

Freddy Fritz / General

Turning the World Upside Down / Gospel; Preach Good News; Jesus' Death; Jesus' resurrection; Forgiveness; Holy Spirit; Faith; Repentance / Acts 2:14–41
Acts 2:14-41 shows us that the gospel that Peter preached is still the gospel for today.

Introduction

First sermons are either memorable or forgettable.

My first sermon was forgettable.

My pastor in Cape Town knew that I was headed to seminary to prepare for pastoral ministry. He also knew that there was a little church in beautiful Llandudno Bay that needed a preacher for an upcoming Sunday. So, he asked me to preach at Llandudno Bay Church.

I was nervous. When I got up to preach, there were only 13 people in that tiny congregation—12 women and 1 man!

After the service, the people politely thanked me and left. One lady invited me to her house for lunch. The man shook my hand, and in the palm of his hand was a Ten Rand bill. I assumed that was my honorarium!

The Apostle Peter's first sermon, however, was memorable.

Peter's first sermon was on the Day of Pentecost. On that day, the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 disciples in terms of wind, fire, and the ability to speak the gospel in foreign languages.

Jews, who had come from every nation under heaven to Jerusalem, were amazed and perplexed, and they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ([Acts 2:12](#)).

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They are filled with new wine" ([Acts 2:13](#)).

But Peter, standing with the eleven apostles, most likely in the temple precinct, lifted up his voice and addressed the vast crowd of thousands of people ([Acts 2:14](#)).

He explained what had just happened based on [Joel 2:28-32](#). The extraordinary phenomenon of Spirit-filled believers declaring the wonders of God in foreign languages was the fulfillment of the prophet Joel's prediction that God would pour out his Holy Spirit on all people.

Peter based his exposition on several texts of Scripture.

Peter's memorable sermon shows how the good news of the gospel that he proclaimed is still the gospel for today.

Scripture

Let us read [Acts 2:14-41](#):

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

**¹⁷ " 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;**

**¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.**

**¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;**

²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood,

before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

²² "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning him,

" 'I saw the Lord always before me,

for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;

²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;

my flesh also will dwell in hope.

²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,

or let your Holy One see corruption.

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

²⁹ "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing

and hearing. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“ ‘The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.” ’

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Lesson

[Acts 2:14-41](#) shows us that the gospel that Peter preached is still the gospel for today. Dr. John Stott has informed much of what I have to say in this message.

Let us use the following outline:

1. The Gospel That Peter Preached Then
2. The Gospel That We Must Preach Today

I. The Gospel That Peter Preached Then

First, let us look at the gospel that Peter preached then.

Peter’s sermon focused on Jesus. In verse 22, Peter summoned the “**men of Israel**” to “**hear these words**” and began by saying, “**Jesus of Nazareth.**”

Then he told the story of Jesus in six stages.

A. Jesus' Life and Ministry (2:22)

First, Peter told about Jesus' life and ministry.

Jesus was truly **“a man.”** Yet, he was also **“attested to [them] by God”** through supernatural works, which are given three names: **“mighty works and wonders and signs.”**

These supernatural works **“God did through [Jesus] in their midst.”**

In other words, Jesus' life and ministry were done publicly and all honest people could affirm what Jesus said and did.

B. Jesus' Death (2:23)

Second, Peter told about Jesus' death.

Peter said in verse 23a that **“this Jesus, [was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.”** God was no impotent bystander watching as things unraveled beyond his control. No. Everything—including Jesus' death—happened according to God's plan.

Furthermore, Peter pointed the finger at all the people standing in front of him and asserted in verse 23b, **“You crucified and killed [Jesus] by the hands of lawless men.”**

Jesus' death was simultaneously attributed to the purpose of God *and* to the wickedness of men.

In this statement, Peter affirmed that God's saving purposes were sovereignly being worked out despite men's wickedness.

C. Jesus' Resurrection (2:24-32)

Third, Peter told about Jesus' resurrection.

Peter went on to say that although wicked men had killed Jesus, **“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it”** ([Acts 2:24](#)).

Peter confirmed the truth of Jesus' resurrection by appealing to [Psalm 16:8-11](#) in which he claimed that Jesus' resurrection was foretold by King David.

