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PARAENESIS IN PETER'S SPEECHES:  
AN EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

BY  
DON EVERTS

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY

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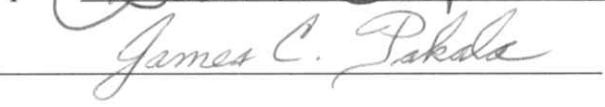
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ABSTRACT OF  
PARAENESIS IN PETER'S SPEECHES:  
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The question put to the apostles after Peter's stirring speech on the day of Pentecost *Brothers, what then shall we do?* remains relevant for the church in every age. No seeker should be expected to know the answer to this question; it is to the church that they turn for guidance on how to respond to the gospel message. The present study seeks to mine the church's original answer to this question in order to strengthen the understanding of salvation and practice of exhorting seekers to repentance in today's church.

After establishing the paradigmatic role Peter played within the early apostolic witness, this study will begin with an exegetical and theological analysis of Peter's response on the day of Pentecost, noting any significant lexical, syntactical, rhetorical, or theological features. The study will then proceed by comparing the exegetical and theological shape of this initial exhortation with six other instances in Acts where Peter is either a) exhorting others to repentance or b) reporting about past exhortations. Finally, the study will proceed by exploring whether the exegetical and theological features found within Peter's seven exhortation pericopes are echoed throughout the remainder of Acts, which one would expect if Peter is indeed playing a paradigmatic role within the early church.

Peter's exhortation at Pentecost reveals evidence of great lexical, syntactical, rhetorical, and theological care. His exhortation centers around three imperatives: one is active (*repent*) and two are passive (*be baptized, be saved*). These core imperatives (and the surrounding lexical, syntactical, and rhetorical features) reveal a basic understanding of salvation that includes: 1) a specific anthropology (all people urgently need to repent: Jews, because of what time it is in redemptive history; all people, because of their corrupt nature); 2) a basic ecclesiology (those who repent are to be baptized by and into the church); and 3) a clear soteriology (salvation is great and is God-authored).

An exegetical and theological comparison with Peter's six other exhortation pericopes reveals a high level of continuity with his exhortation at Pentecost. The chord Peter sounds at Pentecost (people repent, the church baptizes, God saves) is significantly echoed throughout these other six pericopes (with a slightly lighter echo on the call to be baptized.) An examination of these elements within all of Acts reveals an equally notable echo, indicating that there was perhaps something paradigmatic and foundational about Peter's answer at Pentecost.

Additional research into a) Peter's role within the group of apostles and b) the nature of the prophetic preacher's way of calling people to repent (throughout the scriptures) gives further explanation for the specific shape Peter's exhortation took at Pentecost and for the profound, paradigm-shaping influence that initial exhortation had upon the unified apostolic witness. All of this seems to suggest that Peter's understanding of salvation and practice of exhortation ought to garner the church's attention in every age. How he answered that question *Brothers, what shall we do?* could help today's church answer the same question in stronger, more robust ways.

*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?' (Acts 2:37 ESV)*

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

*“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?’” (Acts 2:37 ESV)*

### *The Importance of Exhortation*

*Brothers, what shall we do?* The church in every generation must be able to faithfully answer this question which is put to it by skeptics and seekers alike. No non-Christian should be expected to know the answer to this question; it is to the Christian church that they turn for guidance on how to respond to the gospel message. This is a church that has within its possession a record of the earliest answers to this pressing question. The book of Acts, for example, records four separate occasions when the spokesman for the apostles, Peter, exhorts a group (or individual) to repent, and three separate occasions when Peter is later reporting to others about these exhortations. These seven paraenesis sections within Peter’s speeches in Acts allow the church an insightful study of how Peter, for one, went about answering this timeless question. These paraenesis sections not only give today’s church a view into how Peter exhorted non-Christians to respond to the gospel, but also get at the heart of Peter’s basic theology of salvation: the assumptions that informed his answer to that all-important question *Brothers, what shall we do?* As such these paraenesis sections within Peter’s speeches make a rich field for in-depth study.

*Source Criticism: Where are the speeches in Acts from?*

Before focusing in on the paraenesis sections, one must account for Peter's speeches as recorded in Acts. There has been a wide and thoroughgoing debate in the academy about the source of the speeches in Acts. Some scholars find the speeches as an example of Luke operating as a historian, along the lines of Thucydides. German critical scholarship has tended to view Luke as a theologian who has invented the speeches as rhetorical devices. This fairly widespread and influential critical view has its detractors, some of whom have found evidence that points to Luke more as a faithful reporter or illustrator of the unified apostolic witness.

