

Wrenched Hearts (Acts 2:37-42)

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[0 : 00] 37 to 42. 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? 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.

For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone. Whom the Lord our God calls to himself. And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation.

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Thank you. Yeah. That was the verse that really cut to my heart.

[1 : 14] Have you actually wondered why the people were being cut to their hearts? Have you actually had any sort of these experiences before?

Either it was when you're reading the Bible, suddenly the words like jumping up onto you, and oh, Albert, this is my command to you. Or are you being, you need to repent.

Have you had any sort of experiences before? Right? Why? Yeah? Or even some people talk to you, trying, you know, and really your heart is wrenched and you feel gutted.

Right? But I think situations like this, experiences like this may not be necessarily bad. Because if we, you know, sometimes I believe that when these sort of words or these sort of feelings can actually open up our hearts to God.

Whether people was negatively criticizing us, or, well, actually they're lovingly trying to address the issues that we run into.

[2 : 30] Right? Or at times God uses His Word to really speak to me. And often, me, myself, we just be so stubborn.

You know, this is the way I think, this is the way I operate. And sometimes God would just do that through circumstances, through His Word.

So I just wonder if today God may just want to cut to our hearts. There are things that we need, we might need to change.

Attitudes that we might need to repent. So, let's open up our hearts to God. I just want to pray. Okay? Father, I just pray that Your Spirit will convict us of something that is not right, that we need to repent.

Only Your Spirit, through Your Word, can do that. So I ask that You be with us. Read our hearts, Lord. Speak to us.

[3 : 38] In Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, Cheryl, for reading chapter 2, verses 37 to 42. And I believe that the Bible was actually saying that when the people heard the preaching of Peter, they were really, really cut to their heart.

They were really deeply alarmed. But the result was interesting. They got baptized. These were Jews, right?

They got baptized and somehow formed a faith community. And we have been reading chapter 2. We have kind of know what's happening, right?

And today, I believe that as church, when we open up this passage here, I believe we all, including myself, we are to open up our hearts to let the will of God not just to speak to us, but to transform us.

And all of us have issues that needed to make right before God. So prepare.

[4 : 51] God's going to speak to us. Right? So the situation there in Acts 2, it was Pentecost, right?

And what was that? One of the three festivals that the Jews was really, really held in high regards.

All right? Pentecost, it was 50 days after the Passover. Okay? Remember? Jesus was crucified on the day after Passover.

Right? And 40 days after Jesus died, he rose again, three days. And 40 days he was with his disciples. Right?

And after a while, Jesus was ascended. And Jesus said, wait, wait, wait for the Holy Spirit to come. So eventually, maybe about 10 days or so, the Holy Spirit came.

[5 : 54] It was on the Pentecost. Right? The day of Pentecost. And that place, Jerusalem, was crowded. Right?

Heaps and heaps of people. Why? Because all the Jews coming from different places, and even the non-Jews who accepted Yahweh as their God, they were not Jews, but we call them proselytes.

They converted to Judaism. Right? So they lived all over the place. Egypt, Africa, Asia, and Europe. They all, on that day, they were in Jerusalem.

Crowd, massive crowds. Sometimes we might underestimate the situation. Just to give an illustration, we can actually understand it a little bit better.

It's like, on that day, it's like the opening of Akia. You know? It was that crowd. It's like going to Costco on a boxing day.

[7 : 02] You know? It's like that massive crowd. And people coming all over the place, speaking different languages. Oh, why? They were there to worship Yahweh.

And on that day, the Spirit came. And on that day, Peter and the other apostles spoke to the crowds that were in Jerusalem.

And people were cut to their hearts. Interesting. Now, we look at three perspectives. Look at this cutting to their hearts.

Firstly, we ask, why? Why were people cut to their hearts? The reason. Secondly, the response. And thirdly, and Peter said to them, you have not just a response.

You have a responsibility after hearing this. All right? So, we'll look at it one by one. Firstly, reason. When the people heard this, they were cut to their heart and said to Peter and other apostles, brothers, what shall we do?

[8 : 17] Now, if I speak after my sermon and there are people coming to me, Pastor Albert, what shall I do? Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. Repent.

And take up these responsibilities. Serve. And go. You know. And it's amazing, you know. But my question was, why?

Why were they cut to their hearts? What did Peter say? If we look at the previous passages, Peter was quoting prophecies from the book of Job and about David's in the Psalms.

And he was saying to them, look, Jesus was the Messiah. He has came. He has arrived. He was actually prophesied in the Old Testament.

But you guys, you killed him. He was the one that appointed by God. But you crucified him. You know, you're in trouble.

[9 : 27] And when the people heard that, oh, goodness me, what have we done? And surely it was reflected of the mistakes.

