

CHAPTER 2

Between the promise of the Messiah (even the latest of those promises) and his coming many ages intervened; but between the promise of the Spirit and his coming there were but a few days; and during those days the apostles, though they had received orders to preach the gospel to every creature, and to begin at Jerusalem, yet lay perfectly wind-bound, incognito — concealed, and not offering to preach. But in this chapter the north wind and the south wind awake, and then they awake, and we have them in the pulpit presently. Here is,

- I.** The descent of the Spirit upon the apostles, and those that were with them, on the day of pentecost (v. 1-4).
- II.** The various speculations which this occasioned among the people that were now met in Jerusalem from all parts (v. 5-13)
- III.** The sermon which Peter preached to them hereupon, wherein he shows that this pouring out of the Spirit was the accomplishment of an Old-Testament promise (v. 14-21), that it was a confirmation of Christ's being the Messiah, which was already proved by his resurrection (v. 22-32), and that it was a fruit and evidence of his ascension into heaven (v. 33-36).
- IV.** The good effect of this sermon in the conversion of many to the faith of Christ, and their addition to the church (v. 37-41).
- V.** The eminent piety and charity of those primitive Christians, and the manifest tokens of God's presence with them, and power in them (v. 42-47).

⌄ ACTS 2:1-4

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

We have here an account of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples of Christ. Observe,

- I.** When, and where, this was done, which are particularly noted, for the greater certainty of the thing.

1. It was *when the day of pentecost was fully come*, in which there seems to be a reference to the manner of the expression in the institution of this feast, where it is said (⁴²³⁵Leviticus 23:15), *You shall count unto you seven sabbaths complete*, from the day of the offering of the first-fruits, which was the next day but one after the passover, the sixteenth day of the month Abib, which was the day that Christ arose. This day was *fully come*, that is, the night preceding, with a part of the day, was fully past.

(1.) The Holy Ghost came down at the time of a solemn feast, because there was then a great concourse of people to Jerusalem from all parts of the country, and the proselytes from other countries, which would make it the more public, and the fame of it to be spread the sooner and further, which would contribute much to the propagating of the gospel into all nations. Thus now, as before at the passover, the Jewish feasts served to toll the bell for gospel services and entertainments.

(2.) This feast of pentecost was kept in remembrance of the giving of the law upon mount Sinai, whence the incorporating of the Jewish church was to be dated, which Dr. Lightfoot reckons to be just one thousand four hundred and forty-seven years before this. Fitly, therefore, is the Holy Ghost given at that feast, in fire and in tongues, for the promulgation of the evangelical law, not as that to one nation, but to every creature.

(3.) This feast of pentecost happened on the *first day of the week*, which was an additional honour put on that day, and a confirmation of it to be the Christian sabbath, *the day which the Lord hath made*, to be a standing memorial in his church of those two great blessings — the resurrection of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit, both on that day of the week. This serves not only to justify us in observing that day under the style and title of *the Lord's day*, but to direct us in the sanctifying of it to give God praise particularly for those two great blessings; every Lord's day in the year, I think, there should be a full and particular notice taken in our prayers and praises of these two, as there is by some churches of the one once a year, upon Easter-day, and of the other once a year, upon Whit-sunday. Oh! that we may do it with suitable affections!

2. It was when *they were all with one accord in one place*. What place it was we are not told particularly, whether in the temple, where they attended at public times (⁴²³⁵Luke 24:53), or whether in their own upper room, where they met at other times. But it was at Jerusalem, because this had been the place which God chose, to put his name there, and the

prophecy was that thence the word of the Lord should go forth to all nations, ^{<2118>}Isaiah 2:3. It was now the place of the general rendezvous of all devout people: here God had promised to meet them and bless them; here therefore he meets them with this blessing of blessings. Though Jerusalem had done the utmost dishonour imaginable to Christ, yet he did this honour to Jerusalem, to teach his remnant in all places; he had this in Jerusalem. Here the disciples were in one place, and they were not as yet so many but that one place, and no large one, would hold them all. And here they were *with one accord*. We cannot forget how often, while their Master was with them, there were *strifes among them, who should be the greatest*; but now all these strifes were at an end, we hear no more of them. What they had received already of the Holy Ghost, when Christ breathed on them, had in a good measure rectified the mistakes upon which those contests were grounded, and had disposed them to holy love. They had prayed more together of late than usual (^{<4114>}Acts 1:14), and this made them love one another better. By his grace he thus prepared them for the gift of the Holy Ghost; for that blessed dove comes not where there is noise and clamour, but moves upon the face of the still waters, not the rugged ones. Would we have the Spirit *poured out upon us from on high*? Let us be all of one accord, and, notwithstanding variety of sentiments and interests, as no doubt there was among those disciples, let us agree to love one another; for, where *brethren dwell together in unity*, there it is that *the Lord commands his blessing*.

II. How, and in what manner, the Holy Ghost came upon them. We often read in the old Testament of God's coming down in a cloud; as when he took possession first of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple, which intimates the darkness of that dispensation. And Christ went up to heaven in a cloud, to intimate how much we are kept in the dark concerning the upper world. But the Holy Ghost did not descend in a cloud; for he was to dispel and scatter the clouds that overspread men's minds, and to bring light into the world.

1. Here is an audible summons given them to awaken their expectations of something great, v. 2. It is here said,

(1.) That it came *suddenly*, did not rise gradually, as common winds do, but was at the height immediately. It came sooner than they expected, and startled even those that were now together waiting, and probably employed in some religious exercises.

(2.) It was a *sound from heaven*, like a thunder-clap, ^{<661>}Revelation 6:1. God is said to *bring the winds out of his treasures* (^{<487>}Psalms 135:7), and to *gather them in his hands*, ^{<180>}Proverbs 30:4. From him this sound came, like the voice of one crying, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*.

(3.) It was the sound of a wind, for the way of the Spirit is like that of the wind (^{<487>}John 3:3), *thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it comes nor whither it goes*. When the Spirit of life is to enter into the dry bones, the prophet is told to *prophecy unto the wind: Come from the four winds, O breath*, ^{<370>}Ezekiel 37:9. And though it was not *in the wind* that the Lord came to Elijah, yet this prepared him to receive his discovery of himself in the *still small voice*, ^{<1151>}1 Kings 19:11, 12. *God's way is in the whirlwind and the storm* (^{<300>}Nahum 1:3), and out of the whirlwind he spoke to Job.

(4.) It was a *rushing mighty wind*; it was strong and violent, and came not only with a great noise, but with great force, as if it would bear down all before it. This was to signify the powerful influences and operations of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, and thereby upon the world, that they should be *mighty through God, to the casting down of imaginations*.

(5.) *It filled not only the room, but all the house where they were sitting*. Probably it alarmed the whole city, but, to show that it was supernatural, presently fixed upon that particular house: as some think the wind that was sent to arrest Jonah affected only the ship that he was in (^{<300>}Jonah 1:4), and as the wise men's star stood over the house where the child was. This would direct the people who observed it whither to go to enquire the meaning of it. This wind filling the house would strike an awe upon the disciples, and help to put them into a very serious, reverent, and composed frame, for the receiving of the Holy Ghost. Thus the convictions of the Spirit make way for his comforts; and the rough blasts of that blessed wind prepare the soul for its soft and gentle gales.

2. Here is a visible sign of the gift they were to receive. They saw *cloven tongues, like as of fire* (v. 3), and *it sat* — *ekathise*, not *they sat*, those cloven tongues, but he, that is the Spirit (signified thereby), rested upon each of them, as he is said to rest upon the prophets of old. Or, as Dr. Hammond describes it, “There was an appearance of something like flaming fire lighting on every one of them, which divided asunder, and so formed the resemblance of tongues, with that part of them that was next their heads divided or cloven.” The flame of a candle is somewhat like a

tongue; and there is a meteor which naturalists call *ignis lambens* — a *gentle flame*, not a devouring fire; such was this. Observe,

(1.) There was an outward sensible sign, for the confirming of the faith of the disciples themselves, and for the convincing of others. Thus the prophets of old had frequently their first mission confirmed by signs, that all Israel might know them to be established prophets.

(2.) The sign given was fire, that John Baptist's saying concerning Christ might be fulfilled, *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire*; with the Holy Ghost as with fire. They were now, in the feast of pentecost, celebrating the memorial of the giving of the law upon mount Sinai; and as that was given in fire, and therefore is called a fiery law, so is the gospel. Ezekiel's mission was confirmed by a vision of *burning coals of fire* (Ezekiel 1:13), and Isaiah's by *a coal of fire* touching his lips, Isaiah 6:7. The Spirit, like fire, melts the heart, separates and burns up the dross, and kindles pious and devout affections in the soul, in which, as in the fire upon the altar, the spiritual sacrifices are offered up. This is that fire which Christ came to send upon the earth. Luke 12:49.

(3.) This fire appeared in cloven tongues. The operations of the Spirit were many; that of speaking with divers tongues was one, and was singled out to be the first indication of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and to that this sign had a reference.