*The Thucydidean Analogy: Luke as Historian*

Much work on the many speeches in Acts<sup>1</sup> appeals to Thucydides' reflection on his own use of speeches in history-telling, where he reflects that his approach, "has been, while keeping as closely as possible to the general sense of the words that were actually said, to have the speakers say what, in my view, was called for by each situation."<sup>2</sup> Soards summarizes the wide influence this passage has had on how scholars view Luke and his own task of recording/writing speeches:

*From this starting point, in both the precritical and the critical periods, the speeches in Acts were taken as a précis of actual apostolic preaching, and they*

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<sup>1</sup>Many scholars refer to 24 speeches (taking up 295 verses of the 1000 verses in Acts), though Soards suggests there are 27 or 28 speeches, 7 or more "partial speeches" and 3 dialogues, which amount to over 365 verses total. Marion L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

*were analyzed in relation to the various speakers – especially Peter and Paul, but also Stephen and James – to recover the particular content of their message.*<sup>3</sup>

Many ancient commentaries reflect this view, treating Petrine speeches as if they were indeed spoken by Peter, Pauline speeches as if they were spoken by Paul etc. Views have varied, however, on how much of each speech was *actually* spoken versus how much simply represents Luke “keeping as closely as possible to the general sense of the words.”

### *Critical Skepticism: Luke as Theologian*

However in 1810 Eichhorn’s *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* examined the commonalities between the various speeches and concluded:

*The speeches themselves, even though they have been placed in the mouths of different persons, follow one and the same type, are of the same character, make use of one form of proof, and thus have so much in common that they present themselves thus as speeches of one and the same author.*<sup>4</sup>

While Eichhorn saw Luke as freely inventing the speeches himself as a mouthpiece for his own theology, other scholars, such as W.M.L. de Wette (in 1826) reasoned that Luke used sources which he freely reworked.<sup>5</sup> F.C. Baur’s work (which focused on Acts as an irenic book which was attempting to minimize the conflicts in the early church) posited that Luke was trying to make Paul look as Petrine as possible and Peter look as Pauline as

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 3.

possible.<sup>6</sup> Acts studies influenced by the Tübingen school varied in their view of the speeches in Acts. M. Schneckenburger “understood Acts to be an essentially reliable historical work. Yet, noticing in particular the uniformity of the style and contents of the speeches throughout Acts, he argued that the speeches were Luke’s compositions, intended to give (although inaccurately) examples of early Christian preaching...”<sup>7</sup> M. Zeller, on the other hand, “scrutinized the details of Acts and concluded that Acts was wholly unreliable, although some bare historical facts and legends may lie behind Luke’s creatively composed account.”<sup>8</sup> What these views have in common is the assumption that Luke penned the speeches in Acts as a theologian.

By the turn of the twentieth century the consensus of German critical scholarship was that the speeches in Acts (as A. Julicher summarized) were “free inventions of the author.”<sup>9</sup> This view of Luke as theologian was greatly strengthened by the pioneer of modern Acts criticism in Germany, Martin Dibelius. His definitive studies were published in 1949, but the principles were laid down in earlier works: “*Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (1919) and “*Stilkritisches zur Apostelgeschichte*” (1923).<sup>10</sup> Dibelius argued that “the ancient historian was not aware of any obligation to reproduce only or even preferably, the text of a speech which was actually made.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 26.

<sup>7</sup> Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Richard F. Zehnle, *Peter’s Pentecost Discourse: Tradition and Lukan Reinterpretation in Peter’s Speeches of Acts 2 and 3* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 7.

Luke, then, was seen by Dibelius as taking great liberty in constructing his discourses, in the manner of the great Greek historians. But Dibelius also saw Luke “as a proclaimer of the Christian message [who] had placed himself within the framework of the evangelical tradition.”<sup>12</sup>

Since Dibelius much of the academic discussion has circled around what parts of the speeches in Acts result from Luke’s theology and which parts result from his proclamation of an earlier *kerygma*. As Zehnle puts it, “Identifying what exactly in the speeches reflects the original composition and theological insights of Luke and what reflects traditions of the early community would be a task for those who would follow in Acts research.”<sup>13</sup>

Conclusions have varied: In Henry J. Cadbury’s essay “The Greek and Jewish Traditions of Writing History” (1922) Luke is seen as a Jewish historian “who did not scruple to add speeches where he felt them necessary.” C.H. Dodd, on the other hand, analyzed the speeches in Acts alongside 1 Peter, the Pauline Corpus and more and isolated a primitive element in these speeches which he attributed to the *kerygma* of the early church, concluding that the earliest preaching was a “declaration of the mighty acts of God in Jesus Christ, a little reminiscent of the recital of the mighty acts of God in relation to Israel.”<sup>14</sup> This hypothesis was accepted by F.F. Bruce, W.L. Knox, J. Schmitt, and E. Trocme. C.F. Evans’ critique of Dodd reopened the question of the speeches which paved the way for the work of Wilckens and J.A.T. Robinson (who argued for the

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<sup>12</sup> Zehnle, *Peter’s Pentecost Discourse*, 13-14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Neill & Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 272-273.

presence of some pre-Lukan theology in the speeches.)<sup>15</sup> And in 1953 H. Conzelmann's monumental *Die Mitte der Zeit* marked a "turning point" in Acts study which set the stage for a thoroughgoing literary analysis of the speeches in Acts.<sup>16</sup>

All told, the effect of the German critical school has resulted in a situation in Acts studies where there is "widespread agreement" on two points:

*First, there is a Lukan theology which orders and directs the author's two-volume work; second, Luke has used disparate materials in constructing his work. These are obviously not contradictory statements, but they define the tension existing in Acts research today: Has Luke so re-worked his material that any detectable theological viewpoint in Acts must be said to be properly his? Or can elements of a primitive theology be found in the speeches of Acts...?*<sup>17</sup>

Some recent scholars have begun to suggest an affirmative answer to the latter question.

