

Prayers

Opening prayer

Lord of my life, You are my joy, my peace, my strength, my all, and I give you my worship this day because of everything You have done to save me from sin. I thank You for the blessing of your continued presence with me now, and the glorious hope of eternal life You have placed within me. You, Lord God, have blessed me, and You have done all things well: ALLELUIA

Prayer Suggestions

General theme of the week: WEALTH

1. For yourself

Each one of us has dreams for the future, and many of them depend on us having the wealth and the means to pay for them. Submit your worldly dreams to God and His wisdom, before seeking His blessing on them

2. For your friends and family

Pray for some of your friends and especially for their hopes and dreams, as far as you know them

3. For the church and its work

The church of which you are a part doubtless has plans for the future. Pray for the church and for these plans, and pray for the means, where appropriate, to pay for them

4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)

Pray for your country and for the hopes of your people. Pray that the current turmoil on the financial markets will be settled in a godly way so that stability may return to our world

Meditation

Stay beside me, Lord Jesus, I pray.

You have given me every blessing.

Lord of direction, go with me wherever I go;

Lord of protection, cover me with Your love;

Lord of purity, clean the pollution in my mind;

Lord of security, protect my family from all evil;

Lord of faithfulness, stay close when I am in danger;

Lord of authority, guide the decisions I make;

Lord of wholeness, restore my body, soul and spirit;

Lord of creation, do something new in me today:

Stay beside me every day, I pray,

So I may live in Your presence, forever.

Bible Study

Bible passage – Acts 2:25-36

²⁵ David said about Him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.

For with Him at my right hand,

Nothing can shake me.

²⁶ So my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
And my body will also live in hope,
²⁷ for you will not abandon me to the grave,
nor will you let your Holy One see decay.
²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;
You will fill me with joy in Your presence."

²⁹ Fellow Jews, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that He would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah

"He was not abandoned to the grave,
nor did His body see decay."

³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of this fact. ³³ So, being exalted at the right hand of God, and having received the promised Holy Spirit, He has poured it out as you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

"The Lord said to my Lord:
'Sit at my right hand
³⁵ until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.'"

³⁶ Therefore let the entire house of Israel know for sure that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus, whom you crucified!

Review

This is the second half of Peter's famous sermon on the first day of Pentecost. It contains the heart of his argument that Jesus has the authority to send the Holy Spirit, and it concludes with a dramatic call to those who first heard it to accept responsibility for murdering 'the Christ' (2:36).

As we read through this passage, we cannot fail to notice that its style is very direct. He does not try to make a case by means of a constructed argument, rather, he quotes Scripture and states observable facts, and then appeals to the inherent logic of what these things say. The effect is extraordinary, as we will discover tomorrow, as we read on further in Acts 2.

In the first half of his sermon, Peter has rebuked those who dismissed what was happening to the disciples as mere drunkenness (2:14-16) and then quoted the powerful prophecy of Joel (2:17-21), which confirms God's intention to pour out his Holy Spirit upon 'all flesh' before God's final judgement at the end of time. But along with defending speaking in tongues as evidence of the Holy Spirit, the main aim of Peter's sermon is to justify his claim that Jesus is the Christ, God's Messiah, and it is He who has sent the Holy Spirit.

Peter sets out Christian faith fairly and squarely; Jesus has been confirmed as God's Messiah through the words, deeds, signs and wonders of His ministry (2:22). How awful, then, that Jesus has been killed by the Jewish people with help from the Gentiles authorities (2:23)! But His death is not a defeat, it is a victory, for God has raised Jesus from the dead (2:24), and this is where we pick up today's reading. Now in the first century, Jewish people argued about whether or not there was a resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, and they were made up largely of the traditional old guard of the Temple 'High Priests'. The Pharisees, despite their great opposition to Jesus and his teaching, did in fact believe in the resurrection. Peter then felt it necessary to make a case for the resurrection, and to do this, he turned to Psalm 16:8-11 (2:25-28).