[1.] They were tongues; for from the Spirit we have the word of God, and by him Christ would speak to the world, and he gave the Spirit to the disciples, not only to endue them with knowledge, but to endue them with a power to publish and proclaim to the world what they knew; for *the dispensation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*.

[2.] These tongues were cloven, to signify that God would hereby divide unto all nations the knowledge of his grace, as he is said to have divided to them by his providence the light of the heavenly bodies, Deuteronomy 4:19. The tongues were divided, and yet they still continued all of one accord; for there may be a sincere unity of affections where yet there is a diversity of expression. Dr. Lightfoot observes that the dividing of tongues at Babel was the casting off of the heathen; for when they had lost the language in which alone God was spoken of and preached, they utterly lost the knowledge of God and religion, and fell into idolatry. But now, after

above two thousand years, God, by another dividing of tongues, restores the knowledge of himself to the nations.

(4.) This fire sat upon them for some time, to denote the constant residence of the Holy Ghost with them. The prophetic gifts of old were conferred sparingly and but at some times, but the disciples of Christ had the gifts of the Spirit always with them, though the sign, we may suppose, soon disappeared. Whether these flames of fire passed from one to another, or whether there were as many flames as there were persons, is not certain. But they must be strong and bright flames that would be visible in the day-light, as it now was, for the day was fully come.

III. What was the immediate effect of this? 1. *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost*, more plentifully and powerfully than they were before. They were filled with the graces of the Spirit, and were more than ever under his sanctifying influences — were now holy, and heavenly, and spiritual, more weaned from this world and better acquainted with the other. They were more filled with the comforts of the Spirit, rejoiced more than ever in the love of Christ and the hope of heaven, and in it all their griefs and fears were swallowed up. They were also, for the proof of this, filled with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are especially meant here; they were endued with miraculous powers for the furtherance of the gospel. It seems evident to me that not only the twelve apostles, but all the hundred and twenty disciples were *filled with the Holy Ghost* alike at this time — all the seventy disciples, who were apostolic men, and employed in the same work, and all the rest too that were to preach the gospel; for it is said expressly (⁴⁰⁰⁸Ephesians 4:8, 11), *When Christ ascended on high* (which refers to this, v. 33), *he gave gifts unto men*, not only *some apostles* (such were the twelve), but *some prophets* and *some evangelists* (such were many of the seventy disciples, itinerant preachers), and *some pastors and teachers* settled in particular churches, as we may suppose some of these afterwards were. The *all* here must refer to the *all* that were together, v. 1; ⁴⁰¹⁴Acts 1:14, 15.

2. *They began to speak with other tongues*, besides their native language, though they had never learned any other. They spoke not matters of common conversation, but the word of God, and the praises of his name, *as the Spirit gave them utterance*, or gave them to speak *apophthengesthai* — *apophthegms*, substantial and weighty sayings, worthy to be had in remembrance. It is probable that it was not only one that was enabled to

speaking one language, and another another (as it was with the several families that were dispersed from Babel), but that every one was enabled to speak divers languages, as he should have occasion to use them. And we may suppose that they understood not only themselves but one another too, which the builders of Babel did not, ^{<411E>}Genesis 11:7. They did not speak here and there a word of another tongue, or stammer out some broken sentences, but spoke it as readily, properly, and elegantly, as if it had been their mother-tongue; for whatever was produced by miracle was the best of the kind. They spoke not from any previous thought or meditation, but *as the Spirit gave them utterance*; he furnished them with the matter as well as the language. Now this was,

(1.) A very great miracle; it was a miracle upon the mind (and so had most of the nature of a gospel miracle), for in the mind words are framed. They had not only never learned these languages, but had never learned any foreign tongue, which might have facilitated these; nay, for aught that appears, they had never so much as heard these languages spoken, nor had any idea of them. They were neither scholars nor travellers, nor had had any opportunity of learning languages either by books or conversation. Peter indeed was forward enough to speak in his own tongue, but the rest of them were no spokesmen, nor were they quick of apprehension; yet now not only *the heart of the rash understands knowledge, but the tongue of the stammerers is ready to speak eloquently*, ^{<3314>}Isaiah 32:4. When Moses complained, *I am slow of speech*, God said, *I will be with thy mouth*, and *Aaron shall be thy spokesman*. But he did more for these messengers of his: he that made man's mouth new-made theirs.

(2.) A very proper, needful, and serviceable miracle. The language the disciples spoke was Syriac, a dialect of the Hebrew; so that it was necessary that they should be endued with the gift, for the understanding both of the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, in which it was written, and of the original Greek of the New Testament, in which it was to be written. But this was not all; they were commissioned to *preach the gospel to every creature, to disciple all nations*. But here is an insuperable difficulty at the threshold. How shall they master the several languages so as to speak intelligibly to all nations? It will be the work of a man's life to learn their languages. And therefore, to prove that Christ could give authority to preach to the nations, he gives ability to preach to them in their own language. And it should seem that this was the accomplishment of that promise which Christ made to his disciples (^{<3442>}John 14:12),

Greater works than these shall you do. For this may well be reckoned, all things considered, a greater work than the miraculous cures Christ wrought. Christ himself did not speak with other tongues, nor did he enable his disciples to do so while he was with them: but it was the first effect of the *pouring out of the Spirit* upon them. And archbishop Tillotson thinks it probable that if the conversion of infidels to Christianity were now sincerely and vigorously attempted, by men of honest minds, God would extraordinarily countenance such an attempt with all fitting assistance, as he did the first publication of the gospel.

ACTS 2:5-13

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

We have here an account of the public notice that was taken of this extraordinary gift with which the disciples were all on a sudden endued. Observe,

I. The great concourse of people that there was now at Jerusalem, it should seem more than was usual at the feast of pentecost. *There were dwelling* or abiding *at Jerusalem* Jews that were *devout men*, disposed to religion, and that had the fear of God before their eyes (so the word properly signifies), some of them *proselytes of righteousness*, that were circumcised, and admitted members of the Jewish church, others only *proselytes of the gate*, that forsook idolatry, and gave up themselves to the worship of the true God, but not to the ceremonial law; some of those that were at Jerusalem now, *out of every nation under heaven*, whither the Jews were dispersed, or whence proselytes were come. The expression is hyperbolic, denoting that there were some from most of the then known parts of the world; as much as ever Tyre was, or London is, the rendezvous of trading people from all parts, Jerusalem at that time was of religious people from all parts. Now,

1. We may here see what were some of those countries whence those strangers came (v. 9-11), some from the eastern countries, as the *Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia*, the posterity of Shem; thence we come in order to Judea, which ought to be mentioned, because, though the language of those in Judea was the same with that which the disciples spoke, yet, before, they spoke it with the north-country

tone and dialect (*Thou art a Galilean, and thy speech betrays thee*), but now they spoke it as correctly as the inhabitants of Judea themselves did. Next come the inhabitants of Cappadocia, Pontus, and that country about Propontis which was particularly called *Asia*, and these were the countries in which those strangers were scattered to whom St. Peter writes. ^{<60>}1 Peter 1:1. Next come the dwellers in *Phrygia and Pamphylia*, which lay westward, the posterity of Japhet, as were also the *strangers of Rome*; there were some also that dwelt in the southern parts of *Egypt, in the parts of Libya about Cyrene*; there were also some from the island of Crete, and some from the deserts of Arabia; but they were all either Jews originally, dispersed into those countries; or *proselytes* to the Jewish religion, but natives of those countries. Dr. Whitby observes that the Jewish writers about this time, as Philo and Josephus, speak of the Jews as *dwelling every where through the whole earth*; and that *there is not a people upon earth among whom some Jews do not inhabit*.

2. We may enquire what brought all those Jews and proselytes together to Jerusalem at this time: not to make a transient visit thither to the feast of pentecost, for they are said to dwell there. They took lodgings there, because there was at this time a general expectation of the appearing of the Messiah; for Daniel's weeks had just now expired, the sceptre had departed from Judah, and it was then generally thought that *the kingdom of God would immediately appear*, ^{<29>}Luke 19:11. This brought those who were most zealous and devout to Jerusalem, to sojourn there, that they might have an early share in the kingdom of the Messiah and the blessings of that kingdom.

II. The amazement with which these strangers were seized when they heard the disciples speak in their own tongues. It should seem, the disciples spoke in various languages before the people of those languages came to them; for it is intimated (v. 6) that the spreading of the report of this abroad was that which *brought the multitude together*, especially those of different countries, who seem to have been more affected with this work of wonder than the inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves.

1. They observe that the speakers are all Galileans, that know no other than their mother tongue (v. 7); they are despicable men, from whom nothing learned nor polite is to be expected. God chose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty. Christ was

thought to be a Galilean, and his disciples really were so, unlearned and ignorant men.