Big trouble. And that's why they were cut to their heart. But apart from that, this word, what Peter, actually three times in chapter 2, this word logos, the words of Peter.

All right? Three times. Peter spoke to them about the Old Testament, about the appointed Messiah. And people, because of the words of Peter, they were cut to their hearts.

And somehow, if you know this word, logos, so it's not just words of Peter. It's the word of God.

The same word in first chapter of John, right? The word was God. The word became God. The word was God.

[10 : 43] In the beginning was the word, right? So it was this logos. And actually, 62 times in the whole book of Acts was mentioning this logos.

It's logos. It's the word of God. It's a progressive. The power of God was going forth. But through fallible people like Peter and other apostles.

Now, I was wondering, if I were Peter, it was still fresh in my mind. I denied Jesus. It was not that long ago.

And Jesus forgave me. Gave me three times confirmations. Peter, feed my sheep. Feed my lamb. And only I'm just kind of being forgiven.

I'm still pretty much uncertain about myself. But when I spoke, 3,000 people, what shall we do?

[11 : 49] What shall we do? I would feel very much inadequate. And I know it's not me.

It's not me. It's the power of logos. So, why do people were cut to their hearts?

Because they knew they'd done something wrong. But more powerful is the word of God that convicts the people through fallible Peter.

So, church, when we hear people speak, when we hear people preach, or even when we hear sermons, or when we watch some teachers online, you know, they speak really powerful words.

Don't adore them. I'm sure you don't adore me. And please do not. But also don't abhor me, right? Because I might be fallible.

[12 : 54] But maybe the word of God, the logos, will be spoken through vessels like me. Fallible vessels.

Just imagine Peter. You know, if God would choose upright people, I'm sure there are more good speakers.

But God would choose someone who betrayed Jesus, being forgiven, and to be his vessel.

And all the more, it demonstrated the power of God, the power of the word of God, and not individuals. So, let's, when we hear sermons, let's discern.

Discern. I could speak, sometimes I could speak wrong. I quoted wrong things at times. Surely, I'm a human. But at times, God would speak through me and other pastors and other, yeah, teachers, right?

[14:11] Because actually, ultimately, it's the Holy Spirit speaking through the word of God. When Jesus, before he was betrayed, on the upper room, he spoke to the disciples.

He said, when he comes, the Holy Spirit, when he comes, he will prove the world to be wrong about sin and righteousness and judgments.

Why would they cut to their heart? Yes, the word of God. But the Holy Spirit penetrates the word of God to cut to the hearts of the people.

So, whenever we hear sermons, maybe open up our hearts to hear. Don't just look at the person, but to hear what he was saying.

To discern whether this is the word of God. If it is, repent. Or align ourselves to God. So, when was your last time that you were cut to the hearts when you hear a sermon?

[15:26] It's only recently that I was cut to my heart when I heard something, the word of God, spoken to me. And I need, even after 30-something years, 40 years of ministry, I need to be vigilant.

And I need to open up my hearts and willing to say, Lord, I'm sorry, I need to repent. And people of God, we do have the courage.

And we do have this, yeah, this grace from God to say sorry, to repent. Their response, their response was, Peter said to them, Repent, repent and be baptized, every one of you.

And so they did, in verse 42. They accepted his message and it was, they were baptized. And 3,000 people, not just 3, 30, 300, but 3,000.

Got to be pretty long baptism. Long baptismal service, right? But that was their response. Now, we may not be able to comprehend.

[16:53] For Jews to repent, it's a pretty amazing thing. Jews, they were proud of their religions.

They're proud of their conducts, right? And all these people from all over the place, non-Jews, came to worship Yahweh because they were attracted by the monotheistic God.

They were attracted by their conducts. Wow, look at the Jews. We, heathen, we're miles away from them. I mean, we're miles behind them.

Look, for the Jews, when they repented, they really mean genuine repentance.

And for them, the repentance means they no longer rely upon themselves. No longer rely upon the religious system.

[17:52] Because for them, the religious system was very, very comprehensive. They have the laws and teachers. They have the Pharisees, the scribes.

They have the temple, everything, right? For the Jews, when Peter said, repent and be baptized, what did that mean?

That mean, they have to repent of their trust in obeying the laws and doing things by themselves.

And I wonder if these 3,000 people, how many of them actually were very, very clear. I'm sure the majority would be clear.

But I'm sure there would be some who was not all that certain. But anyway, oh, because I was very moved. Yeah, I feel that I need to repent.

[18:56] But at the end, that's why Peter continues to say that you have a responsibility to save yourself from this crooked generation.

Because the history tells us that the early church, because they were all, they consist of like Jews, right? Jewish Christians.

Majority of them until the Holy Spirit driven them out away from Jerusalem, right? To Samaria, to great part of Judea and the ends of the world.