*Unified Apostolic Witness: Luke as Careful Reporter & Illustrator*

In 1962 H.N. Ridderbos responded to the more critical approach to the speeches in Acts, finding this critical treatment wanting for at least three significant reasons. First, viewing Luke primarily as a theologian ignored the nature of Luke's writing as historical: "Therefore, to our mind, to maintain that these speeches are more or less compositions of Luke shows a total lack of appreciation for his writings. For even though Luke's book may not be a biography of Peter or Paul, none the less the value of it depends upon the

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<sup>15</sup> Zehnle, *Peter's Pentecost Discourse*, 14-15.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

historical character of his information.”<sup>18</sup> Sir William Ramsey (1851-1939), who was deeply influenced early on by the Tübingen school and initially approached Luke with strong skepticism, found his own archaeological research changing his view of Luke. Neill and Wright summarize “The story of his researches is also the story of his gradual conversion to the view that Luke is a most careful and trustworthy writer.”<sup>19</sup> Ridderbos’ second critique of the critical approach to the speeches in Luke was that it failed to account for Luke’s familiarity with apostolic preaching: “It is, upon reflection, hard to imagine that Luke should not have been acquainted with the content and manner of the apostles’ preaching.”<sup>20</sup> Ridderbos is careful to qualify what exactly this could mean:

*This does not, of course, mean that there was a shorthand account of everything that the apostles had said on any and every occasion. But it was not difficult for those who had heard the apostolic preaching again and again, to remember its content and the way in which Peter in particular, the great spokesman of the early days, had witnessed to Christ.*<sup>21</sup>

As Stephen Neill puts it, “...in the early chapters of Acts, Luke is using good authorities and depicts for us with considerable accuracy the kind of ideas that were entertained by the early Christians.”<sup>22</sup>

Finally, for Ridderbos, the linguistic commonalities between the speeches in Acts did not necessarily imply Luke’s free invention of the speeches. As Ridderbos reasoned,

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<sup>18</sup> H.N. Ridderbos, *The Speeches of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1962), 9. It is noteworthy in this regard to contend with Luke’s introductory reflections upon his writing task, Luke 1:1-4.

<sup>19</sup> Neill & Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 153.

<sup>20</sup> Ridderbos, *The Speeches of Peter*, 9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>22</sup> Neill & Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 286.

*It is not strange that the Greek form of this preaching should bear the characteristics of Luke's own linguistic style and manner of expression. But that does not mean that the fixed plan and stereotyped construction of these speeches, the method of citing Scripture and the peculiarly archaic expressions occurring in these speeches, stemmed from Luke and not from Peter.*<sup>23</sup>

H.F. Bayer supports Ridderbos' assessment of the dissimilarities between the speeches, "The Lucan composition of the speeches must be considered. However, there are sufficient points of dissimilarity between the respective speeches to suggest that Ridderbos is handling the evidence essentially in a responsible manner."<sup>24</sup> F.F. Bruce further outlines specific linguistic and theological elements within the content of the speeches that are non-Lucan. "True, Luke recasts it to some extent in his own style, but there is much in the content that is not essentially Lukan."<sup>25</sup> Bruce gives, as examples, the regular appeal to Hebrew scripture (which is not a common a feature in Luke's writing), the reference to the blood of Christ in Acts 20.28 (Paul speaking in a decidedly Pauline way), and the eschatology in Acts 3:19-21 (Peter expressing a particular view found only here and in 2 Peter 3:12.)

While Luke's pen would account for some of the similarities in Greek, the dissimilarities in speeches as well as the non-Lucan elements within the speeches would seem to support Ridderbos' conclusion that "These speeches should be regarded not as a literal record of the exact words of Peter, Paul, *etc.*, but as illustrations of apostolic

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<sup>23</sup> Ridderbos, *The Speeches of Peter*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> Hans F. Bayer, "The Preaching of Peter in Acts," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 259.

<sup>25</sup> F.F. Bruce, "The Speeches in Acts – Thirty Years After," in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology*, ed. Robert Banks (Exeter: Paternoster, 1974), 59.



preaching in various characteristic situations.”<sup>26</sup> While an “illustration” of apostolic preaching might not rise to the level of a dictation of every word uttered, it would involve faithfully reporting actual words and messages preached by individual apostles.

