

The Work Of The Holy Spirit.

Text: Acts 2:32-41

1) The Holy Spirit wounds

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Holy Spirit heals

131, 127, 128, 123T286, 124,

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Acts 2:32–41, ³² *This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.* ³³ *Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.*

³⁴ *“For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, ³⁵ Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”’*

³⁶ *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” ³⁷ 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?”*

³⁸ *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. ³⁹ 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.”*

⁴⁰ *And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We read in Acts 19:1–2, ¹ *And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ² he said to them, “Did you receive the*

Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”

Paul was in Ephesus and asks certain disciples whether they have received the Holy Spirit. They reply, ***“We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”*** This answer stuns us, that Christians would not know of the Holy Spirit! Is that possible?

Ask Christians today. The answers will shock you. Many disciples do not know of the Holy Spirit; others have heard of Him, but have vague ideas about His person and work.

How about among us? We have heard and hear of Him, but so few can tell others what the Holy Spirit does. They know the Father created us, and know the Son saved us; but despite Luther’s beautiful explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed many people do not know, or at least not as well as they ought, what the Holy Spirit does.

Let us improve our knowledge. We can do so by studying our Pentecost text. It speaks to us of The Work of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Holy Spirit Wounds

Our text says, ***they were cut to the heart.*** Who are “they”? Peter addresses them ***“Men of Israel,”***¹ meaning those living in Judea, as well as those dwelling in Jerusalem during the festival days. When these people heard the ***“sound”***,² they came together, and to this multitude, Peter speaks.

The hearts of these people were cut by Peter’s message. What did Peter preach? He tells them that they have crucified the Lord Jesus, that they have done so with wicked hands, and this Lord Jesus was more than a great teacher come from God.³

He was their Messiah. He was sent to save His people from their sins.⁴ He was sent to save them also. But they would not have Him.⁵

They crucified their own Saviour. More than this, they had crucified God’s own Son. Jesus, their Saviour, was God’s beloved Son.⁶ God had shown His love for His Son by raising Him from the dead, (of which they were witnesses)

and by permitting Him to ascend to heaven, and by placing Him at the right hand of God the Father.

Yes, they had crucified the Son of God. More than this; they had crucified their own Lord. But the one they crucified God exalted. He is now in heaven. He is now at God's right hand. He is Lord over all.

Of the fact that Jesus really was their Lord and Christ they could convince themselves easily by seeing on this Pentecost Day the fulfilment of the promise the Father had given Jesus regarding the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had been promised.⁷ Had Jesus been a mere man, these promises would have remained unfulfilled. By fulfilling them in Jesus Christ, God showed that He had exalted Jesus to be Lord over all. And this Jesus, who was their Saviour, God's own Son, and their Lord, they had crucified.

With this message the hearts of the hearers are cut. They did not treat Peter's plain preaching with indifference. They made no excuse for their wicked act. There was no attempt to defend themselves. They did not become angry with the preacher,⁸ rather they were cut to the heart. Their hearts were pricked, pierced, penetrated, and wounded.

As Peter preaches, they become conscious of the greatness of their sin as they are told that they have crucified their Lord and their Christ. They fear the dreadful consequences they must endure because of their wrong-doing.

They ask the question, "***Men and brethren, what shall we do?***" And what gave Peter's message the power to produce contrition? Not Peter's words, not Peter's delivery, but the Holy Spirit accompanying Peter's words.⁹

Jesus says in John 16:8, ***And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*** The Holy Spirit convinces the world of sin. Today, the Holy Spirit cuts, pricks, and wounds the hearts of the unconverted with the same message that Peter preached.

He demands that His ministers preach the Word of God faithfully.¹⁰ Christian preachers should declare Jesus to be, not only Mary's, but especially God's own Son.¹¹ Christian preachers should declare Jesus to be King of kings and Lord of lords.¹² Christian preachers should not fear to say that Jesus was crucified because of our sins.¹³

Rightly dividing God's Word,¹⁴ preaching God's Law without fear or favour, telling people that with their wicked hands, they have slain the Prince of Life, Christian preachers have a message which cuts, penetrates, and wounds the hearts of their hearers.¹⁵

The heart of David was cut and wounded by the message ***You are the man!***¹⁶ The hearts of Israel were cut when Jesus held their sins up to them, saying, ***"You are a stiff-necked people."***¹⁷

Our heart is wounded also. We read in Romans 3:20 that ***by the law is the knowledge of sin.***¹⁸ We learn to know our sin, feel its great guilt, fear the consequences, and cry out in the words of our text, ***"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"***

We cry out with St. Paul in Romans 7:24, ²⁴ ***O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*** The Law has this power to convict people of their sin through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Holy Spirit Heals

The Holy Spirit not only wounds but also heals. He not only smites, but also binds up the wounds as we read in Hosea 6:1, ¹ ***Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.***¹⁹

When the hearers came with question, ***"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"*** Peter knew a remedy that would heal their wounded hearts. It was God's Word. He tells them to repent. ***"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."***

Repent means to change one's mind. Inconsistent with the spirit of the entire passage is to say that to repent means to do penance. The Pharisees imagined external observance of ceremonial rules and regulations would cleanse them. But Christ declared to them that only the outside of their cup was clean.²⁰

Peter meant that these people should change their minds regarding Jesus. They should no longer regard Him as an impostor but as their Lord. Then Peter tells them ***"be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."*** To be baptised in the name of any one implies in the person baptised a professed dependence and a devoted subjection to him.²¹

These people should openly confess that they needed Jesus to save them and that from now on they would willingly obey Him, and would prove their confession to be sincere by having themselves baptised in Jesus' name.