But majority of the early church were Jews, Jewish Christians. But you see in the epistles, the letters of Paul, when they addressed the people at the time, he was addressing some Jewish Christians.

Commentators call them Judaizers. Who were they? They were Christians. But they also believe they need to observe the laws. They also believe they need to observe circumcisions.

[20 : 07] And that's why Paul or Peter in his letters continue to say, No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Just Jesus is enough. Not Jesus plus laws.

Not Jesus and your own doings. Jesus finished. It is complete. Just trust in Jesus. No need to add anything.

That's why when Paul writing Galatians, a letter to the church in Galatia, he mentions something like this.

Now, verse 20, we're all familiar with, right? I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, and Christ lives in me. The life I live and now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Now, we all, most of us can recite that passage, right? And become, yeah, it's my, yeah, it's for me.

[21 : 12] It's a slogan for me, okay? But a lot of us, we don't realize in the context why Paul said this verse. It was actually, it was to the people at the time, there was these Judaizers.

They believe that, I believe in Jesus, but also I believe I need to observe the law. I need to obey the law. It says, Jesus plus works equals salvation.

And Paul said, no, if it was that, I mean, Jesus would not need to die on the cross. You can do it yourself, you see?

So that's why, you see, for through the law, I died to the law, so that I might live in God. If I did not die to the law, I cannot live in God. So that was, that was the Jews that at the time they had to repent of, okay?

Now, we're different, for us, what is repentance for us? Right? Some might still have this sort of problem, you know, I think I need to do it right.

[22 : 24] And we need to repent of that. But maybe for a lot of us, complacency, something we need to repent of. Maybe, yeah, my, I'm not bearing any, I'm not bearing my cross to follow Jesus, I need to repent of.

Maybe my bad characters, you know, I need to repent of. I cannot deal with it myself and ask God to deal with me, right? And I'm sure every one of us, we have, we have attitudes, behaviors, mentalities that we need to repent and ask the Lord to help us.

Just think, whether, how long, whether, how many years I have been Christians. I'm sure we still have things that we need to repent before God.

When God cuts to our heart, pointed out something, perhaps we need to change.

We ask God to have mercy upon us. And thirdly, not just response, but responsibility. A longer term, a response is something that repentance from our heart, that lead to actions, but the actions should need to be continually to be a pattern of our Christian life.

[24 : 11] Verse 40 to 42, Peter continued to say, Save yourselves from this corrupted generations. And those accepted, they were baptized and devoted themselves to their apostles' teaching and to their fellowship.

Right? So, immediate response, when we are cut to heart, great. We have change of our mentality and then we do something great.

But it's not just one of, it's not just one or twice. It needs to be a Christian pattern of, yeah, change of a lifestyle.

Right? I'm sure this is a continuous challenge for us. Once or twice, once or twice, spiritual experiences, elite kind of, yeah, encounter, great.

But we cannot live on that, on those. We need to continually to strive in the power of God to live a Christian, a godly lifestyle.

[25 : 29] And for them, how could they save themselves from the corrupted generation? We just said they cannot rely on their own deeds, right?

So, it's got to be the word of God. That's why they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship. I won't speak about fellowship today, but other times, I think other pastors will talk about fellowship of the early church.

But we cannot do without others. We're not islands, right? You know, I often question people who say, oh, I love Jesus, but I don't like the church.

You can't. You can't. You know, in the Chinese context, we all understand. I love you, but I hate your family. You can't. You know, you have to do, you love your spouse, but you have to love the family as well.

So, when I say, I love God, I need to love your church. Yeah, church is not lovable. Make the church lovable. I'm not focusing on that today.

[26 : 47] But I'm just saying that we need one another. Even when we devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching, when we need to devote ourselves to the truth of God, we need one another.

Yes, I can read. I can take in the word of God. Surely, God can. Well, I mean, I'm always very convinced that the Lord is my personal savior.

Right? Right? But it's not an individual savior. He's my personal savior. But he's also the savior of the whole church.

This individualism, I think, gets too much into our lives today. You know, I think being born in an oriental community culture, I mean, family, community, it's more biblical, actually.

You know, today, we all stress too much about individualism. Okay? We learn together as a church. We have services.

[28 : 01] We have learning, teaching, education moments, sessions at church, learning the Bible together. Yeah, that's important. Surely, we can do it at home.

Surely. But it doesn't mean that we do not do it at church. Okay? And they were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching. But what are the apostles' teaching?

Surely, those 12 at the time, minus Judas, he was dead. Right? But they appointed another guy, Matthias.

Right? So, anyway, there was 11, anyway, who actually spent three years with Jesus, who observed his doing, who heard his teaching, who saw his miracles, his kind deeds.

Right? So, they had the firsthand experience. So, what they taught was very important.