Ridderbos’ view of Luke as a reporter and illustrator is further supported by the work of H.F. Bayer in his 1998 essay “The Preaching of Peter in Acts” in which he analyzes the role that Peter’s preaching played within the early church; namely, that Peter was a spokesman of the collective, apostolic witness. As Bayer notes, “The evidence suggests that Luke intended to give at least the impression that what Peter said was representative of the collective apostolic group.”<sup>27</sup> Bayer notes that after 9.32 Peter functions more as an individual (as, for example, Stephen, Philip, Paul).<sup>28</sup> This unique treatment of Peter’s early apostolic witness gives the impression that “Luke thus emphasizes that what Peter said in the initial stages of the early church... is what all the apostles said and what the apostles said is what Peter said.”<sup>29</sup> Not only does Luke seem to carefully report Peter as the paradigmatic preacher for the church, but also “...it must be conceded that Luke intended to give the impression that the message was proclaimed

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<sup>26</sup> Ridderbos, *The Speeches of Peter*, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Bayer, “The Preaching of Peter in Acts,” 261.

<sup>28</sup> Consider 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?’”) The question is being addressed to Peter “and the rest of the apostles” though the answer Luke records is the one given by Peter, as if either Peter was the representative for the group of apostles or at least his specific answer was representative of all their answers. CF Acts 1:15, 2:14, and 5:29.

<sup>29</sup> Bayer, “The Preaching of Peter in Acts”, 261-262.

with an abiding core shared by all the preachers in Acts, allowing at the same time for unique emphases to surface at appropriate points.”<sup>30</sup>

Bayer’s theory accounts for both the uniformity in content between the speeches as well as the variation from person to person and occasion to occasion. As Bayer describes the function of Peter’s early speeches within Acts, “...it is our additional hypothesis that the initial Petrine speeches (Acts 2,3) set the tone and framework for other themes developed and expounded in the unfolding narrative of Acts.”<sup>31</sup> In this sense the commonality between the speeches need not lead us to Dibelius’ conclusion that Luke freely invented all of the speeches, but rather that Peter’s earliest preaching became a paradigm, etching out the basic *kerygma* that the church would proclaim. Soards’ extensive work on the repetition of themes within the speeches in Acts (published in 1994) bears out the presence of an apostolic *kerygma*. As he concludes, “Through the speeches, especially in their christological claims of theological realization, Luke shows the reader of Acts the essential unity of early Christianity.”<sup>32</sup>

Soards’ analysis of the repeated themes within the speeches leads him to critique the mainstream approach in Acts studies, “But the consistent concern of these studies with questions of tradition history has caused the analysis of the speeches to fall into exclusive or fragmented, and thus reductionistic categories – literary, historiographic, or theological...”<sup>33</sup> Bayer’s work points a way toward a different approach to the speeches

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>32</sup> Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 9.

in Acts: analyzing the particular role of Peter's early speeches within Acts as a key to understanding the following speeches in Acts – their similarities and their dissimilarities.<sup>34</sup>

In summary, there is sufficient evidence within Acts to suggest, as F.F. Bruce<sup>35</sup> concluded in 1942, that there is "...good ground... for believing these speeches to be, not inventions of the historian, but condensed accounts of speeches actually made, and therefore valuable and independent sources for the history and theology of the primitive Church."<sup>36</sup> This theory not only accounts for the weaknesses in the critical view of the speeches in Acts (as outlined by Ridderbos) but also holds significant explanatory power in understanding the similarities and differences between the speeches in Acts – Peter's paradigmatic role accounting for the similarities in early apostolic preaching, the different speakers and occasions accounting for the differences between early apostolic sermons.

#### *Kerygma in Acts: Peter's Preaching as Paradigmatic*

Not only does the work of Bayer, Ridderbos, and Soards give an alternate view of the nature of the speeches in Acts (Luke as reporter and illustrator of the unified apostolic witness rather than Luke as a free-wheeling theologian), it also suggests that there is something unique and specific going on in Peter's preaching. As Bayer put it, "Judging from the literary function of the Petrine speeches and observing the fact that Peter arises

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<sup>34</sup> The implications of Bayer's work will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter 4.

<sup>35</sup> Bruce claims Dibelius doesn't deal with historicity of the speeches, rather ignores it, "With his emphasis on style criticism Dibelius redressed the balance, but to such a degree that he lays himself open to the counter-charge of thinking only of the account and not of the event. The question of the historicity of the speeches is not beside the point in the study of a work which claims to be a historical narrative." Bruce, "The Speeches in Acts – Thirty Years After," 57.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 53.

in Acts 1-9:32 as spokesman of the collective, apostolic witness group it becomes apparent that Peter's Pentecost and Temple speeches play a significant role in laying the theological foundation for the unfolding narrative of the Book of Acts."<sup>37</sup> The fact that Peter leads the apostles in replacing Judas (Acts 1) is not insignificant. As Perkins concludes, "His responsibility for the apostolic mission was suggested when he reconstituted the number of apostles."<sup>38</sup> Peter's unique role within the early church points towards the unique role of his speeches. As Ridderbos concludes about Peter's speeches in Acts, "These speeches are, therefore, of untold significance for our knowledge of early Christianity, and in particular the original apostolic *kerygma*. Particularly in reference to the speeches of Peter we are dealing with the foundation upon which Christ promised to build his church, Matthew 16:18; cf Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14."<sup>39</sup>

In other words Peter's speeches need to be seen as paradigmatic, as formative for the remainder of what one will hear in speeches in Acts: both in Jerusalem and outside of Jerusalem as the early church takes its message forward.<sup>40</sup> Luke's textual clues seem to point toward Peter as a spokesman for the apostles, as Acts 2:37 (noted above) and Acts 2:14 ("But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them....") seem to illustrate. As mentioned earlier, Bayer notes that Luke treats Peter more as a representative of the apostles prior to Acts 9 and more as an individual afterwards. All of

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<sup>37</sup> Bayer, "The Preaching of Peter in Acts," 257.