2. They acknowledge that they spoke intelligibly and readily their own language (which they were the most competent judges of), so correctly and fluently that none of their own countrymen could speak it better: *We hear every man in our own tongue wherein we were born* (v. 8), that is, we hear one or other of them speak our native language. The Parthians hear one of them speak their language, the Medes hear another of them speak theirs; and so of the rest; v. 11, *We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God*. Their respective languages were not only unknown at Jerusalem, but probably despised and undervalued, and therefore it was not only a surprise, but a pleasing surprise, to them to hear the language of their own country spoken, as it naturally is to those that are strangers in a strange land.

(1.) The things they heard the apostles discourse of were the *wonderful works of God*, *megalēia tou Theou* — *Magnalia Dei*, *the great things of God*. It is probable that the apostles spoke of Christ, and redemption by him, and the grace of the gospel; and these are indeed the *great things of God*, which will be for ever *marvellous in our eyes*.

(2.) They heard them both praise God for these great things and instruct the people concerning these things, *in their own tongue*, according as they perceived the language of their hearers, or those that enquired of them, to be. Now though, perhaps, by dwelling some time at Jerusalem, they were got to be so much masters of the Jewish language that they could have understood the meaning of the disciples if they had spoken that language, yet,

[1.] This was more strange, and helped to convince their judgment, that this doctrine was of God; for *tongues were for a sign* to those that believed not, ~~412~~ 1 Corinthians 14:22.

[2.] It was more kind, and helped to engage their affections, as it was a plain indication of the favour intended to the Gentiles, and that the knowledge and worship of God should no longer be confined to the Jews, but the partition-wall should be broken down; and this is to us a plain intimation of the mind and will of God, that the sacred records of God's wonderful works should be preserved by all nations *in their own tongue*;

that the scriptures should be read, and public worship performed, in the vulgar languages of the nations.

3. They wonder at it, and look upon it as an astonishing thing (v. 12): *They were all amazed*, they were in an *ecstasy*, so the word is; and they were in doubt what the meaning of it was, and whether it was to introduce the kingdom of the Messiah, which they were big with the expectation of; they asked themselves and one another *ti an theloi touto einai*; — *Quid hoc sibi vult?* — *What is the tendency of this?* Surely it is to dignify, and so to distinguish, these men as messengers from heaven; and therefore, like Moses at the bush, they will *turn aside, and see this great sight*.

III. The scorn which some made of it who were natives of Judea and Jerusalem, probably the scribes and Pharisees, and chief priests, who always resisted the Holy Ghost; they said, *These men are full of new wine, or sweet wine*; they have drunk too much this festival-time, v. 13. Not that they were so absurd as to think that wine in the head would enable men to speak languages which they never learned; but these, being native Jews, knew not, as the others did, that what was spoken was really the languages of other nations, and therefore took it to be gibberish and nonsense, such as drunkards, those *fools in Israel*, sometimes talk. As when they resolved not to believe the finger of the Spirit in Christ's miracles, they turned it off with this, "He casteth out devils by compact with the prince of the devils;" so, when they resolved not to believe the voice of the Spirit in the apostles' preaching, they turned it off with this, *These men are full of new wine*. And, if they called the Master of the house a wine-bibber, no marvel if they so call those of his household.

~~414~~ ACTS 2:14-36

PETER'S SERMON AT JERUSALEM

We have here the first-fruits of the Spirit in the sermon which Peter preached immediately, directed, not to those of other nations in a strange language (we are not told what answer he gave to those that were amazed, and said, *What meaneth this?*) but to the Jews in the vulgar language, even to those that mocked; for he begins with the notice of that (v. 15), and addresses his discourse (v. 14) *to the men of Judea and the inhabitants of Jerusalem*; but we have reason enough to think that the other disciples

continued to speak to those who understood them (and therefore flocked about them), in the languages of their respective countries, *the wonderful works of God*. And it was not by Peter's preaching only, but that of all, or most, of the rest of the hundred and twenty, *that three thousand souls were* that day converted, and added to the church; but Peter's sermon only is recorded, to be an evidence for him that he was thoroughly recovered from his fall, and thoroughly restored to the divine favour. He that had sneakingly denied Christ now as courageously confesses him. Observe,

I. His introduction or preface, wherein he craves the attention of the auditory, or demands it rather: *Peter stood up* (v. 14), to show that he was not drunk, *with the eleven*, who concurred with him in what he said, and probably in their turns spoke likewise to the same purport; those that were of greatest authority stood up to speak to the scoffing Jews, and to confront those who contradicted and blasphemed, but left the seventy disciples to speak to the willing proselytes from other nations, who were not so prejudiced, in their own language. Thus among Christ's ministers, some of greater gifts are called out to instruct those that oppose themselves, to take hold of sword and spear; others of meaner abilities are employed in instructing those that resign themselves, and to be vine-dressers and husband-men. *Peter lifted up his voice*, as one that was both well assured of and much affected with what he said, and was neither afraid nor ashamed to own it. He applied himself to *the men of Judea, andres Ioudaioi* — *the men that were Jews*; so it should be read; “and you especially *that dwell at Jerusalem*, who were accessory to the death of Jesus, *be this known unto you*, which you did not know before, and which you are concerned to know now, *and hearken to my words*, who would draw you to Christ, and not to the words of the scribes and Pharisees, that would draw you from him. My Master is gone, whose words you have often heard in vain, and shall hear no more as you have done, but he speaks to you by us; hearken now to our words.”

II. His answer to their blasphemous calumny (v. 15): “*These men are not drunken, as you suppose*. These disciples of Christ, that now *speak with other tongues*, speak good sense, and know what they say, and so do those they speak to, who are led by their discourses into the knowledge of *the wonderful works of God*. You cannot think they are drunk, for *it is but the third hour of the day*,” nine of the clock in the morning; and before this time, on the sabbaths and solemn feasts, the Jews did not eat nor drink:

may, ordinarily, *those that are drunk are drunk in the night*, and not in the morning; those are besotted drunkards indeed who, *when they awake*, immediately *seek it yet again*, ~~428~~ Proverbs 23:35.

III. His account of the miraculous effusion of the Spirit, which is designed to awaken them all to embrace the faith of Christ, and to join themselves to his church. Two things he resolves it into: — that it was the fulfilling of the scripture, and the fruit of Christ's resurrection and ascension, and consequently the proof of both.

1. That it was the accomplishment of the prophecies of the Old Testament which related to the kingdom of the Messiah, and therefore an evidence that this kingdom is come, and the other predictions of it are fulfilled. He specifies one, that of *the prophet Joel*, ~~428~~ Acts 2:28. It is observable that though Peter *was filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke with tongues as the Spirit gave him utterance*, yet he did not set aside the scriptures, nor think himself above them; nay, much of his discourse is quotation out of the Old Testament, to which he appeals, and with which he proves what he says. Christ's scholars never learn above their Bible; and the Spirit is given not to supersede the scriptures, but to enable us to understand and improve the scriptures. Observe,

(1.) The text itself that Peter quotes, v. 17-21. It refers to *the last days*, the times of the gospel, which are called *the last days* because the dispensation of God's kingdom among men, which the gospel sets up, is the last dispensation of divine grace, and we are to look for no other than the continuation of this to the end of time. Or, *in the last days*, that is, a great while after the ceasing of prophecy in the Old-Testament church. Or, in the days immediately preceding the destruction of the Jewish nation, in the last days of that people, just before *that great and notable day of the Lord* spoken of, v. 20. “It was prophesied of and promised, and therefore you ought to expect it, and not to be surprised at it; to desire it, and bid it welcome, and not to dispute it, as not worth taking notice of.” The apostle quotes the whole paragraph, for it is good to take scripture entire; now it was foretold,

[1.] That there should be a more plentiful and extensive effusion of the Spirit of grace from on high than had ever yet been. The prophets of the Old Testament had been *filled with the Holy Ghost*, and it was said of the people of Israel *that God gave them his good Spirit to instruct them*,

^{<400>}Nehemiah 9:20. But now *the Spirit shall be poured out*, not only upon the Jews, but *upon all flesh*, Gentiles as well as Jews, though yet Peter himself did not understand it so, as appears, ^{<40117>}Acts 11:17. Or, *upon all flesh*, that is, upon some of all ranks and conditions of men. The Jewish doctors taught that the Spirit came only upon wise and rich men, and such as were of the seed of Israel; but God will not tie himself to their rules.

