

“Choices”

Acts 2:1-41

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It's week two of our FORWARD series and I am so excited about getting into our text. I'm calling the message today: **Choices**

You and I get to make choices every single day. Many are seemingly insignificant and we make them without even thinking about it. Like hopefully:

- You made a choice to brush your teeth this morning...
- You made a choice to eat breakfast of some kind...
- You made a choice to listen to music or turn the tv on or to not listen or watch anything at all as you were getting ready for church...
- You made the choice – it's not insignificant to get here today and be in a life group and/or come to service...
- You are making a choice right now to engage in the service and with this message by taking notes and paying attention or you are choosing not to by checking out your phone and looking at social media...

We make choices ALL the time! I read an article this week. Researchers at Cornell University found that the average person in the United States makes around 35,000 what they call “remotely conscious” decisions every day – decisions like I just talked about.

And get this 226.7 of them have to do with the food...we make 226.7 choices a day on food. Some of you right now are making the choice as to where you are going to go eat after church! You're thinking about it!

And these are just the “remotely conscious” choices! This doesn't include the major choices we make in life. Choice like:

- Where we will go to college...
- Who we will marry...
- How many kids will we have...
- What will we do job-wise...
- When will we retire...

We make choices all the time. And the choices we make in life – think about it...they ultimately define us. It's been said that our character is the sum total of the choices we make. We could say it like this: **Your Choices Make You**

In the passage we are looking at today, we are going to see three choices that are made that are defining choices for the ones who made them. And we'll outline this text around these choices because we have a lot of verses to cover – 41 of them and we've got to do it in about 30 minutes!

So, let's get to work!!! And let's begin by noting first:

1. **The disciples chose obedience**

Now, remember the context for Acts chapter two. It picks up where we left off last week. And if you missed the message or miss any of these messages you can download our app or our podcast and keep up with us in this series...you can relisten on your way to work or while working out.

Last week, we covered the ascension of Jesus. After his resurrection, he appeared to his disciples for forty days, eating with them, teaching them, just being with them. And BEFORE he ascended, he commanded the disciples...he gave them a mandate:

Acts 1:4-5 – “And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

And so, check this...this is the point I'm making. The disciples CHOSE obedience. Rather than going out and running their own plays...going out and doing their own thing...and they certainly could have! Instead, they chose obedience and stayed there in Jerusalem.

Acts 1:12-14 – “Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.”

You'll see this theme recurring over and over again in these early chapter of Acts...one of the reasons the church was able to move forward in such a significant way in its infancy was because the believers were together! NOT just physically although that's a part of it.

There is a reason the church gathers like this! Don't overlook the value and blessing and power in simply being together.

Illus. Covid – One of the most destructive parts about Covid has been the damage it has done to cutting off gathering together. The threat is real and it has kept some away and I understand that...it's why we will continue to offer online and if you are watching online we are extremely grateful to have you join us in this format.

However, it's NOT the same as gathering physically with the church. And while the threat of Covid is real so too is the threat and danger of not being together as God's church!

JUST a point I'm making at the outset...this isn't about attendance...it's about spiritual health and blessing and the ability to move forward on mission for Jesus and we need to be TOGETHER MORE in these days, not less.

The early church wasn't just together physically though, it's what they were doing when they were together. They were unified...in purpose and on mission!

AND we'll see over and over again they were praying! (1:14) says they were "devoting themselves to prayer."

Illus. Sept 15 prayer time – sense the call to call us to prayer more and more in the days ahead (Prayer Room).

Prayer is what the disciples were doing when the Holy Spirit comes. Let's pick up in Acts 2. Now, remember what we are emphasizing here. Jesus said, "stay in Jerusalem and the Holy Spirit will come not many days from now." The disciples CHOOSE to obey and look at what happens next.

Acts 2:1-4 – "When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Now, there's a lot here and to get through it all, let's go through and answer from these verses the simple when, where, what, who, how and why questions.

WHEN does all this take place? A: The day of Pentecost. The word means "fiftieth". Look, God doesn't make mistakes and everything – EVERYTHING as we will see in just a moment is governed by God. He's not doing anything here by happenstance.