<sup>38</sup> PHEME PERKINS, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 90.

<sup>39</sup> Ridderbos, *The Speeches of Peter*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> Consider that Paul's early days as a Christian (in Damascus and Jerusalem) were days spent among the believers and leaders who would have already been shaped by Peter's paradigmatic *kerygma*.

which points to Peter’s early speeches as having a special role within Acts. As Bayer observes, “On the literary level we are alerted to the fact that the Petrine speeches hold significant keys to the interpretation of the unfolding narrative. We submit the hypothesis that the initial speeches in Acts set the stage for the entire unfolding narrative.”<sup>41</sup> In addition, if Peter’s mode of exhortation was not unique but rather fully within the historical tradition of prophetic calls to repentance – which would have been “in the air” among the Jewish community at the time (as will be addressed below) - this only further underlines how Peter’s initial exhortations to repentance could so thoroughly shape the church’s mode of exhortation.

*Scope and Method: an Exegetical and Theological Analysis of the Paraenesis Sections within Peter’s Speeches*

The present work will thus approach Peter’s speeches as if they grant real access to the beginnings (and even foundations) of the unified apostolic witness. In the speeches that Luke records<sup>42</sup> there are four occasions where Peter is explicitly calling a group or individual to repent:

Acts 2:38-41 Peter’s Speech at Pentecost

Acts 3:19-21 Peter’s Speech at Solomon’s Portico

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<sup>41</sup> Bayer, “The Preaching of Peter in Acts,” 273. Or, as Joel B. Green observes about the need for human response to the gospel, “The necessity of response is set forth *programmatically* in the narration of the Pentecost address....” (emphasis added) Joel B. Green, “Salvation to the End of the Earth: God as the Savior in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 101.

<sup>42</sup> Bayer identifies the following material within Acts where Peter is speaking: Acts 1:16-22, 2:14-40, 3:6, 3:12-26, 4:8-12, 4:19ff, 4:24-30, 5:3ff, 5:29-32, 8:20-23, 10:14, 10:26, 10:34-43, 10:47, 11:5-17, 15:7-11. Bayer, “The Preaching of Peter in Acts,” 258.

Acts 8:20-24 Peter's Exhortation in the City of Samaria

Acts 10:42-48 Peter's Speech at Cornelius' House

In addition, there are three occasions when Peter is reporting about past exhortations to repentance:

Acts 4:11-12 Peter's Report to the Jewish Council

Acts 11:4-18 Peter's Report to the Circumcision Party

Acts 15:7-11 Peter's Report to the Jerusalem Council

Chapter 2 of this study begins with an exegetical and theological analysis of Peter's exhortation at Pentecost. This is not only the first time Peter exhorts a crowd to repent,<sup>43</sup> but (as indicated above and considered below) this is widely considered Peter's paradigm-shaping exhortation. This speech at Pentecost is presented by Luke as foundational and therefore will be systematically examined lexically, syntactically, rhetorically, and then theologically.

In Chapter 3 the significant exegetical and theological features of Peter's Pentecost exhortation will be compared with the six other paraenesis pericopes where Peter is either exhorting others to repent or is reporting about past exhortations. If Peter's Pentecost exhortation is indeed functioning in a paradigmatic way one would expect to find the significant exegetical and theological features at Pentecost to be echoed in these other paraenesis pericopes. Chapter 3 will explore whether this is indeed the case.

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<sup>43</sup> Peter's Pentecost speech is often considered the "first Christian sermon" ever given. "Up until this time the resurrection of Christ had been the experience of a few disciples. With this sermon it was publicly announced." Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 167.

Chapter 4 will take the comparison further out: are the exegetical and theological features imbedded within Peter's Pentecost exhortation present throughout the rest of Acts as well? If Peter's answer to the question *Brothers, what then should we do?* is indeed paradigmatic, then one would expect to find evidence of that throughout all of Acts. Chapter 4 will examine whether this is so and delve further into the linguistic-historical realities that might have strengthened Peter's rhetorical and theological influence over the early church.

Finally, in Chapter 5 the implications of the study for today's church will briefly be explored.