[2.] That the Spirit should be in them a Spirit of prophecy; by the Spirit they should be enabled to foretel things to come, and to *preach the gospel to every creature*. This power shall be given without distinction of sex — now only *your sons*, but *your daughters shall prophesy*; without distinction of age — both *your young men and your old men shall see visions, and dream dreams*, and in them receive divine revelations, to be communicated to the church; and without distinction of outward condition — even the *servants and handmaids* shall receive of *the Spirit, and shall prophesy* (v. 18); or, in general, men and women, whom God calls his servants and his handmaids. In the beginning of the age of prophecy in the Old Testament there were *schools of the prophets*, and, before that, *the Spirit of prophecy* came upon *the elders of Israel* that were appointed to the government; but now the Spirit shall be poured out upon persons of inferior rank, and such as were not brought up in the schools of the prophets, for the kingdom of the Messiah is to be purely spiritual. The mention of *the daughters* (v. 17) and *the handmaidens* (v. 18) would make one think that *the women* who were taken notice of (^{<40114>}Acts 1:14) received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, as well as the men. Philip, the evangelist, had *four daughters who did prophesy* (^{<4019>}Acts 21:9), and St. Paul, finding abundance of the gifts both of tongues and prophecy in the church of Corinth, saw it needful to prohibit women's use of those gifts in public, ^{<4016>}1 Corinthians 14:26, 34.

[3.] That one great thing which they should prophesy of should be the judgment that was coming upon the Jewish nation, for this was the chief thing that Christ himself had foretold (Matthew 24) at his entrance into Jerusalem (^{<0141>}Luke 19:41); and when he was going to die (^{<029>}Luke 23:29); and these judgments were to be brought upon them to punish for their contempt of the gospel, and their opposition to it, though it came to them thus proved. Those that would not submit to the power of God's grace, in this wonderful effusion of his Spirit, should fall and lie under the pourings out of the vials of his wrath. Those shall break that will not bend. *First*, The destruction of Jerusalem, which was about forty years after

Christ's death, is here called *that great and notable day of the Lord*, because it put a final period to the Mosaic economy; the Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law were thereby for ever abolished and done away. The desolation itself was such as was never brought upon any place or nation, either before or since. It was *the day of the Lord*, for it was the day of his vengeance upon that people for crucifying Christ, and persecuting his ministers; it was *the year of recompences for that controversy*; yea, and for all the blood of the saints and martyrs, *from the blood of righteous Abel*, ⁴²³⁵Matthew 23:35. It was a little day of judgment; it was a *notable day*: in Joel it is called a *terrible day*, for so it was to men on earth; but here *epiphane* (after the Septuagint), *a glorious, illustrious day*, for so it was to Christ in heaven; it was the epiphany, his appearing, so he himself spoke of it, ⁴²⁴⁰Matthew 24:30. The destruction of the Jews was the deliverance of the Christians, who were hated and persecuted by them; and therefore that day was often spoken of by the prophets of that time, for the encouragement of suffering Christians, *that the Lord was at hand, the coming of the Lord drew nigh, the Judge stood before the door*, ⁴²⁴⁵James 5:8, 9. *Secondly*, The terrible presages of that destruction are here foretold: *There shall be wonders in heaven above, the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood; and signs too in the earth beneath, blood and fire*. Josephus, in his preface to his history of the wars of the Jews, speaks of the signs and prodigies that preceded them, terrible thunders, lightnings, and earthquakes; there was a fiery comet that hung over the city for a year, and a flaming sword was seen pointing down upon it; a light shone upon the temple and the altar at midnight, as if it had been noon-day. Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of these presages: *The blood of the Son of God, the fire of the Holy Ghost now appearing, the vapour of the smoke in which Christ ascended, the sun darkened, and the moon made blood*, at the time of Christ's passion, were all loud warnings given to that unbelieving people to prepare for the judgments coming upon them. Or, it may be applied, and very fitly, to the previous judgments themselves by which that desolation was brought on. *The blood* points at the wars of the Jews with the neighbouring nations, with the Samaritans, Syrians, and Greeks, in which abundance of blood was shed, as there was also in their civil wars, and the struggles of the *seditions* (as they called them), which were very bloody; there was no peace to him that went out nor to him that came in. *The fire and vapour of smoke*, here foretold, literally came to pass in the burning of their cities, and towns, and synagogues, and temple at last. And this turning of *the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood*,

bespeaks the dissolution of their government, civil and sacred, and the extinguishing of all their lights. *Thirdly*, The signal preservation of the Lord's people is here promised (v. 21): *Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord Jesus* (which is the description of a true Christian, ^{ACT}1 Corinthians 1:2) *shall be saved*, shall escape that judgment which shall be a type and earnest of everlasting salvation. In the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, there was a remnant sealed to be hid in *the day of the Lord's anger*; and in the destruction by the Romans not one Christian perished. Those that distinguish themselves by singular piety shall be distinguished by special preservation. And observe, the saved remnant are described by this, that they are a praying people: *they call on the name of the Lord*, which intimates that they are not saved by any merit or righteousness of their own, but purely by the favour of God, which must be sued out by prayer. It is *the name of the Lord* which *they call upon* that is *their strong tower*.

(2.) The application of this prophecy to the present event (v. 16): *This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*; it is the accomplishment of that, it is the full accomplishment of it. This is that effusion of the Spirit upon all flesh which should come, and we are to look for no other, no more than we are to look for another Messiah; for as our Messiah ever lives in heaven, reigning and interceding for his church on earth, so this Spirit of grace, the Advocate, or Comforter, that was given now, according to the promise, will, according to the same promise, continue with the church on earth to the end, and will work all its works in it and for it, and every member of it, ordinary and extraordinary, by means of the scriptures and the ministry.

2. That it was the gift of Christ, and the product and proof of his resurrection and ascension. From this *gift of the Holy Ghost*, he takes occasion to preach unto them Jesus; and this part of his sermon he introduces with another solemn preface (v. 22): "*You men of Israel, hear these words*. It is a mercy that you are within hearing of them, and it is your duty to give heed to them." Words concerning Christ should be acceptable words to the men of Israel. Here is,

(1.) An abstract of the history of the life of Christ, v. 22. He calls him *Jesus of Nazareth*, because by that name he was generally known, but (which was sufficient to roll away that reproach) he was *a man approved of God among you*, censured and condemned by men, but approved of

God: God testified his approbation of his doctrine by the power he gave him to work miracles: *a man marked out by God*, so Dr. Hammond reads it; “signalized and made remarkable among you that now hear me. He was sent to you, set up, a glorious light in your land; you yourselves are witnesses how he became famous by *miracles, wonders, and signs*, works above the power of nature, out of its ordinary course, and contrary to it, *which God did by him*; that is, which he did by that divine power with which he was clothed, and in which God plainly went along with him; *for no man could do such works unless God were with him*.” See what a stress Peter lays upon Christ's miracles.

[1.] The matter of fact was not to be denied: “They were done *in the midst of you*, in the midst of your country, your city, your solemn assemblies, *as you yourselves also know*. You have been eyewitnesses of his miracles; I appeal to yourselves whether you have any thing to object against them or can offer any thing to disprove them.”

[2.] The inference from them cannot be disputed; the reasoning is as strong as the evidence; if he did those miracles, certainly God approved him, *declared him to be*, what he declared himself to be, *the Son of God and the Saviour of the world*; for the God of truth would never set his seal to a lie.

(2.) An account of his death and sufferings which they were witness of also but a few weeks ago; and this was the greatest miracle of all, that a man approved of God should thus seem to be abandoned of him; and a man thus approved among the people, and in the midst of them, should be thus abandoned by them too. But both these mysteries are here explained (v. 23), and his death considered,

[1.] As God's act; and in him it was an act of wonderful grace and wisdom. *He delivered him to death*; not only permitted him to be put to death, but gave him up, devoted him: this is explained ~~ROM~~ Romans 8:32, *He delivered him up for us all*. And yet he was approved of God, and there was nothing in this that signified the disapproving of him; for it was done by *the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, in infinite wisdom, and for holy ends, which Christ himself concurred in, and in the means leading to them. Thus divine justice must be satisfied, sinners saved, God and man brought together again, and Christ himself glorified. It was not only according to the will of God, but according *to the counsel of his will*, that he suffered and died; according to an eternal counsel, which could not be

altered. This reconciled him to the cross: *Father, thy will be done; and Father, glorify thy name; let thy purpose take effect, and let the great end of it be attained.*

[2.] As the people's act; and in them it was an act of prodigious sin and folly; it was fighting against God to persecute one whom he approved as the darling of heaven; and fighting against their own mercies to persecute one that was the greatest blessing of this earth. Neither God's designing it from eternity, nor his bringing good out of it to eternity, would in the least excuse their sin; for it was their voluntary act and deed, from a principle morally evil, and therefore "they were *wicked hands with which you have crucified and slain him.*" It is probable that some of those were here present who had cried, *Crucify him, crucify him,* or had been otherwise aiding and abetting in the murder; and Peter knew it. However, it was justly looked upon as a national act, because done both by the vote of the great council and by the voice of the great crowd. It is a rule, *Refertur ad universos quod publice fit per majorem partem* — *That which is done publicly by the greater part we attribute to all.* He charges it particularly on them as parts of the nation on which it would be visited, the more effectually to bring them to faith and repentance, because that was the only way to distinguish themselves from the guilty and discharge themselves from the guilt.