Pentecost was 50 days after the Sabbath of Passover. In the Old Testament this was known as the “Feast of Weeks” or the “Feast of Harvest”. It was a day of thanksgiving where Israel would express gratitude to God for how he provided for them. Later after the Temple period, it became a celebration and commemoration of the giving of the Law at Sinai.

So, get WHEN the Holy Spirit came to the disciples. He came on the exact day when thousands and thousands of Jewish people from all over the world would have just so happened to be in Jerusalem to celebrate the “Feast of Weeks”.

On the SAME day Jews were celebrating the giving of the Law, God was giving his people the Holy Spirit. Amazing.

WHERE – Let’s answer this question. Where did this take event we know of as Pentecost take place? Well, we know from (1:13) they were gathered together in an upper room praying...could have been there.

(v. 2) tells us when the Spirit came this sounds like a wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. Wherever it was it had to be close to where the masses was gathered because of what we’ll see here in the rest of chapter two in just a moment when Peter starts preaching.

Let’s combine the **WHO** and **WHAT** and **HOW** questions. Look back at **Acts 2:2-4** – **“And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”**

So, they are together praying and all of the sudden, they hear a noise! It’s “Earth, Wind and Fire” baby! Tongues of fire appear and rest on each one of them. **WHO** is they/each one of them?

Well, we know it’s the disciples for sure and it’s very possible and maybe even probable that this happens with the other 120 believers mentioned in (1:15) as well.

WHAT – is going on? The Holy Spirit is coming – fire represents the presence of God. Wind represents the power of God. What is going on is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is being birthed.

What we see taking place in this house is the Labor and Delivery Room of the Church!

G. Campbell Morgan (pastor of Westminster Chapel in 1900’s)– **“There was born the Christian Church, not by sprinkling of water, not by votes and resolutions, not by creeds formulated and signed, but by the baptism of the wind and fire of God.”**

What is taking place here is the very fulfillment of John the Baptist's words. They are recorded in Luke's gospel – remember that's Volume One and Acts is Volume Two.

Luke 3:16 – “John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

That's what is taking place. **HOW** is all this happening? It's a supernatural move of God and this is made evident by the end of (v. 4) – “began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Now, there is ZERO reason to go off the deep-end on what “tongues” is here. It's very clear because of word usage and context that this utterance...these “tongues” was other known and recognizable languages of those gathered in Jerusalem that day.

Just look with me at **Acts 2:5-8 – “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.** (again, God bringing it all together...the timing! These Jews were there because of the Festivals they were expected to attend!)
⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered (amazed/confused), **because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?** (Galileans had the reputation of being backwoods...they weren't sophisticated Jews like the ones who would have been trained in Jerusalem. It's like saying, “isn't he from Louisiana? – doesn't add up!) **And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?”**

Now, this is a miracle if there ever was one! The people there are amazed...astonished...they are at a loss at what they are experiencing in this moment.

Here these Jews are gathered from literally all over the world! Look at (v. 9) and as I read these, I'll just put a map on the screen so you can see where all these places are:

Acts 2:9-11a – “Parthians (modern day Iran) **and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia** (modern day Iraq), **Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,** ¹⁰ **Phrygia and Pamphylia** (what we know of today as the country of Turkey), **Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene** (were talking as far as North Africa), **and visitors from Rome,** ¹¹ **both Jews and proselytes, Cretans** (Greece) **and Arabians...**”

Are you kidding me? People from all over observing this miracle. Let's look at the **WHY** question. Why is all this happening?

Well, look at the last part of **Acts 2:11b – “...we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”**

This is happening because God is coming through on his promise from Acts 1:8 that we talked about last week. He said, “you’ll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. This is what we call an “already/not yet fulfillment”.

Acts 1:8 is already fulfilled here in this passage – on this day, in this moment they are being his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the world...but it’s also not yet because we still have this task as well.

One commentary I read this week had an interesting perspective. He noted that the Holy Spirit didn’t distribute “pens” at Pentecost, but “tongues”.

In other words, the gospel was meant to be proclaimed to the world using our mouth. To be a true witness for Jesus it involves life and lips.

Now, remember the big picture here! It’s NO small thing to say this occurred – the Holy Spirit coming...the world hearing the “mighty works of God” in their own language BECAUSE the disciples chose obedience and did exactly what Jesus told them to do - go back to Jerusalem and wait!