## Chapter 2: Paraenesis at Pentecost

In Acts 2 the commotion of the Holy Spirit coming upon the group of believers in Jerusalem draws a crowd and the stage is set for Peter's Pentecost speech in verses 14-36. Peter corrects the crowd's assumption that the disciples are drunk with wine and proceeds to give a stirring overview of the redemptive-historical events leading up to the recent events in Jerusalem, including the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' followers.<sup>44</sup> As Dennis E. Johnson summarizes, "What Moses foresaw and longed for, and what Joel predicted, Peter now declares to have arrived."<sup>45</sup> This speech is followed by a question from the crowd (verse 37)<sup>46</sup> and Peter's answer (verses 38-40) which comprises Peter's first exhortation to repentance.<sup>47</sup>

(37) And having heard this<sup>48</sup> they were pierced in the heart, they said to Peter and the remaining apostles, "What should<sup>49</sup> we do,<sup>50</sup> brothers?" (38) Peter said to

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<sup>44</sup> Zehnle remarks on Peter's role, "While only Peter does the actual speaking, Luke takes pains to indicate that this discourse is to be accredited to the twelve, to the apostolic college which has just (1:26) been reestablished." (2:14, 37, 42) Zehnle, *Peter's Pentecost Discourse*, 37.

<sup>45</sup> Dennis E. Johnson, *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1997), 62.

<sup>46</sup> "Luke heightens the dramatic effect by having Peter's discourse end with the summary of 2:36, and by then interjecting a question from the audience who have been cut to the heart by what they have heard... This allows Luke the fullest statement in Acts of what is demanded of one who has been touched by the Christian message." Zehnle, *Peter's Pentecost Discourse*, 35.

<sup>47</sup> Author's own translation.

<sup>48</sup> Peter's speech (Acts 2:14-36) is undoubtedly in view here. Peter's words (see "the word" in verse 41) have had an effect on the hearers. The word has penetrated into their very hearts.

<sup>49</sup> Deliberative or hortatory subjunctive.

<sup>50</sup> (ποιήσωμεν) Subjunctive Aorist Active 1<sup>st</sup> Person Plural. Having not only heard the word, but had the word pierce into their very hearts the hearers feel the need to respond, to "do" something. Hearing and being affected at their core is presumably not enough, they instinctively sense that they must do something in response.



them, “You all repent”<sup>51</sup> he says “and each of you be baptized<sup>52</sup> on the name of Jesus Christ for the sending away of your sins and you all will receive<sup>53</sup> the gift of the Holy Spirit, (39) for the promise is for you all and for your children and all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God might call.<sup>54</sup> (40) With many other words he testified solemnly<sup>55</sup> and was urging<sup>56</sup> them saying, “You all be saved<sup>57</sup> from this crooked generation.” (41) Then the receivers<sup>58</sup> of the word were baptized<sup>59</sup> and were added<sup>60</sup> in that day about 3000 souls.

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<sup>51</sup> (μετανοήσατε) Imperative Aorist Active 2<sup>nd</sup> Person Plural. “change one’s mind.” William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: a Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch Zu Den Schriften Des Neuen Testaments Und der Übrigen Urchristlichen Literatur*, 2d ed. (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1979), 511. The question “what must we do” is answered with 3 imperatives – 1 of these is active and 2 are passive. The active imperative: repent. The passive: be baptized and be saved.

<sup>52</sup> (βαπτισθήτω) Imperative Aorist Passive 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Singular. “dip, immerse.” Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 131. Note the passive voice here: baptism is something that is done to a person – people don’t baptize themselves.

<sup>53</sup> (λήμψεσθε) Indicative Future Middle 2<sup>nd</sup> Person Plural. Note the tense here: this is not another imperative, but rather a future indicative, indication of something that will happen.

<sup>54</sup> (προσκαλέσεται) Subjunctive Aorist Middle 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Singular. While calling the people to “do” something (the two imperatives thus far), Peter clarifies that God is doing something as well. It is those whom God is calling that are to respond by repenting and being baptized.

<sup>55</sup> (διεμαρτύρατο) Indicative Aorist Middle 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Singular. “to make a serious declaration on the basis of presumed personal knowledge - 'to declare, to assert, to testify.’” Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based On Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, *Introduction and Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), §33.223.

<sup>56</sup> (παρεκάλει) Indicative Imperfect Active 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Singular. “to ask for something earnestly and with propriety - 'to ask for (earnestly), to request, to plead for, to appeal to, earnest request, appeal.’” Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §33.168.

<sup>57</sup> (σώθητε) Imperative Aorist Passive 2<sup>nd</sup> Person Plural. “save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue.” Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 798. Peter’s third imperative, also a passive verb: be saved. Note that baptism is something that is done to someone, as is being saved. The translation “save yourselves” seems to render the verb as if it were middle, which it is not. Rendering this as a passive (be saved) stays closer to the syntax of the original. Soards notes that this imperative formula in 40b expresses the conclusion of the Joel quotation from verse 21. (Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 31)

<sup>58</sup> (ἀποδεξάμενοι) Participle Aorist Middle Noun Masculine Plural. Who are the ones who were baptized and added to their numbers that day? Those who had “received” the word. Many had heard the word and were affected by the word that day (verse 37) but only those who “received” the word were baptized and added to their numbers. Here we undoubtedly have a reference to those who did indeed “repent”, the ones who responded to the imperative to change their minds about the word they had heard.

<sup>59</sup> (ἐβαπτίσθησαν) Indicative Aorist Passive 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Plural. Peter’s second imperative (and be baptized) is also followed: those who had repented were indeed baptized.