And their being baptised would be to them not only an act of confession, but this Sacrament would be to them also the path of salvation. Baptism saves, it offers and seals the forgiveness of sins. Our text says that they should be baptised in Jesus' name "*for the remission of sins.*"²²

And then Peter added that if they would repent, believe, and be baptised in Jesus Christ, then they *shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*. The special charisma of the Holy Spirit, speaking with tongues, healing, prophecy, and the like, are not meant.

The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities.²³ He gives us strength²⁴ to mortify our members,²⁵ to crucify the old man,²⁶ and to put on the new man.²⁷ He assures us that we are God's children.²⁸ He promises us eternal life, and as He assures us that we are God's children in Christ Jesus He heals our wounds.

The promise to heal the wounds that was given to the Jews is given also to their children, and given also *to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call*. In Christ there is universal salvation. Also to Gentiles the Holy Spirit offers Jesus, and Him crucified. God does not want any one to perish.²⁹ He wants to save us also.

When we come with contrite hearts, asking what we must do to be saved, we are told the same message Peter preached. We are told to repent. Nothing is said about ceremonies, which are useless³⁰ nothing about mere orthodoxy, which is vain, as we read in Jeremiah 7:4, *'Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these.'* Nothing is said about outward show of piety, which is no good.³¹

Rather we are told what the Philippian jailer was told as we read in Acts 16:31, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

We are told what Paul was told, *Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*³²

We are told what the Ethiopian eunuch was told, as we read in Acts 8:35–37, ³⁵ *Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.* ³⁶ *Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”* ³⁷ *Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”* *And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*³³

We are furthermore told that we should confess our faith. Do not be like those mentioned in John 12:42, *even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.*

Instead be like John and Peter, who said, *For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*³⁴

Do as Paul did in Athens, ¹⁶ *Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.* ¹⁷ *Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.*³⁵

Do as Jesus says in Matthew 10:32, ³² *“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.*

Do as Peter’s listeners did as we read in Acts 2:41–42, ⁴¹ *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.* ⁴² *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Our text says that in Holy Baptism we shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Note that *the gift of the Holy Spirit* is imparted with Baptism. It is not something that comes separately or later.

The Holy Spirit gives us strength to subdue the wicked promptings of flesh.³⁶ He will not to let sin reign over us.³⁷ He helps us to resist temptation,³⁸ and to bear fruits worthy of repentance,³⁹ and helps us to be zealous for good works.⁴⁰

The Holy Spirit assures us that we are God’s children and He sustains our faith by supplying us with God’s Word, and the Sacraments, and He promises eternal salvation.⁴¹

The Holy Spirit does not work by an arm of political power, not by church rules and regulations, not by pious emotionalism, not by dreams and visions, but by the truth of God's inspired Word.

An unconverted man sat down to read the Bible an hour each evening with his wife. In a few evenings he stopped in the midst of his reading and said to his wife, "*If this book is true, we are wrong.*" He read on, and a few days later he said to his wife, "*If this book is true, we are lost.*" Riveted to the book and deeply anxious, he still read, and a week later he joyfully exclaimed to his wife, "*If this book is true, we can be saved!*" After a few week's more reading, and, taught by the Spirit of God, through the exhortations and instructions of a city missionary, they both became believers in Jesus Christ.

This example show us how the Holy Spirit first wounds and hen heals bringing people to faith in Jesus Christ.

So let us close with this word of Scripture, Matthew 28:19-20, ¹⁹ ***Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the [world].*** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Acts 2:22

² Acts 2:6

³ John 3:2

⁴ Matt. 1:21; John 1:11

⁵ Luke 19:14; 20:13,15; Acts 7:51-52

⁶ Matt. 3:17; Luke 9:35

⁷ Acts 1:14; Luke 24:49; John 14: 16, 26

⁸ See Acts 7:54

⁹ Acts 2:4; Matt. 10:20; 1 Cor. 2:13

¹⁰ Acts 20:17; Jer. 23:22; Matt. 28:20; John 15:15

¹¹ Matt. 14:33; 16:15; Mark 1:1; John 10:30; 20:28; Rom. 9:5

¹² Rev. 19:16; Matt. 21:5; John 19:19; Rom. 9:5; 1 Pet. 3:22

¹³ Isa. 53:4-6.; John 1:29; 3:14; Acts 20:28; Rom. 4:25; Gal. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:6

¹⁴ 1 Tim. 2:15

¹⁵ John 16:8,11; Heb. 4:12,13

¹⁶ 2 Samuel 12:7

¹⁷ Exodus 33:3-4; cf. 1 Sam. 15:24; Matt. 3:7; Jer. 26:18,19; 1 Kings 21:27; Acts 19:18

¹⁸ See also Romans 7:7

¹⁹ Also Jer. 30:17

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- ²⁰ Matt. 23:25
²¹ 1 Cor. 1:10,16
²² Cf. Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21
²³ Rom. 8:26
²⁴ Eph. 3:16
²⁵ Col. 3:5
²⁶ Rom. 6:4
²⁷ Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:9-10
²⁸ Rom. 8:16
²⁹ 2 Pet. 3:9
³⁰ Isa. 1:13
³¹ 2 Tim. 3:5
³² Acts 22:16
³³ See also Mark 16:16; John 7:37-38; Eph. 2:7-8
³⁴ Acts 4:20
³⁵ Acts 17:16-17
³⁶ Gal. 5:24
³⁷ Rom. 6:12,14
³⁸ 1 Pet. 5:8-9
³⁹ Matt. 3:8
⁴⁰ Titus 2:14
⁴¹ 1 Pet. 1:5, 9