(3.) An attestation of his resurrection, which effectually wiped away the reproach of his death (v. 24): *Whom God raised up; the same that delivered him to death delivers him from death,* and thereby gave a higher approbation of him than he had done by any other of *the signs and wonders wrought by him,* or by all put together. This therefore he insists most largely upon.

[1.] He describes his resurrection: *God loosed the pains of death, because it was impossible that he should be holden of it; odinas* — *the sorrows of death; the word is used for travailing pains, and some think it signifies the trouble and agony of his soul, in which it was exceedingly sorrowful, even to the death; from these pains and sorrows of soul, this travail of soul, the Father loosed him* when at his death he said, *It is finished.* Thus Dr. Godwin understands it: "Those terrors which made Heman's soul lie like *the slain* (¹⁸⁸⁵Psalm 88:5, 15) had hold of Christ; but he was too strong for them, and broke through them; this was *the resurrection of his soul* (and it is a great thing to bring a soul *out of the depths* of spiritual agonies); this

was not leaving his soul in hell; as that which follows, *that he should not see corruption*, speaks of the resurrection of his body; and both together make up the great resurrection.” Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of this: “Having *dissolved the pains of death*, in reference to all that believe in him, God raised up Christ, and by his resurrection *broke all the power of death*, and destroyed its pangs upon his own people. He *has abolished death*, has altered the property of it, and, because *it was not possible that he should be long holden of it*, *it is not possible that they should be for ever holden.*” But most refer this to the resurrection of Christ's body. And death (says Mr. Baxter) is by privation a penal state, though not dolorous by positive evil. But Dr. Hammond shows that the Septuagint, and from them the apostle here, uses the word for *corde* and *bands* (as ~~390B~~ Psalm 18:4), to which the metaphor of loosing and being held best agrees. Christ was imprisoned for our debt, was thrown into the bands of death; but, divine justice being satisfied, it was not possible he should be detained there, either by right or by force; for he had life in himself, and in his own power, and had conquered the prince of death.

[2.] He attests the truth of his resurrection (v. 32): *God hath raised him up, whereof we all are witnesses* — we apostles, and others our companions, that were intimately acquainted with him before his death, were intimately conversant with him after his resurrection, *did eat and drink with him*. They *received power, by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them*, on purpose that they might be skilful, faithful, and courageous witnesses of this thing, notwithstanding their being charged by his enemies as having stolen him away.

[3.] He showed it to be the fulfilling of the scripture, and, because the scripture had said that he must rise again before he saw corruption, therefore *it was impossible that he should be holden by death and the grave; for David speaks of his being raised*, so it comes in, v. 25. The scripture he refers to is that of David (~~390B~~ Psalm 16:8-11), which, though in part applicable to David as a saint, yet refers chiefly to Jesus Christ, of whom David was a type. Here is,

First, The text quoted at large (v. 25-28), for it was all fulfilled in him, and shows us,

1. The constant regard that our Lord Jesus had to his Father in his whole undertaking: *I foresaw the Lord before me continually*. He set before him his Father's glory as his end in all — *for he saw that his sufferings would*

redound abundantly to the honour of God, and would issue in his own joy; these were *set before him*, and these he had an eye to, in all he did and suffered; and with the prospect of these he was borne up and carried on, ^{}John 13:31, 32; 17:4, 5.

2. The assurance he had of his Father's presence and power going along with him: "*He is on my right hand*, the hand of action, strengthening, guiding, and upholding that, *that I should not be moved*, nor driven off from my undertaking, notwithstanding the hardships I must undergo." This was an article of the covenant of redemption (^{}Psalm 89:21), *With him my hand shall be established, my arm also shall strengthen him*; and therefore he is confident the work shall not miscarry in his hand. If God be at our right hand we shall not be moved.

3. The cheerfulness with which our Lord Jesus went on in his work, notwithstanding the sorrows he was to pass through: "Being satisfied *that I shall not be moved*, but the good pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in my hand, therefore *doth my heart rejoice, and my tongue is glad*, and the thought of my sorrow is as nothing to me." Note, It was a constant pleasure to our Lord Jesus to look *to the end of his work*, and to be sure that the issue would be glorious; so well pleased is he with his undertaking that it does his heart good to think how the issue would answer the design. *He rejoiced in spirit*, ^{}Luke 10:21. *My tongue was glad*. In the psalm it is, *My glory rejoiceth*; which intimates that our tongue is our glory, the faculty of speaking is an honour to us, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God. Christ's *tongue was glad*, for when he was just entering upon his sufferings, in the close of his last supper, he *sang a hymn*.

4. The pleasing prospect he had of the happy issue of his death and sufferings; it was this that carried him, not only with courage, but with cheerfulness, through them; he was putting off the body, but *my flesh shall rest*; the grave shall be to the body, while it lies there, a bed of repose, and hope shall give it a sweet repose; *it shall rest in hope, hoti, that thou wilt no leave my soul in hell*; what follows is the matter of his hope, or assurance rather,

(1.) That the soul shall not continue in a state of separation from the body; for, besides that this is some uneasiness to a human soul made for its body, it would be the continuance of death's triumph over him who was in truth a conqueror over death: "*Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*" (in

hades, in the invisible state, so hades properly signifies); “but, though thou suffer it for a time to remove thither, and to remain there, yet thou wilt remand it; thou wilt not leave it there, as thou dost the souls of other men.”

(2.) That the body shall lie but a little while in the grave: *Thou wilt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption;* the body shall not continue dead so long as to begin to putrefy or become noisome; and therefore it must return to life on or before the third day after its death. Christ was God's *Holy One*, sanctified and set apart to his service in the work of redemption; he must die, for he must be *consecrated by his own blood*; but he must *not see corruption*, for his death was to be unto God *of a sweet smelling savour*. This was typified by the law concerning the sacrifice, *that no part of the flesh of the sacrifice which was to be eaten should be kept till the third day*, for fear it should see corruption and begin to putrefy, ^{<0075>}Leviticus 7:15-18.

(3.) That his death and sufferings should be, not to him only, but to all his, an inlet to a blessed immortality: *“Thou has made known to me the ways of life, and by me made them known to the world, and laid them open.”* When the Father gave to the Son to have life in himself, a power to lay down his life and to take it again, then he showed him *the way of life*, both to and fro; *the gates of death were open to him and the doors of the shadow of death* (^{<0087>}Job 38:17), to pass and repass through them, as his occasion led him, for man's redemption.

(4.) That all his sorrows and sufferings should end in perfect and perpetual felicity: *Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance*. The reward set before him was *joy, a fulness of joy*, and that in God's *countenance*, in the countenance he gave to his undertaking, and to all those, for his sake, that should believe in him. The smiles with which the Father received him, when, at his ascension, he was *brought to the Ancient of days*, filled him with *joy unspeakable*, and that is *the joy of our Lord*, into which all his shall enter, and in which they shall be for ever happy.

Secondly, The comment upon this text, especially so much of it as relates to the resurrection of Christ. He addresses himself to them with a title of respect, *Men and brethren*, v. 29. “You are men, and therefore should be ruled by reason; you are brethren, and therefore should take kindly what is said to you by one who, being nearly related to you, is heartily concerned for you, and wishes you well. Now, give me leave *freely to speak to you concerning the patriarch David*, and let it be no offence to you if I tell you

that David cannot be understood here as speaking of himself, but of the Christ to come.” David is here called a patriarch, because he was the father of the royal family, and a man of great note and eminency in his generation, and whose name and memory were justly very precious. Now when we read that psalm of his, we must consider,

1. That he could not say *that of himself*, for he died, and was buried, and his sepulchre remained in Jerusalem till now, when Peter spoke this, and his bones and ashes in it. Nobody ever pretended that he had risen, and therefore he could never say of himself that he *should not see corruption*; for it was plain he did see corruption. St. Paul urges this, ^{<443>}Acts 13:35-37. Though he was a man after God's own heart, yet he went the way of all the earth, as he saith himself (^{<412>}1 Kings 2:2), both in death and burial.
2. Therefore certainly he spoke *it as a prophet*, with an eye to the Messiah, whose sufferings the prophets testified beforehand, and with them *the glory that should follow*; so did David in that psalm, as Peter here plainly shows.

(1.) David knew that the Messiah should descend from his loins (v. 30), that God had sworn to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. He promised him a Son, the throne of whose kingdom should be established for ever, ^{<102>}Samuel 7:12. And it is said (^{<421>}Psalms 132:11), God swore it in truth unto David. When our Lord Jesus was born, it was promised that the Lord God would give him the throne of his father David, ^{<413>}Luke 1:32. And all Israel knew that the Messiah was to be the Son of David, that is, that, according to the flesh, he should be so by his human nature; for otherwise, according to the spirit, and by his divine nature, he was to be David's Lord, not his son. God having sworn to David that the Messiah, promised to his fathers, should be his son and successor, the fruit of his loins, and heir to his throne, he kept this in view, in penning his psalms.