### *Lexical Features*

Peter employs several note-worthy words in his exhortation at Pentecost. As a musical chord is made up of individual notes, so Peter’s exhortation is comprised of individual lexical notes, of which 4 are highlighted below.

1. μετανοήσατε: The call to “repent” carries strong connotations. Louw-Nida specify this verb as indicating,

*...to change one's way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness - 'to repent, to change one's way, repentance.' ... Though in English a focal component of repent is the sorrow or contrition that a person experiences because of sin, the emphasis in μετανοέω and μετάνοια seems to be more specifically the total change, both in thought and behavior, with respect to how one should both think and act.<sup>61</sup>*

F.F. Bruce comments,

*Repentance was plainly called for: a complete change of heart, a spiritual about-face, was essential if those who had failed to recognize their God-sent deliverer in Jesus were nevertheless to enjoy the deliverance which he had come to procure for them and was now offering from his place of exaltation. The call to repentance had been sounded by John and Jesus (and by Jesus’ disciples in his name) in the years preceding the crucifixion, and it remained an essential element in the proclamation of the apostolic message.<sup>62</sup>*

Peter’s use of μετανοήσατε is not inventive or unique but follows Jesus’ own pattern of exhortation and will continue to be used within the early church.<sup>63</sup> Taken within the context of Peter’s speech “...the exhortation to repent means that the listeners regret their

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<sup>60</sup> (προσετέθησαν) Indicative Aorist Passive 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Plural. They were added – presumably those who had transferred from the “crooked generation” into the numbers of those who were saved. Here we see Peter’s third imperative come to fruition: he urged the people to “be saved” and here we see that they “were added” (also passive) to the ranks of the believers.

<sup>61</sup> Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §41.52.

<sup>62</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts: Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 69.

<sup>63</sup> CF 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20. Bruce, *The Book of Acts: Revised Edition*, 69.

(active or passive) involvement in the crucifixion of Jesus, that they turn away from their former, negative attitude concerning Jesus, that they believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah and exalted Lord.”<sup>64</sup> Keener suggests the implications of this, “true repentance produces a lifestyle of radical simplicity and care for others’ needs. Genuine faith in Jesus (16:31) saves, but such genuine commitment to Jesus as ‘the Lord’... will entail following Jesus’ teaching...”<sup>65</sup>

2. βαπτισθήτω: At its core this verb indicates a ritual washing, as Louw-Nida specify, “to wash (in some contexts, possibly by dipping into water), with a view to making objects ritually acceptable - 'to wash, to purify, washing, purification.”<sup>66</sup> That baptism should play a role in Peter’s exhortation is, again, not overly surprising. F.F. Bruce clarifies the connotations this word carried at the time Peter used the word, “Apparently the command to be baptized occasioned no surprise. The practice of baptism was tolerably familiar to Peter’s hearers, who (like John’s hearers before them) were required to receive baptism in water as the outward and visible sign of their repentance.”<sup>67</sup> That this imperative is in the passive is significant in context, the people are to *be baptized*. As Schnabel has put it, “The passive voice... indicates that the new converts would not be immersing themselves, as Jews were in the practice of doing, but would be immersed by one of the

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<sup>64</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, “The Language of Baptism: The Meaning of βαπτίζω in the New Testament,” in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century*, ed. Andreas J. Kostenberger, Robert W. Yarbrough. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 232.

<sup>65</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, Vol 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 971.

<sup>66</sup> Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §53.31.

<sup>67</sup> Bruce, *The Book of Acts: Revised Edition*, 69-70.

120 followers of Jesus.”<sup>68</sup> This was similar to John’s baptism and pointed toward baptism as less of a personal purification rite (as the Jews were accustomed to experiencing in a local *miqvah*) and more of a public, communal act. As Green observes, “Within the Lukan narrative, ‘baptism’ takes its meaning in part from the ministry of John (Luke 3:1-20), with the result that it expresses a desire to embrace God’s purpose anew and to be embraced into the community of those similarly oriented around the way of God.”<sup>69</sup> For a Jew this symbol of being embraced into God’s people was particularly striking.<sup>70</sup> Schnabel takes issue with Louw-Nida’s lexical entry and the practice of always translating *bapto*- and its cognates with the English word “be baptized” (which tends to connote ritual, and a ritual in water), arguing that there are contexts where it would be more appropriate to render the verb in English as “be immersed” or “be cleansed”. In Luke’s writing, for example, this same root verb is used in reference to Jesus’ passion (Luke 12:50), the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5), and pre-dinner washing (Luke 11:38). However Schnabel characterizes this particular occurrence of the verb at Pentecost in this way, “In view of the fact that Peter’s audience included Diaspora Jews who were visiting Jerusalem as pilgrims attending the festival of Pentecost, they would have understood the term βαπτίζω – whether the Aramaic equivalent, or the Greek term – in the sense of ‘to be immersed in water’, expressing

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<sup>68</sup> Schnabel, “The Language of Baptism”, 233.

<sup>69</sup> Green, “Salvation to the End of the Earth”, 104.

