

God's Grace Compels a Response

Consider Acts 2:14a, 36-41. Often times, this chapter in Acts is used to prove that you must do something to make Jesus Lord, and that your faith and repentance are what get you saved, almost in a contractual way. The Truth is actually more beautiful than that!

Peter only says repent and believe AFTER he has said that the Holy Spirit has come upon all flesh (NASB = "all mankind"), Acts 2:17, AND, AFTER he has already proclaimed Jesus as Lord of all by the Father, v.36 (Lord of all by grace, not by faith or repentance!). In verse 33 Peter preaches that Jesus received the Spirit (but doesn't Jesus already have the Spirit from birth and without measure?), and that he had poured it out already that day on all flesh. It was AFTER they heard about such astounding grace that the crowd asked "Brothers, what should we do?"

According to this passage, and contrary to popular opinion, proclaiming mankind's resurrection in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and preaching the fullness of God's grace DOES compel a response and DOES convict people of sin and help them turn from it!

Notice that the crowd asks what should they do as a result of hearing this word of grace and that it isn't Peter that first tells them what they need to do! When Peter does tell them what to do, surprisingly he doesn't say confess your sins or go do a bunch of works or even "have faith!" He says, IN THIS ORDER, "repent" (metanoeo = to change one's mind), "and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins" ("for" as in "because of" NOT "to get what you don't have"). In my mind, it is already obvious to the crowd that their sins had already been forgiven since the Spirit had already been poured out on them on this day of Pentecost! When Peter finishes off with "and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" he can only mean, in the context, that: you will receive (embrace) what you have already received (or what has already received you!!) There is no receiving of God without Him first having received us!

If we are willing to receive it, Peter's sermon is one of the all time greats on how the Word of God's grace in Jesus includes and transforms us! Proclaiming God's Word of our Adoption and inclusion in His Grace does not, as many think, minimize our personal and corporate desire to evangelize, nor does it diminish the effectiveness of our following Him and doing His will in our lives, such as being baptized. Rather, proclaiming this Good News maximizes good things even more (v.41-47)! Hallelujah!!

~ Tim Brassell