(2.) Christ being *the fruit of his loins*, and consequently in his loins when he penned that psalm (as Levi is said to be in Abraham's loins when he paid tithes to Melchizedek), if what he says, as in his own person, be not applicable to himself (as it is plain that it is not), we must conclude it points to that son of his that was then in his loins, in whom his family and kingdom were to have their perfection and perpetuity; and therefore, when he says that *his soul should not be left in its separate state, nor his flesh see corruption*, without doubt he must be understood to speak of the

resurrection of Christ, v. 31. And as *Christ died, so he rose again, according to the scriptures; and that he did so we are witnesses.*

(3.) Here is a glance at his ascension too. As David did not rise from the dead, so neither did he *ascend into the heavens*, bodily, as Christ did, v. 34. And further, to prove that when he spoke of the resurrection he meant it of Christ, he observes that when in another psalm he speaks of the next step of his exaltation he plainly shows that he spoke of another person, and such another as was his Lord (~~1801~~ Psalm 110:1): “*The Lord said unto my Lord, when he had raised him from the dead, Sit thou at my right hand, in the highest dignity and dominion there; be thou entrusted with the administration of the kingdom both of providence and grace; sit there as king, until I make thy foes either thy friends or thy footstool,*” v. 35. Christ rose from the grave to rise higher, and therefore it must be of his resurrection that David spoke, and not his own, in the 16th Psalm; for there was no occasion for him to rise out of his grave who was not to ascend to heaven.

(4.) The application of this discourse concerning the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

[1.] This explains the meaning of the present wonderful effusion of the Spirit in those extraordinary gifts. Some of the people had asked (v. 12), *What meaneth this?* I will tell you the meaning of it, says Peter. *This Jesus being exalted to the right hand of God*, so some read it, to sit there; *exalted by the right hand of God*, so we read it, by his power and authority — it comes all to one; and *having received of the Father*, to whom he has ascended, *the promise of the Holy Ghost*, he hath given what he received (~~1688~~ Psalm 68:18), and *hath shed forth this which you now see and hear*; for the Holy Ghost was to be given when Jesus was glorified, and not before, (~~1719~~ John 7:39). You see and hear us speak with tongues that we never learned; probably there was an observable change in the air of their countenances, which they saw, as well as heard the change of their voice and language; now this is from the Holy Ghost, whose coming is an evidence that Jesus is exalted, and he has *received this gift from the Father*, to confer it upon the church, which plainly bespeaks him to be the Mediator, or middle person between God and the church. *The gift of the Holy Ghost* was, *First*, A performance of divine promises already made; here it is called *the promise of the Holy Ghost*; many *exceedingly great and precious promises* the divine power has given us, but this is *the*

promise, by way of eminency, as that of the Messiah had been, and this is the promise that includes all the rest; hence God's giving *the Holy Spirit to those that ask him* (^{<4113>}Luke 11:13) is his giving them all *good things*, ^{<4171>}Matthew 7:11. Christ received *the promise of the Holy Ghost*, that is, the promised gift of the Holy Ghost, and has given it to us; for all *the promises are yea and amen in him*. *Secondly*, It was a pledge of all divine favours further intended; what you now see and hear is but an earnest of greater things.

[2.] This proves what you are all bound to believe, that Christ Jesus is the true Messiah and Saviour of the world; this he closes his sermon with, as *the conclusion of the whole matter, the quod erat demonstrandum* — *the truth to be demonstrated* (v. 36): *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that this truth has now received its full confirmation, and we our full commission to publish it, That God has made that same Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Christ*. They were charged to *tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ* till after his resurrection (^{<4160>}Matthew 16:20; 17:9); but now it must be *proclaimed on the housetops, to all the house of Israel; he that hath ears to hear, let him hear it*. It is not proposed as probable, but deposed as certain: *Let them know it assuredly*, and know that it is their duty to receive it as *a faithful saying*, *First*, That God has glorified him *whom they have crucified*. This aggravates their wickedness, that they crucified one whom God designed to glorify, and put him to death as a deceiver who had given such pregnant proofs of his divine mission; and it magnifies the wisdom and power of God that though they crucified him, and thought thereby to have put him under an indelible mark of infamy, yet God had glorified him, and the indignities they had done him served as a foil to his lustre. *Secondly*, That he has glorified him to such a degree as to make him *both Lord and Christ*: these signify the same; he is *Lord of all*, and he is not a usurper, but is *Christ, anointed to be so*. He is *one Lord to the Gentiles*, who had had lords many; and *to the Jews he is Messiah*, which includes all his offices. He is *the king Messiah*, as the Chaldee paraphrast calls him; or, as the angel to Daniel, *Messiah the prince*, ^{<4125>}Daniel 9:25. This is the great truth of the gospel which we are to believe, *that that same Jesus, the very same that was crucified at Jerusalem, is he to whom we owe allegiance, and from whom we are to expect protection, as Lord and Christ*.

ACTS 2:37-41

PETER'S SERMON AT JERUSALEM

We have seen the wonderful effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, in its influence upon the preachers of the gospel. Peter, in all his life, never spoke at the rate that he had done now, with such fulness, perspicuity, and power. We are now to see another blessed fruit of the pouring out of the Spirit in its influence upon the hearers of the gospel. From the first delivery of that divine message, it appeared that there was a divine power going along with it, and *it was mighty, through God*, to do wonders: thousands were immediately brought by it to the *obedience of faith*; it was *the rod of God's strength sent out of Zion*, ¹³⁹Psalm 110:2, 3. We have here the first-fruits of that vast harvest of souls which by it were gathered in to Jesus Christ. Come and see, in these verses, the exalted Redeemer riding forth, in these chariots of salvation, *conquering and to conquer*, ¹⁴⁰Revelation 6:2.

In these verses we find the word of God the means of beginning and carrying on a good work of grace in the hearts of many, *the Spirit of the Lord working by it*. Let us see the method of it.

I. They were startled, and convinced, and put upon a serious enquiry, v. 37. *When they heard*, or *having heard*, having patiently heard Peter out, and not given him the interruption they had been used to give to Christ in his discourses (this was one good point gained, that they were become attentive to the word), *they were pricked to the heart*, or *in the heart*, and, under a deep concern and perplexity, applied themselves to the preachers with this question, *What shall we do?* It was very strange that such impressions should be made upon such hard hearts all of a sudden. They were Jews, bred up in the opinion of the sufficiency of their religion to save them, had lately seen this Jesus crucified in weakness and disgrace, and were told by their rulers that he was a deceiver. Peter had charged them with having a hand, a *wicked hand*, in his death, which was likely to have exasperated them against him; yet, when they heard this plain scriptural sermon, they were much affected with it.

1. It put them in pain: *They were pricked in their hearts*. We read of those that were *cut to the heart* with indignation at the preacher (¹⁴¹Acts 7:54),

but these were *pricked to the heart* with indignation at themselves for having been accessory to the death of Christ. Peter, charging it upon them, awakened their consciences, touched them to the quick, and the reflection they now made upon it was as *a sword in their bones*, it pierced them as they had pierced Christ. Note, Sinners, when their eyes are opened, cannot but be *pricked to the heart* for sin, cannot but experience an inward uneasiness; this is having the *heart rent* (²⁰¹³ Joel 2:13), *a broken and contrite heart*, ⁴⁵¹⁷ Psalm 51:17. Those that are truly sorry for their sins, and ashamed of them, and afraid of the consequences of them, are *pricked to the heart*. A prick in the heart is mortal, and under those commotions (says Paul) I died, ⁴⁶⁷⁹ Romans 7:9. “All my good opinion of myself and confidence in myself failed me.”

2. It put them upon enquiry. *Our of the abundance of the heart*, thus pricked, *the mouth spoke*. Observe,

(1.) To whom they thus addressed themselves: *To Peter and to the rest of the apostles*, some to one and some to another; to them they opened their case; by them they had been convinced, and therefore by them they expect to be counselled and comforted. They do not appeal from them to the scribes and Pharisees, to justify them against the apostles' charge, but apply to them, as owning the charge, and referring the case to them. They call them *men* and *brethren*, as Peter had called them (v. 29): it is a style of friendship and love, rather than a title of honour: “You are men, look upon us with humanity; you are brethren, look upon us with brotherly love.” Note, Ministers are spiritual physicians; they should be advised with by those whose consciences are wounded; and it is good for people to be free and familiar with those ministers, as men and their brethren, who deal for their souls as for their own.

(2.) What the address is: *What shall we do?*

[1.] They speak as men at a stand, that did not know what to do; in a perfect surprise: “*Is that Jesus* whom we have crucified both *Lord and Christ?* Then what will become of us who crucified him? We are all undone!” Note, No way of being happy but by seeing ourselves miserable. When we find ourselves in danger of being lost for ever, there is hope of our being made for ever, and not till then.

[2.] They speak as men at a point, that were resolved to do any thing they should be directed to immediately; they are not for taking time to consider,

nor for adjourning the prosecution of their convictions to a more convenient season, but desire now to be told what they must do to escape the misery they were liable to. Note, Those that are convinced of sin would gladly know the way to peace and pardon, ^{<406>}Acts 9:6; 16:30.