Psalm 16 is one of a number of Scriptures that speaks of God's protection beyond the grave. Tantalisingly, most of these fall short of saying specifically that there is a resurrection, or that beyond death, people continue to exist in some form or another in God's presence. Nevertheless, Psalm 16 comes very close to it. Here, David expresses confidence that God will not 'abandon me to the grave' (2:27), and it goes on to say far more. It continues with David's prophesy that God 'will not let (His) Holy One see decay' (2:27). Peter obviously intends that we read this as referring to Jesus, the Messiah. He then continues by painting a contrast, for although David believed in a resurrection, he died without there being evidence of this (2:29); but now that Jesus has been killed, there is real evidence of resurrection, for the disciples and others are 'witnesses of the fact' (2:32).

Having established the resurrection as a fact, Peter goes one step further, and it is a step that we often miss out when discussing Jesus and what he has done. Peter reminds us that after Jesus died and was raised, he ascended to God, and again, the disciples were themselves witnesses to this fact (1:10). More than that, Jesus had ascended to the *'right hand of God'* (2:33). The right hand side of God was a position of power and authority, and the one who occupied it had the right to God's authority. Peter tells us that Jesus used this God-given authority to pour out the Holy Spirit on earth, and make it available to all (2:33). Surprisingly, Peter does not say any more about the gift of the Holy Spirit itself, he is more concerned to let us know that Jesus is acting with God's authority when He sends the Holy Spirit!

Having preached this short but remarkable sermon, Peter concludes with a sharp and challenging call. Having told us that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ) and the One through whom God has worked to prove the resurrection and send the Holy Spirit, and he pulls at the heart strings of his hearers. They indeed, were the ones who had condemned this awesome Messiah to death!

No sermon since the first Pentecost has struck with a harder punch, and no sermon since has had its effect. As we will see next, God used this sermon to kick start the church in Jerusalem, and from there, to the whole world. Thank God, therefore, that those who were present remembered it and passed it on to us eventually through Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles.

Going Deeper

- Notes on the translation of the passage

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V30 'that He would place one of his descendants on his throne'

Other translations:

'that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on the throne (New Authorised Version)

The original Greek is notoriously awkward at this point, and some translators (as in the case of the New Authorised Version) have sought to try and put a gloss on it to help it read better both in the original Greek and also in translation. I do not think that such emendation is necessary, because the simple translation I have given is accurate to the Greek, except that the Greek phrase *'the fruit of his loins (or body)'* has been translated as 'descendants'.

V31 'Messiah'

The Hebrew word 'Messiah' is the Greek word 'Christ', and when Peter spoke, his message was about what happened to the Messiah. So in my translation, I have used the words 'Messiah' or 'Christ', in whatever ways it helps our understanding of what was said. In verse 31, Peter is making a point about what happened to the Messiah, i.e. he was raised. In verse 36, however, where the same word is used, it seems more natural in English to talk of 'Christ', because Peter is talking about the risen Jesus 'Christ'.

Discipleship

Application

Questions for groups

1. What does this passage of Scripture teach us about preaching the Gospel?
2. What are the doctrines of Christian faith according to this great sermon of Peter (including yesterday's passage)? Is this sermon a sufficient statement of Christian faith? What more should we include?
3. Look up the quoted passage in Peter's sermon and check out what they appear to say in their original setting.

Discipleship challenges

- *What passages of Scripture are essential to your faith? Make a list of the passages that have played a significant part in your life of faith. Thank God for these Scriptures and use them in your prayers to meditate on the things of God throughout the day.*
 - *Look for opportunities within your daily life to praise God for the salvation He has won for you in Jesus Christ. It is easy to go from day to day without doing anything like this, and then drifting away from the Lord, so do your best to keep the truths of your faith close to your heart.*
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Final Prayer

You have blessed us Lord Jesus Christ, with the gift of Your Holy Spirit, who is our helper, our comforter, our healer, our guide, and our reliable source of power for doing the things of God. May we always be ready to listen to what You would say to us through Your Spirit, but more than that, to take up the challenges of faith and do the work of Your Kingdom here on earth. We praise You, Lord Jesus Christ, and we glory in Your presence. AMEN