[29 : 12] Apostles' teaching. And actually, today, most of the apostles' teaching has been written in the New Testament. Right?

And the Old Testament supports the New Testament. And the New Testament, I mean, fulfills the Old Testament. So, we have the Word of God. So, it really means the apostles' teaching today for us is the Bible.

So, we need to devote ourselves to the Bible together. And at home. And for many of us younger ones, if you do not have a pattern of reading your Bibles, I mean, we have Bible teachers here.

They're experienced leaders here. I'm sure they can help. But if you can do it at home as a habit, as a lifestyle, I want to just share something like, something you can do.

It's reading the Bible 101. Right? It's something we taught a lot in Hong Kong. It's like, listen, read, study, recite, meditate, and apply.

[30 : 29] Okay? Okay? And Cantonese is easier to remember. Teng, dok, yin, chong, sion, yong. Okay? So, it's really just helping us, you know, how to take in the Word of God.

Listen. You can read. You can listen from any apps. Plenty, whatever versions you can hear. All right? Listen.

But listen is not enough. It's, right? But better than none. Listen plus read. That's good. It takes more in.

And if you have time to study, study it. I mean, we study other stuff so diligently, but often we neglect the Word of God.

I believe there are many tools today can help us to understand the Word of God. To recite. And hopefully, our monthly verse hopefully can help us to remember some of the verses.

[31 : 29] And I believe in my personal experiences. At times when you go through really hard times, when you're half dead, you know, when you're sick in the hospital, you know, you don't have time. You don't even have the eyesight to read the Word of God.

Right? And the Holy Spirit will bring whatever you have recited, what you have read, will bring into your mind, your heart. And those were the saving moments, I tell you.

I've experienced that myself. Right? That's why you don't wait until those moments to read the Word of God. You stack it in, you know, just like you're eating all the time, you know.

And then when the time, the crucial moments, the Lord will feed you with the food that you have taken in. Meditate? How would you meditate?

When I open up the Word of God, I'm just lost in the wilderness. What do I do? The specs can help us.

[32 : 32] It's a passage. Are there any sins that's mentioned in there? I need to look out. Are there any promises that the Lord can give to me to encourage me?

Are there any examples in the passage that I can imitate? Are there any commands? Are there any things that I can't do?

Are there any things that I can't do? Are there any stumbling blocks?

Are there any mistakes that people make? They can't serve as a reminder for me. Now, easy, right? I'm sure not every passage has all five elements in it.

Sometimes, as one or two. You know, when you read, David was waking up, you know, late in the afternoon. Right?

[33 : 37] And so somebody was bathing. What does it tell you? Don't wake up too late in the afternoon. No, it's not about laziness, right?

And talking about temptation can come very subtly. But the second look, that's sin. Right?

So these are some of the specs can help us to understand the passage they are reading. We can meditate on it. Every time if a sin, if the Lord convicts me, I repent.

And I talk to God. That's meditation and prayers going on at the same time. You can use it at your quiet time. Right?

It's very practical. I'm sure. I'm sure the Lord, when the Lord can give us His Word, He's not giving us so that we are being bewildered, baffled.

[34 : 37] I'm sure the Lord, when He gives us His Word, He wants us to understand, to know, and to embrace it, and to be transformed. Right?

It's a matter of whether we want to understand. We want to, yeah, just spend time so that we can know His Word. We've mentioned this to 2033, right?

So today is a Bible path. I hope that, yeah, with these five paths, by the time, five weeks later, we finish these, we get an idea as a Christian, we have these kind of passion and dreams, and God wants us to have.

It's not just a BWA, a Baptist World Alliance. It's not just what they want to promote. It's us as Christians. We need to live out these God-given mandates for us.

Imagine, as Christians, we don't know the Word of God. What kind of Christian is that? Right? We're just superstitions.

[35 : 52] We don't even know what we believe. I think the first thing for us, we know the Word of God, and allow the Word of God to cut to our hearts, and help us to repent, and return to God.

So, any of the cutting-to-heart experiences lately? If there has been, praise God.

But don't just, oh, that's what God said to me. And we just don't do anything. You know, when God really speaks to us, He expects responses.

And if we don't hear, next time, the cut will be greater. It will be more painful. Because He loves us.

Right? That's why His Word cuts to our heart. So, how do we respond when we're stirred by God? Let's pray.

[37 : 03] Father, I just pray that You'll continue to speak to us, and thank You for Your Word. So powerful. It's like the two-edged sword cutting to our heart, and wanting to us to change, to repent, so that, Lord, our lives can be acceptable, continue to be transformed, to be acceptable in Your sight.

Thank You for Your Word. Thank You always, as light to our path, and lamb to our feet, and light to our path, Lord. Thank You, Lord. May Your Spirit continue to stir our hearts.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.