

# St. Paul: On The Same page

04.27.14 for Easter 3a

## Day One: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

*<sup>37</sup>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?" <sup>38</sup>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. <sup>39</sup>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."*

Peter's words go by so quickly, but have you ever considered what he is offering? Every promise made by salespeople today is followed immediately by limits and conditions. I received a great special offer on a new car, but only if I take delivery in the next 4 days! We got a great discount on clothes by signing up for the store credit card, but we didn't get our bill until the day it was due and the "late" penalty wiped out the savings. Every time there is a "free" gift there seem to be strings attached.

Peter is making an amazing offer. You can get the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit! But what about the fine print?

It is unconditional. It's not for today only. God's promise does not expire, although you would be foolish to delay.

It's not just for certain qualified people. He says this promise of life and salvation is valid for you, for your children, for people who live far away, and even for those who were yet to be born!

This offer is not changed by the amount of your debt. It is available for big sins and small ones, for those in despair over their sin and those who are only just realizing their need.

*"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. You will be offered many things in life, but no one will ever make you an offer like this.*

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you have washed away my sins. Wash me again each day. Renew my life in you. And give me joy in serving you forever! Amen.*

## Day Two: 1 Peter 1:17-25

*“...conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,<sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,<sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*

The first lesson talked about a great “deal” that God offered to you and all people through Peter’s words that day. But you know the old saying, “there is no such thing as a free lunch.”

There is always a price. And the price for such an amazing gift turns out to be terribly high. It is a price that you could never pay, but which Jesus paid for you.

Peter says that price was not with perishable things like silver and gold. We don’t usually think of silver and gold as perishable. The metals can be shaped into a sculpture, melted down and made into coins, melted again and fashioned into jewelry. It seems to last forever.

But our wealth doesn’t last like that, does it? Where does all our money go?

As an example, most of the games played on cell phones are free. Of the 300 million people who play Candy Crush Saga, only about 4% spend any money to get ahead faster in the game. But their spending adds up to \$650,000 every day.

We spend money on things that don’t even exist, like virtual items in games. We spend money on things that we use and throw away. Our landfills are stuffed with furniture, clothing, wrappers, even buildings that have been torn down and carried away.

But Jesus paid a price much more precious than these temporary things. Jesus gave away his holy, perfect life.

Water for your baptism? A few cents. Nice clothes to wear for your baptism? \$75. The forgiveness of your sins given you in your baptism? Priceless!

**Prayer:** *Dearest Savior, you “picked up the tab” for me, and I scarcely noticed what a terrible price you paid. Lord, I am filled with gratitude and joy when I think of it. Fill me with love for you in response to your love. Amen.*

### **Day Three: Luke 24:13-35**

*The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him;<sup>21</sup> but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.<sup>22</sup> In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning<sup>23</sup> but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive.*

“We had hoped that he was the one...” Those are sad words, filled with disappointment. Has God ever seemed to disappoint you? Did you get your hopes up for some specific thing you thought God should give you?

I have talked to many people who described for me how God let them down. They prayed for healing, but they're still sick. They prayed for wealth, but they are still poor. One young man prayed fervently for deliverance from sexual temptation, but when he continued to feel a sinful desire he concluded that God must be saying it is not wrong.

All of these people are like the disciples who were walking along the road to Emaus. They

were in the middle of the story. They were drawing conclusions, but they had not yet seen what God would do.

“We had hoped that he was the one...” Too quickly they concluded that Jesus' death must mean God had disappointed them. But Jesus' death was God's plan, and his rising from death was the part they had not yet seen. Their eyes were still closed.

Did God disappoint these disciples? They would have been truly disappointed if they had not listened to Jesus' words. But he revealed to them what God had done – what they had failed to see. Instead of failing, God had done much more than they had hoped for. They wanted a Savior from the Romans. God gave them a Savior for eternity.

How has God responded to your hopes? Is it possible that he has planned something better for you than that which you have asked? Might it already be waiting for you?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, I have hoped for many things, but I pray that you would give me what you have hoped for me. I know that your dreams for me are best. Amen.*

**Day Four: *Will everyone be in heaven?***

A Michigan pastor recently made a big splash with his new book, “Love Wins,” in which he argues that God’s love is so powerful that all people, regardless of what they believe in this life, will eventually be saved and live forever in heaven. This space is too short to give a proper response, but many of our members have had questions on this issue, so it’s good to at least point out some clear truths from next weeks’ Scriptures.

God does indeed love the whole world, as Jesus said. Indeed, his love is so great that he willingly paid the highest price we can imagine – the sinless life of his beloved Son, as our second reading says. And what is the result of God’s loving sacrifice? We can see that in our first lesson.

Through his disciples, God calls upon us all to repent – that is, to turn away from our sin and turn back toward him – and to be baptized. It is God’s free and generous invitation!

But, as Jesus also said in John 3, “Whoever believes in him (Jesus) is not condemned,

but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in God’s one and only Son.”

Easter brings wonderful news! God’s gifts of free forgiveness and eternal life are offered to all of us! What is our response when we see that some do not believe? It should be a greater and greater urgency to tell them the good news!

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, grant that I may receive your gifts as you desire – and share them with those you love. Amen.*