This choice they made ushered in the Holy Spirit and allowed them to be used in a miraculous way that day. The disciples chose obedience.

We see another choice being made that day. It was a choice made by one of the disciples, the de-facto leader of the group. We see:

2. **Peter chose courage**

The Holy Spirit falls. The disciples are speaking in languages that those gathered can understand. And look at the response of those that God brought together when they heard this noise and sensed this commotion that was taking place near this room where all these disciples were gathered.

Acts 2:12-13 – “And all were amazed and perplexed (Luke’s vocabulary – Jesus, now disciples), saying to one another, “What does this mean?”¹³ But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Translation – these people are drunk. They are off their rocker! And they mock them...they laugh at them! And then look at what happens!

Acts 2:14a – “But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them...”

Peter addresses the crowd?! The same Peter that denied Jesus? The same Peter that was hiding out for fear of his life after Jesus had been raised from the dead?! This Peter stands up and addresses a crowd in Jerusalem that just 50 days ago cried out “Crucify” when Jesus was put before them. What’s the point I’m making?

- Peter could have remained silent and let these people hear what they heard and gone about their business.
- Peter as the leader could have said, “John, you tell them what’s really going on!”
- Peter had the influence that he could have just led the group of disciples to walk away and let the Spirit do what He was going to do.

But Peter didn’t do any of those things...instead, he chose courage and NOT only set the record straight, he begins to preach and preach with a boldness I’m not even sure he knew he had!

First of all, he says: **Acts 2:15 – “For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.”**

He says, “It’s 9:00 in the morning...come on! We’re not filled with distilled spirits, we’re filled with the Holy Spirit.” And he begins to spit fire...I’m telling you, it’s awesome!

Now, we don’t have time to outline his entire message, so let me summarize it for you. They say that a good preacher should be able to summarize their entire sermon in a sentence. So, I’m going to attempt to summarize Peter’s entire sermon – all 22 verses in one sentence.

Here it is with this caveat: He tells the crowd what they are witnessing is the fulfilling of Old Testament scripture that God said would mark the last days. In other words, we know the clock to the consummation of history starts ticking because of what we are experiencing right now. And then he gets into the heart of his message and here is the sermon in a sentence:

“God sent Jesus and you rejected and killed him, but because he is God’s Holy One, he was raised from the dead and is now exalted at the right hand of God.”

Now, I want you to put yourself in the place of a Jewish person observing what he just witnessed and then hearing this message. They would have known the Old Testament scripture...they know the prophecy and when Peter explains it, it makes complete sense.

They know who Jesus is...what had just happened – his crucifixion had just taken place in the last 50 days. Those that were there to celebrate “The Feast of Weeks” would have been there to celebrate Passover too.

When they realize that the Jesus they handed over and crucified was the Holy One of God – evidenced by his resurrection and now outpouring of the Holy Spirit – all it takes is a gospel preacher like Peter – filled with the Holy Spirit of God and with courage to preach and explain the scripture and the Holy Spirit does the rest!

Look at what the people say and how they are described after hearing Peter’s message:
Acts 2:37 – “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

This crowd that had gathered...they heard this powerful Scripture saturated, Christ-centered, Spirit-filled message and they were “cut to the heart”. It a word that means to be “pierced or stabbed”. They were deeply convicted.

By the way, this is what kind of preaching you should long for! If at any time you hear me or someone else from this pulpit and it’s NOT:

- Saturated with Scripture...
- Centered on the person and work of Christ and...
- Filled with Holy Spirit power and unction...

It’s time to get a new pastor or find a new church! This kind of preaching will (Is. 55:11) “accomplish what he desires and achieve the purpose for which it was sent.”

What we read here in this response is exactly what Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do. We looked at it last week in John 16. He said the Spirit would come and “convict the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment.”

And it’s this weight they feel...it’s a weight of Holy Spirit conviction that leads them to say, “What must me do? What can we do?”

And this is like tossing a softball to Peter. He says, “I’ll tell you what you need to do:
Acts 2:38-40 – “And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

You want to be saved? Repent and be baptized! Now, these acts don't save you...this isn't some work-based salvation that Peter is preaching here. Peter knows that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone.