II. Peter and the other apostles direct them in short what they must do, and what in so doing they might expect, v. 38, 39. Sinners convinced must be encouraged; and that which is broken must be bound up (^{<2546>}Ezekiel 34:16); they must be told that though their case is sad it is not desperate, there is hope for them.

1. He here shows them the course they must take.

(1.) *Repent*; this is a plank after shipwreck. “Let the sense of this horrid guilt which you have brought upon yourselves by putting Christ to death awaken you to a penitent reflection upon all your other sins (as the demand of some one great debt brings to light all the debts of a poor bankrupt) and to bitter remorse and sorrow for them” This was the same duty that John the Baptist and Christ had preached, and now that the Spirit is poured out is it still insisted on: “*Repent, repent*; change your mind, change your way; admit an after-thought.”

(2.) *Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ*; that is, “firmly believe the doctrine of Christ, and submit to his grace and government; and make an open solemn profession of this, and come under an engagement to abide by it, by submitting to the ordinance of baptism; be proselyted to Christ and to his holy religion, and renounce your infidelity.” They must be baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ*. They did believe in the Father and the Holy Ghost speaking by the prophets; but they must also believe in the name of Jesus, that he is the Christ, the Messiah promised to the fathers. “Take Jesus for your king, and by baptism swear allegiance to him; take him for your prophet, and hear him; take him for your priest, to make atonement for you,” which seems peculiarly intended here; for they must be baptized *in his name* for the *remission of sins* upon the score of his righteousness.

(3.) This is pressed upon each particular person: *Every one of you*. “Even those of you that have been the greatest sinners, if they repent and believe, are welcome to be baptized; and those who think they have been the greatest saints have yet need to repent, and believe, and be baptized. There is grace enough in Christ for every one of you, be you ever so many, and

grace suited to the case of every one. Israel of old were baptized unto Moses in the camp, the whole body of the Israelites together, when they passed *through the cloud and the sea* (⁴⁰¹1 Corinthians 10:1, 2), for the covenant of peculiarity was national; but now *every one of you* distinctly must be *baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*, and transact for himself in this great affair." See ⁵⁰⁸Colossians 1:28.

2. He gives them encouragement to take this course: —

(1.) "It shall be for *the remission of sins*. Repent of your sin, and it shall not be your ruin; be baptized into the faith of Christ, and in truth you shall be justified, which you could never be by the law of Moses. Aim at this, and depend upon Christ for it, and this you shall have. As the cup in the Lord's supper is the New Testament in the blood of Christ for the remission of sins, so baptism is in the name of Christ for the remission of sins. Be washed, and you shall be washed."

(2.) "You shall *receive the gift of the Holy Ghost* as well as we; for it is designed for a general blessing: some of you shall receive these external gifts, and each of you, if you be sincere in your faith and repentance, shall receive his internal graces and comforts, shall be *sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*." Note, All that receive the remission of sins *receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*. All that are justified are sanctified.

(3.) "Your children shall still have, as they have had, an interest in the covenant, and a title to the external seal of it. Come over to Christ, to receive those inestimable benefits; for the promise of the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, is *to you and to your children*," v. 39. It was very express (^{234B}Isaiah 44:3): *I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed*. And (^{235B}Isaiah 59:21), *My Spirit and my word shall not depart from thy seed, and thy seed's seed*. When God took Abraham into covenant, he said, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed* (^{417E}Genesis 17:7); and, accordingly, every Israelite had his son circumcised at eight days old. Now it is proper for an Israelite, when he is by baptism to come into a new dispensation of this covenant, to ask, "What must be done with my children? Must they be thrown out, or taken in with me?" "Taken in" (says Peter) "by all means; for the promise, that great promise of God's being to you a God, is as much to you and to your children now as ever it was."

(4.) "Though the promise is still extended to your children as it has been, yet it is not, as it has been, confined to you and them, but the benefit of it

is *designed for all that are afar off;*” we may add, *and their children*, for the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ, ^{<834}Galatians 3:14. The promise had long pertained to the Israelites (^{<804}Romans 9:4); but now it is sent to *those that are afar off*, the remotest nations of the Gentiles, and *every one* of them too, *all that are afar off*. To this general the following limitation must refer, *even as many of them*, as many particular persons in each nation, *as the Lord our God shall call* effectually into the fellowship of Jesus Christ. Note, God can make his call to reach those that are ever so far off, and none come but those whom he calls.

III. These directions are followed with a needful caution (v. 40): *With many other words*, to the same purport, *did he testify* gospel truths, and exhort to gospel duties; now that the word began to work he followed it; he had said much in a little (v. 38, 39), and that which, one would think, included all, and yet he had more to say. When we have heard those words which have done our souls good, we cannot but wish to hear more, to hear many more such words. Among other things he said (and it should seem inculcated it), *Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Be you free from them*. The unbelieving Jews were an untoward generation, perverse and obstinate; they walked contrary to God and man (^{<805}1 Thessalonians 2:15), wedded to sin and marked for ruin. Now as to them,

1. “Give diligence to save yourselves from their ruin, that you may not be involved in that, and may *escape all those things*” (as the Christians did): *“Repent, and be baptized; and then you shall not be sharers in destruction with those with whom you have been sharers in sin.” O gather not my soul with sinners.*

2. “In order to this continue not with them in their sin, persist not with them in infidelity. *Save yourselves*, that is, separate yourselves, distinguish yourselves, from this *untoward generation. Be not rebellious like this rebellious house*; partake not with them in their sins, that you share not with them in their plagues.” Note, To separate ourselves from wicked people is the only way to save ourselves from them; though we hereby expose ourselves to their rage and enmity, we really save ourselves from them; for, if we consider whither they are hastening, we shall see it is better to have the trouble of swimming against their stream than the danger of being carried down their stream. Those that repent of their sins, and give up themselves to Jesus Christ, must evidence their sincerity by

breaking off all intimate society with wicked people. *Depart from me, ye evil doers*, is the language of one that determines to keep *the commandments of his God*, ^{<BB15>}Psalm 119:115. We must *save ourselves* from them, which denotes avoiding them with dread and holy fear, as we would save ourselves from an enemy that seeks to destroy us, or from a house infected with the plague.

IV. Here is the happy success and issue of this, v. 41. The Spirit wrought with the word, and wrought wonders by it. These same persons that had many of them been eye-witnesses of the death of Christ, and the prodigies that attended it, and were not wrought upon by them, were yet wrought upon by the preaching of the word, for it is this that is the *power of God unto salvation*.

- 1.** They received the word; and *then* only the word does us good, when we do receive it, embrace it, and bid it welcome. They admitted the conviction of it, and accepted the offers of it.
- 2.** They gladly received it. Herod *heard* the word gladly, but these gladly *received* it, were not only glad that they had it to receive, but glad that by the grace of God they were enabled to receive it, though it would be a humbling changing word to them, and would expose them to the enmity of their countrymen.
- 3.** They were baptized; believing with the heart, they made confession with the mouth, and enrolled themselves among the disciples of Christ by that sacred rite and ceremony which he had instituted. And though Peter had said, “Be baptized in the name of *the Lord Jesus*” (because the doctrine of Christ was the present truth), yet we have reason to think that, in baptizing them, the whole form Christ prescribed was used, *in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*. Note, Those that receive the Christian covenant ought to receive the Christian baptism.
- 4.** Hereby there were added to the disciples to the number of about *three thousand souls that same day*. All those that had received the Holy Ghost had their tongues at work to preach, and their hands at work to baptize; for it was time to be busy, when such a harvest was to be gathered in. The conversion of these three thousand with these words was a *greater work* than the feeding of four or five thousand with a few loaves. Now Israel began to multiply after the death of our Joseph. They are said to be *three thousand souls* (which word is generally used for persons when women

and children are included with men, as ^{<112>}Genesis 14:21, *margin, Give me the souls*; ^{<145>}Genesis 46:27, *seventy souls*), which intimates that those that were here baptized were not so many men, but so many heads of families as, with their children and servants baptized, might make up *three thousand souls*. These were *added to them*. Note, Those who are joined to Christ are added to the disciples of Christ, and join with them. When we take God for our God, we must take his people to be our people.

^{<412>}ACTS 2:42-47

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE DISCIPLES

We often speak of the primitive church, and appeal to it, and to the history of it; in these verses we have the history of the *truly primitive church*, of the *first days* of it, its state of infancy indeed, but, like that, the state of its greatest *innocence*.