David could not have been referring to himself, when he wrote that God would **“not abandon [his] soul to Hades, or let [his] Holy One see corruption”** ([Acts 2:27](#)).

Why not?

Because, Peter said in verse 29, that David **“both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.”**

Peter went on to note in verse 30 that David knew **“that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne.”**

That descendent was, of course, Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover, David **“foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption”** ([Acts 2:31](#)).

Having quoted [Psalm 16](#) and applied it to the resurrection of Jesus, Peter concluded in verse 32, **“This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.”**

So, what was predicted in the Old Testament was now fulfilled in the New Testament.

D. Jesus' Exaltation (2:33-36)

Fourth, Peter told about Jesus' exaltation.

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus was **“exalted at the right hand of God”** ([Acts 2:33a](#)). From that position of supreme honor and power, Jesus **“received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing”** ([Acts 2:33b](#)). That is, the people saw transformed people speaking the wonders of God in words that they could understand.

Peter again used an Old Testament quotation to prove his point. He applied [Psalm 110:1](#) (which is the most quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament) to the ascension of Jesus.

Peter said in verse 34a, **“For David did not ascend into the heavens.”** David had not been preserved from decay when he died. Rather, it was Jesus who had ascended into heaven.

Based on the use of the original words in verses 34b-35, the Father said to Jesus, **“Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”**

Peter then made this marvelous statement in verse 36, **“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”**

Jesus did not *become* **“Lord and Christ”** at the time of his ascension, for he has always been **“both Lord and Christ.”** It was rather that God had exalted him to be in reality and power what he already was by right.

E. Jesus' Salvation (2:37-39)

Fifth, Peter told about Jesus' salvation.

In verse 37, we read of the response of the crowd to Peter's gospel: **“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ ”**

As the people heard Peter preach the gospel, they came under the conviction of sin. They wanted to know what they needed to do about their sin. By the way, remember that just 2 months earlier these very same people had called for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Peter told the people how to respond to the preaching of the gospel in verse 38: **“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”**

The people needed to **repent**. That is, they needed a complete change of mind and attitude toward Jesus.

In addition, the people needed to **be baptized**. Baptism was a sign of union with Jesus. It was a sign of a new allegiance. It was a sign of being in a new family.

Peter noted that the believers received two gifts from God.

The first was **the forgiveness of sins**.

And the second was **the gift of the Holy Spirit**.

Everyone God calls to himself receives both gifts, the forgiveness of sins as well as the gift of the Holy Spirit.

F. Jesus' New Community (2:40-41)

And sixth, Peter told about Jesus' new community.

Luke reported what Peter did in verse 40, **“And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ ”**

This is a fascinating statement. Peter was not asking for private and individual conversions only but for a public identification with other believers. Commitment to Jesus implied a commitment to Jesus' new community, that is, the church.

Believers in Jesus would have to change communities, transferring their membership, as it were, from one that was **crooked** to one that was new and different.

Luke records the incredible response to Peter's sermon. We read in verse 41, **“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”**

In accordance with Peter's promise, these new believers must also have received forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, although this time there were no supernatural signs (such as wind, fire, or tongues) accompanying these gifts.

That is the gospel that Peter preached then.

II. The Gospel That We Must Preach Today

And second, let's note the gospel that we must preach today.

Peter's gospel focused on Jesus and told his story in six stages.

Our struggle today is how to be faithful to the apostolic gospel, while at the same time presenting the gospel in a way that resonates with contemporary people.

What should be immediately clear is that, like Peter (and indeed all the apostles), we too must focus on Jesus.

After the introductory explanation of the Pentecost phenomenon, Peter's focus was on **“Jesus of Nazareth.”**

The focus of our gospel today must also be on “**Jesus of Nazareth.**”

It is impossible to preach the gospel without proclaiming **Jesus of Nazareth.**

But how?

How do we proclaim the gospel today?

John Stott very helpfully suggests several elements that we must present if are to preach the gospel faithfully today.

A. The Gospel Events

First, we must preach the gospel events.

There are two primary gospel events.

The first is the death of Jesus, and the second is the resurrection of Jesus.

