe was the greatest act of justification in history.

**Verse 24** is GOOD NEWS about His resurrection.

*God raised him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death.*

Unlike all the other prophets, priests, and kings that had come before Him, Jesus did not stay dead. The resurrection of Jesus is a historical reality that must be reckoned with. He is the rightful King of the universe. The resurrection proves He is who He said He was. This is what Peter says in v. 36.

*Let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.*

The gospel is not advice, performance, or self-help—it is good news about Jesus. He lived the life you and I could never live, He died the death we deserved under God’s judgment, and He rose again.

## The Gospel is Good News that Exposes our Truest Needs

Now, as I said just a moment ago, if that GOOD NEWS is true, then it must be reckoned with. One cannot be indifferent to the historical claims of Jesus, which partially explains why Jesus still (and always will be) divisive.

Look at the people’s reaction in v. 37.

*When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”*

The response of the people to the Good News of Jesus was, “What should we do?” The effect of the news was to pierce their heart, and their response was, “What should we do?”

People say this when they have a clearly identified need. “What should we do?” is something we say when we have a need that we don’t know how to fill or satisfy or solve. So, when Peter tells them what to do in v. 38, he also tells them what they will receive, which means that what they will receive are the needs that they identified. Look at v. 38.

*Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

You can clearly see the needs the people felt. They needed forgiveness from God, and they needed God Himself. Let’s break those down for a moment – the need for forgiveness and the need for God Himself.

## The Need for Forgiveness from God

In my lifetime, the idea of forgiveness has been on a wild ride. The predominant worldview has been postmodernism or relativism, and a relativistic world lacks moral clarity. There really is no right or wrong in a purely postmodern world. Truth and meaning are constructed as any one person sees fit, as opposed to there being a God who determines what is true. So, in a relativistic world, there is no plumbline of absolute truth that we have to be reconciled with, which means we don’t need God or His forgiveness. And with human relationships in such a world, this means that none of us can tell another that they are ever wrong. And if you can’t do anything wrong, then there’s never an opportunity to forgive you.

This is the world most of us have known. We have been told to make ourselves the measure of what is good and acceptable. The only role that God has to play, if any, is to endorse our own self-affirmation. And if God ever presents a standard or law that doesn't jive with me, then I just dismiss Him. So, in this worldview, I don't need forgiveness from God, and I don't get to experience it with any of you.

What a contrast that is with these people in v. 37. These people were cut to the heart because they saw that God is perfect, pure, and righteous in all His ways, and that He had made Jesus Lord and Christ, but they had killed him. That made them utterly at odds with God. They were living against his will. They were out of step with his character. They were in violation of his Word and his Son. God was one way. They were another way. What they desperately needed, and what God, in amazing grace, was ready to give, was forgiveness. And the same is true for you and I. We have offended God. We have violated God. We have disobeyed God. But in Christ, God is both holy and gracious. He is just and forgiving. You cannot become a Christian without recognizing your need for forgiveness of sin.<sup>1</sup>

## The Need for God in Us

The second need we see in the passage is the need for the Holy Spirit ... the need for God in us.

We don't just need forgiveness from God, as if salvation were only a clean slate. We need God Himself to come and dwell within us where sin once reigned. Forgiveness removes the penalty of sin, but only the Holy Spirit can break sin's power and fill the emptiness it leaves behind. We need more than pardon—we need a new heart. We need a personal relationship with God through His Spirit, who makes us alive, assures us of His love, and empowers us to walk with Him day by day.

It is the Spirit who gives wisdom when life confuses us, guidance when decisions overwhelm us, and strength when temptations threaten us. He produces in us what we cannot manufacture on our own: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And beyond our inner renewal, we need extraordinary power for an extraordinary mission—the Spirit equips ordinary people to bear witness to Jesus across the street and across the world.

Without the Spirit, forgiveness would leave us pardoned but powerless; with the Spirit, we are forgiven and filled. We begin to become like the very One who forgave us. We need God in us. We need the Holy Spirit.

## How do We Get the Needs the Gospel Exposes?

So, the GOOD NEWS of Jesus exposes our need for forgiveness of God and the Spirit of God. But how do we get those things?

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<sup>1</sup> Derived from Piper, 1990, *Did you Kill the Lord of Glory?*

Peter answers that in v. 38.

*Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

First, the call is to repent. Repentance isn't just feeling sorry, nor is it simply changing your behavior. It's a whole reorientation of your life. It means turning from being your own master to bowing before Jesus as Lord. In other words, you stop trying to save yourself—whether through religion, morality, or irreligion—and you put your trust in the finished work of Christ.

Second, he calls them to be baptized. Baptism here is not magic water. It's the outward, visible expression of that inward repentance and faith. To be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ" means to publicly identify with Him, to say, "My life is now His." Baptism is like a wedding ring: the ring doesn't make you married, but it declares publicly that you belong to someone.

## Conclusion

### God Is Ready to Forgive You and Give You His Spirit

Even if you are a murderer of the Son of God (v. 36), God himself stands ready to forgive you! And not only to forgive you but to give you his Spirit! In other words he is willing to cancel all your debts and then come and live with you, and guide you, and change you, and empower you. And for this you cannot work. It cannot be earned, or bought. It is a free gift to all who repent—who turn from darkness to light—and call on the name of the Lord.

### Knowing is Growing

Being cut to the heart by the Good News of Jesus happens once when we are saved, but growing in our awareness of God's holiness and our sinfulness is to mature in our faith in Jesus.

### The Unwavering Church Preaches the Gospel

This passage reminds us that the ministry of the church must always keep the gospel at its center. Peter did not stand up at Pentecost and offer life hacks, moral improvement plans, or political solutions. He preached Jesus crucified, risen, and reigning, and he called people to repentance, faith, and baptism. That means our ministries—whether in the pulpit, in children's classrooms, in student groups, or in neighborhood outreach—must have the same aim: to bring people face to face with the living Christ so they may receive forgiveness and the Spirit. We are not simply running programs, managing events, or offering religious goods and services. We are proclaiming news that changes eternity. If we lose this center, we lose our power. But if we stay faithful to it, the Spirit will do today what He did then—pierce hearts, grant forgiveness, give the Spirit, and form a people who live and speak as witnesses of Jesus.

## Closing Prayer

*Father in heaven, we thank You for the gospel—the good news that Jesus lived the life we could never live, died the death we deserved, and rose again in victory over sin and death. Thank You that in Him we find both forgiveness for our sins and the gift of Your Spirit to dwell within us.*

*Lord, pierce our hearts as You did on that day of Pentecost. Where we need to repent, give us humility. Where we need faith, give us courage to trust Jesus fully. And where we need to obey, give us boldness to take the next step—whether that’s confessing sin, being baptized, or bearing witness to Christ in our homes and neighborhoods.*

*Holy Spirit, fill us as Your people. Make us a church that never loses sight of the gospel, a church that proclaims Christ crucified and risen, a church that embodies Your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

*Send us out now with Your power, that we might be unwavering in our hope and bold in our witness, until the day every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.*

*We pray in His strong name, Amen.*