- I.** They kept close to holy ordinances, and abounded in all instances of piety and devotion, for Christianity, admitted in the power of it, will dispose the soul to communion with God in all those ways wherein he has appointed us to meet him and promised to meet us.
- 1.** They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the *preaching of the word*. They *continued in the apostles' doctrine*, and never disowned nor deserted it; or, as it may be read, *they continued constant to the apostles' teaching or instruction*; by *baptism* they were disciplined to be taught, and they were willing to be taught. Note, Those who have given up their names to Christ must make conscience of hearing his word; for thereby we give honour to him, and build up ourselves in our most holy faith.
- 2.** They kept up the *communion of saints*. They *continued in fellowship* (v. 42), and *continued daily with one accord in the temple*, v. 46. They not only had a mutual affection to each other, but a great deal of mutual conversation with each other; they were much together. When they withdrew from *the untoward generation*, they did not turn hermits, but were very intimate with one another, and took all occasions to meet; wherever you saw one disciple, you would see more, like *birds of a feather*. See how these Christians love one another. They were concerned

for one another, sympathized with one another, and heartily espoused one another's interests. They had fellowship with one another in religious worship. They met *in the temple*: there was their rendezvous; for joint-fellowship with God is the best fellowship we can have with one another, ~~608~~ 1 John 1:3. Observe,

(1.) They were daily in the temple, not only on the days of the sabbaths and solemn feasts, but on other days, every day. Worshipping God is to be our daily work, and, where there is opportunity, the oftener it is done publicly the better. God loves the gates of Zion, and so must we.

(2.) They were *with one accord*; not only no discord nor strife, but a great deal of holy love among them; and they heartily joined in their public services. Though they met with the Jews in the courts of the temple, yet the Christians kept together by themselves, and were unanimous in their separate devotions.

3. They frequently joined in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. They continued *in the breaking of bread*, in celebrating that memorial of their Master's death, as those that were not ashamed to own their relation to, and their dependence upon, Christ and him crucified. They could not forget the death of Christ, yet they kept up this memorial of it, and made it their constant practice, because it was an institution of Christ, to be transmitted to the succeeding ages of the church. They broke bread *from house to house*; *kat' oikon* — *house by house*; they did not think fit to celebrate the eucharist in the temple, for that was peculiar to the Christian institutes, and therefore they administered that ordinance in private houses, choosing such houses of the converted Christians as were convenient, to which the neighbours resorted; and they went from one to another of these little synagogues or domestic chapels, houses that had churches in them, and there celebrated the eucharist with those that usually met there to worship God.

4. They continued *in prayers*. After the Spirit was poured out, as well as before, while they were waiting for him, they continued instant in prayer; for prayer will never be superseded till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting praise. *Breaking of bread* comes in between the *work* and *prayer*, for it has reference to both, and is a help to both. The Lord's supper is a sermon to the eye, and a confirmation of God's word to us; and it is an encouragement to our prayers, and a solemn expression of the ascent of our souls to God.

5. They abounded in thanksgiving; were continually *praising God*, v. 47. This should have a part in every prayer, and not be crowded into a corner. Those that have received the gift of the Holy Ghost will be much in praise.

II. They were loving one to another, and very kind; their charity was as eminent as their piety, and their joining together in holy ordinances knit their hearts to each other, and very much endeared them to one another.

1. They had frequent meetings for Christian converse (v. 44): *All that believed were together*; not all those thousands in one place (this was impracticable); but, as Dr. Lightfoot explains it, they kept together in several companies or congregations, according as their languages, nations, or other associations, brought them and kept them together. And thus joining together, because it was apart from those that believed not, and because it was in the same profession and practice of the duties of religion, they are said to be together, *epi to auto*. They associated together, and so both expressed and increased their mutual love.

2. They had *all things common*; perhaps they had common tables (as the Spartans of old), for familiarity, temperance and freedom of conversation; they *ate together*, that those who had much might have the less, and so be kept from the temptations of abundance; and they who had little might have the more, and so be kept from the temptations of want and poverty. Or, There was such a concern for one another, and such a readiness to help one another as there was occasion, that it might be said, They had *all things common*, according to the law of friendship; one wanted not what another had; for he might have it for the asking.

3. They were very cheerful, and very generous in the use of what they had. Besides the religion that was in their sacred feasts (their *breaking bread from house to house*) a great deal of it appeared in their common meals; they did *eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*. They brought the comforts of *God's table* along with them to *their own*, which had two good effects upon them: —

(1.) It made them very pleasant, and enlarged their hearts with holy joy; they did eat their bread with joy, and *drank their wine with a merry heart*, as knowing that *God now accepted their works*. None have such cause to be cheerful as good Christians have; it is a pity but that they should always have hearts to be so.

(2.) It made them very liberal to their poor brethren, and enlarged their hearts in charity. They did *eat their meat with singleness of heart, en apheloteti kardias* — *with liberality of heart*; so some: they did not eat their morsels alone, but bade the poor welcome to their table, not grudgingly, but with all the hearty freedom imaginable. Note, It becomes Christians to be open-hearted and open-handed, and in every good work to sow plentifully, as those on whom God hath sown plentifully, and who hope to reap so.

4. They raised a fund for charity (v. 45): They *sold their possessions and goods*; some sold their lands and houses, others their stocks and the furniture of their houses, and *parted* the money to their brethren, *as every man had need*. This was to destroy, not property (as Mr. Baxter says), but selfishness. Herein, probably, they had an eye to the command which Christ gave to the rich man, as a test of his sincerity, *Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor*. Not that this was intended for an example to be a constant binding rule, as if all Christians in all places and ages were bound to sell their estates, and give away the money in charity. For St. Paul's epistles, after this, often speak of the distinction of rich and poor, and Christ hath said that *the poor we always have with us*, and shall have, and the rich must be always doing them good out of the rents, issues, and profits, of their estates, which they disable themselves to do, if they sell them, and give all away at once. But here the case was extraordinary

(1.) They were under no obligation of a divine command to do this, as appears by what Peter said to Ananias (~~408~~Acts 5:4): *Was it not in thine own power?* But it was a very commendable instance of their raisedness above the world, their contempt of it, their assurance of another world, their love to their brethren, their compassion to the poor, and their great zeal for the encouraging of Christianity, and the nursing of it in its infancy. The apostles left all to follow Christ, and were to give themselves wholly to the word and prayer, and something must be done for their maintenance; so that this extraordinary liberality was like that of Israel in the wilderness towards the building of the tabernacle, which needed to be restrained, ~~408~~Exodus 36:5, 6. Our rule is, to give according as God has blessed us; yet, in such an extraordinary case as this, those are to be praised who give *beyond their power*, ~~408~~2 Corinthians 8:3.

(2.) They were Jews that did this, and those who believed Christ must believe that the Jewish nation would shortly be destroyed, and an end put

to the possession of estates and goods in it, and, in the belief of this, they sold them for the present service of Christ and his church.

III. God owned them, and gave them signal tokens of his presence with them (v. 43): *Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles* of divers sorts, which confirmed their doctrine, and incontestably proved that it was from God. Those that could work miracles could have maintained themselves and the poor that were among them miraculously, as Christ fed thousands with a little food; but it was as much for the glory of God that it should be done by a miracle of grace (inclining people to sell their estates, to do it) as if it had been done by a miracle in nature.

But the Lord's giving them power to work miracles was not all he did for them; he *added to the church daily*. The word in their mouths *did wonders*, and God blessed their endeavours for the increase of the number of believers. Note, It is God's work to add souls to the church; and it is a great comfort both to ministers and Christians to see it.

IV. The people were influenced by it; those that were without, the standers by, that were spectators.

1. They *feared them*, and had a veneration for them (v. 43): *Fear came upon every soul*, that is, upon very many who saw the *wonders and signs* done by the apostles, and were afraid lest their not being respected as they should be would bring desolation upon their nation. The common people stood in awe of them, as Herod feared John. Though they had nothing of external pomp to command external respect, as the *scribes' long robes* gained them the *greetings in the market-places*, yet they had abundance of spiritual gifts that were truly honourable, which possessed men with an inward reverence for them. Fear came upon *every soul*; the *souls* of people were strangely influenced by their awful preaching and living.

2. They *favoured them*. Though we have reason to think there were those that despised them and hated them (we are sure the Pharisees and chief priests did), yet far the greater part of the common people had a kindness for them — they *had favour with all the people*. Christ was so violently run upon and run down by a *packed mob*, which cried, *Crucify him, crucify him*, that one would think his doctrine and followers were never likely to have an interest in the common people any more. And yet here we find them *in favour with them all*, by which it appears that their prosecuting Christ was a sort of force put upon them by the artifices of the

priests; now they returned to their wits, to their right mind. Note, Undissembled piety and charity will command respect; and cheerfulness in serving God will recommend religion to those that are without. Some read it, *They had charity to all the people* — *charin echontes pros holon ton laon*; they did not confine their charity to those of their own community, but it was *catholic* and *extensive*; and this recommended them very much.

3. They *fell over* to them. Some or other were daily coming in, though not so many as the first day; and they were such as *should be saved*. Note, Those that God has designed for eternal salvation shall one time or other be effectually brought to Christ: and those that are brought to Christ are *added to the church* in a holy covenant by baptism, and in holy communion by other ordinances.