It is true that Peter referred to Jesus’ life and ministry (2:22) and went on to his exaltation (2:33), and elsewhere to his return as judge. Peter preached the whole saving work of Jesus. Yet he concentrated on Jesus’ death and resurrection (2:23-24).

The death and resurrection of Jesus are historical facts of history.

A careful, honest study of the facts will demonstrate that Jesus died and rose again from the grave.

Furthermore, the events of Jesus’ death and resurrection have significance.

Jesus’ death was in accordance with God’s purpose of redeeming his people. Jesus died on the cross to pay for sin. Not for his sin (for he had none), but for the sin of his people.

And Jesus’ resurrection is the proof that God accepted his sacrifice and that he vindicated what Jesus did by his life and by his death on the cross.

B. The Gospel Witnesses

Second, we must preach the gospel witnesses.

The apostles did not proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus in a vacuum but in the context of Scripture and history.

They appealed to two strands of evidence to substantiate their testimony, so that by two witnesses the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection might be established.

First, the apostles appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures, which Jesus fulfilled. In his sermon, recorded in [Acts 2](#), Peter appealed to [Psalm 16](#), [Psalm 110](#), and [Joel 2](#) to support his claim regarding Jesus' resurrection, exaltation, and gift of the Holy Spirit.

Second, the apostles appealed to their own eyewitness testimony. The apostles constantly insisted that they were eyewitnesses of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39ff). The eyewitness testimony of the apostles has been recorded in the pages of the New Testament.

We have no warrant to proclaim our own experiences of Jesus since we are not eyewitnesses of his life, death, and resurrection.

However, the witnesses today that testify to Jesus Christ are the Old and New Testaments.

The gospel for today faithfully proclaims the authentic Jesus as he is proclaimed in the Old and New Testaments. The primary witnesses to Jesus are the prophets and the apostles.

Our gospel must point to their witness to Jesus.

C. The Gospel Promises

Third, we must preach the gospel promises.

The gospel is good news not only of what Jesus *did* (that is, he died for our sins and was resurrected by God, according to the Old and New Testaments) but also of what he *offers* as a result of what he did.

Jesus promises two gifts to those who respond to him.

The first promise is the forgiveness of sins. The gospel promises us that all of our sins, past, present, and future are erased by Jesus' perfect work on our behalf.

And the second promise is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gospel promises us that God will make us new people.

The forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit together constitute the freedom for which so many people are searching, freedom from guilt, defilement, judgment, self-centeredness, and freedom to be the persons God made and meant us to be.

Forgiveness and the Spirit comprise what we call “salvation,” and both are publicly signified in baptism, namely the washing away of sin and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

D. The Gospel Conditions

And finally, we must preach the gospel conditions.

There are two gospel conditions.

First, the gospel demands repentance. There must be a radical turn from sin to Jesus.

And second, the gospel demands faith. There must be a wholehearted trust in the person and work of Jesus.

And it is only by the grace of God that a sinner can turn from sin and trust in Jesus.

Repentance and faith are demonstrated by baptism, a public testimony of our penitent faith in Jesus.

Moreover, by our repentance, faith, and baptism we also change our allegiance from this crooked generation to the new community of Jesus. We became members of a local, visible church of Jesus.

Conclusion

Here, then, is the fourfold gospel for today.

We must proclaim two gospel events (namely Jesus’ death and resurrection), as attested by two witnesses (who are the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament), on the basis of which God makes two promises (the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit), on two conditions (repentance and faith).

We have no liberty to amputate this apostolic gospel, by proclaiming the cross without the resurrection, or referring to the New Testament but not the Old, or offering forgiveness without the Holy Spirit, or demanding faith without repentance. There is a wholeness about the biblical gospel.

If you are not a Christian today, I urge you to consider the gospel.

Jesus really died and rose again from the dead.

The facts of his death and resurrection were foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament and affirmed by the apostles in the New Testament.

God promises to forgive your sins and to make you a new person by giving you the Holy Spirit.

And, to receive God's gift you must repent of your sin and believe in Jesus.

Dear friends, this is the gospel for today.

For, as Peter said in another sermon in [Acts 4:12](#), "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Amen.