How do you know though that you're walking in that grace?

- Repent of sin (v. 38) – it's a turning from sin...it's a change of mind that also involves a change of heart and change of will – it's a complete 180!
- Be baptized (v. 38) – immersion in water...it's your spiritual identification.

It's interesting...I was talking to a buddy of mine this week about this passage and he was noting that both these words are in the imperative...it's not a suggestion...it's instructions. This is what you do! Repentance is in the active imperative meaning it's something you do. Peter says this – “every one of you”. Only you can repent for you.

“Baptized” is an imperative as well, but it's not active tense, it's passive tense...meaning you don't do it to yourself, it's something that's done to you.

So, what Peter is saying here is, “If you want to know what steps to take now that the Holy Spirit of God has convicted you...you need to repent and be baptized. This shows a change of direction and an identification that you are now following Jesus.

Notice what we have here!!!

1. The disciples chose obedience – and the Holy Spirit came in power and used them to declare the wonders of God!
2. Peter chose courage – and God used him to preach a message that was clothed in Holy Spirit power and he explained exactly what was taking place that day.

The power of our choices! I'm telling you they can make us or break us...they can define us and guide us! There's one more choice that was made that day though...and that is:

3. The crowd chose faith

Not all of them of course, but a whole lot. Look at **Acts 2:41** – “**So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.**”

Each person listening to Peter that day had to make a choice. They could receive the word and be saved or reject the word and continue living in their sin, out of fellowship and relationship with the God who created them and loved them.

3,000 were saved and baptized that day! Incredible! We're baptizing three people after the service today and I'm going to leave on a high for that reason...can't imagine 3,000 people committing their life to Christ and identifying through water baptism with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

To be there that day seeing people make a choice that would change their life and eternal destiny forever – amazing!

Three choices here in Acts 2. As I thought about how to close this message, I really believe I just need to lay out some application in the form of our outline today. So, I'll do it like this:

1. Choose Obedience

If you are a disciple of Jesus, you have a choice every single day like the disciples had then and that is to obey Jesus. Are you?

These disciples did exactly what Jesus told them to do and what an incredible blessing we saw in their obedience. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and able to be his witnesses for all those gathered in Jerusalem that day.

Every day as a disciple of Jesus, we have the choice as to whether we are going to obey him or not. He tells us to:

- Abide in him...
- Wait on him...
- Walk with him...
- Share our faith...
- To be on mission...

Are you...am I choosing obedience? I wonder what God is NOT able to accomplish in our lives because we run our own plays, do our own thing, think our way is better than his way.

I want to encourage you today if you know Jesus, choose obedience to him every single day.

2. Choose Courage

Peter could have remained silent! He could have allowed his fears to overwhelm him and shut him up! He could have passed the responsibility to open up his mouth and declare the gospel to someone else, but he didn't!

Instead, he chose to be courageous. In a world that is in decay...in the culture that we live in that does not honor or respect our faith, you do realize that you are going to be confronted with a choice over and over again in life as a Christian.

It will be a choice when you hear Jesus being misrepresented and his reputation being maligned – will you have courage to stand up like Peter and bring clarity to who Christ is.

You will have a choice – I promise you...when you see injustice, will you have the courage to stand and speak for those that don't have a voice OR will you turn a blind eye.

You will have a choice when at the office your employer wants you to do something that does not honor Jesus or reflect who you are in him. What are you going to do?

I want to implore you today to choose courage and stand up for Jesus. Speak for Jesus. Students, you have this choice every single day as you walk the halls of your school or sit in the locker-room getting ready for practice.

You have a choice! You can choose to invite your friends to church with you or you can lay low...just know whatever you choose, it has consequences...some eternal consequences. Choose wisely.

1. Choose obedience
2. Choose courage
3. **Choose faith**

This is the choice some you need to make today. You need to choose faith. God by his Spirit has spoken to your heart. Like the crowd that day, God has used his word and the explanation of his word to cut deep...and like some in that crowd, you are asking, “What must I do?”

And I'm telling you, what you need to do is choose faith – which means repent – turn from your sins...and as you are making that decisions be baptized and identify not with the old self that is passing away, but the new self that has been raised with Christ.

Some of you need to make that choice...and you can make it today.

Would you pray with me?

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.