<sup>70</sup> Michael Green explains why baptism would represent a potential stumbling block for Jews. “It meant renouncing all claim to be God’s elect simply on the grounds of birth and circumcision. It meant becoming like a new-born child, and washing away all impurities in the bath of baptism – and that was what they were accustomed to thinking took place when a proselyte was baptized into Israel.” Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 147.

cleansing from moral and spiritual defilement.”<sup>71</sup> This lexical analysis points toward a practical sense<sup>72</sup> of what Peter was getting at: “Peter expects listeners who repent to go to an immersion pool and let themselves be immersed in water as a sign of their repentance, of being cleansed from their sin and guilt in the name of Jesus, and of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>73</sup> Such baptism as a part of a conversion was known within Judaism at the time, as Keener points out, “One Jewish use of baptism in antiquity was an act of conversion (as part of the conversion), although Jewish people traditionally applied this function of immersion only to Gentiles.”<sup>74</sup>

3. σώθητε: Again Peter is using a word rich in meaning: “to rescue from danger and to restore to a former state of safety and well being - 'to deliver, to rescue, to make safe, deliverance.’”<sup>75</sup> σώζω and its cognates are lexically central to the proclamation of the gospel. As Soards points out, “The statement in v. 40b with its strong call to “be saved” (σώθητε) reflects v. 21 (σωθήσεται “to be saved”), and it relates to speech-statements about Jesus as “savior” (σωτήρ) in 5:31 and 13:23 as well as to speech-statements about “salvation” in 4:12 (ἡ σωτηρία), 28:28 (τὸ σωτήριον), and “being saved” (σωθῆναι) in 15.11.”<sup>76</sup> Note that this verb assumes danger and lack of well-being. The call to *be saved*,

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<sup>71</sup> Schnabel, “The Language of Baptism”, 232.

<sup>72</sup> While all these elements of Peter’s cultural context clarify his use of βαπτισθήτω, and while this context on a practical level seemed to involve an immersion in water, it would be going beyond the scope of the present study to explore whether this specific practical component (immersion) was universally applied in the early church and is to be seen as normative for the church in every age.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid..

<sup>74</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 972.

<sup>75</sup> Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §21.18.

<sup>76</sup> Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 38.

then, implies a great deal about the audience's current state – that they are in danger or in sickness or generally in need of being saved.

4. προσκαλέσεται: The root verb here (προσκαλέομαι) carries the sense of “to call to, with a possible implication of a reciprocal relation - 'to call, to call to.’”<sup>77</sup> In this case the context makes it clear that it is “the Lord our God” who “might call” (προσκαλέσεται is in the subjunctive) the crowd listening to Peter (ὁμῖν), their “children” (τοῖς τέκνοις ὁμῶν), and “all who are far away” (πᾶσιν τοῖς εἰς μακράν). It is noteworthy that while Peter is answering the crowd's question about what *they* must do (ποιήσωμεν) Peter also makes note of what *God himself* must do.

While the four verbs indicated above comprise the primary notes of the lexical chord Peter sounds to call his listeners to repent, verse 38 contains some significant phrases that warrant mention as well. These phrases describe what the *effects* will be if they do repent. The forgiveness of sins (ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὁμῶν) is a significant theme for Luke. As Stenschke points out, “The forgiveness of sin is a Lukan stress as eight of the NT's eleven occurrences are found in Luke's passages.”<sup>78</sup> ἄφεσιν is often translated “forgiveness” and has the lexical sense “to remove the guilt resulting from wrongdoing - 'to pardon, to forgive, forgiveness.’”<sup>79</sup> This term is central to the gospel and is focused upon the removal of guilt, as Louw and Nida clarify:

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<sup>77</sup> Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §33.308.

<sup>78</sup> Stenschke, “The Need for Salvation”, 132.

<sup>79</sup> Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §40.8.

*It is extremely important to note that the focus in the meanings of ἀφίημι, ἄφεσις, and ἀπολύω is upon the guilt of the wrongdoer and not upon the wrongdoing itself. The event of wrongdoing is not undone, but the guilt resulting from such an event is pardoned. To forgive, therefore, means essentially to remove the guilt resulting from wrongdoing. Some languages make a clear distinction between guilt and sin, and terms for forgiveness are therefore related to guilt and not to the wrongdoing. Therefore, 'to forgive sins' is literally 'to forgive guilt.' Though terms for 'forgiveness' are often literally 'to wipe out,' 'to blot out,' or 'to do away with,' it is obviously not possible to blot out or to wipe out an event, but it is possible to remove or obliterate the guilt.<sup>80</sup>*

Another significant phrase Peter uses to describe the effects of repentance is καὶ λήμψεσθε τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (“and you all will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”) λήμψεσθε has the general sense of “to take hold of something or someone, with or without force - 'to take hold of, to grasp, to grab.’”<sup>81</sup> In this case there is the sense of them *receiving* the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is noteworthy that the two results of repentance promised involve a *sending away* of something (guilt) and a *receiving* of something (the gift of the Holy Spirit.) This transaction constitutes a significant lexical piece of Peter’s exhortation to repentance.

In addition, Luke’s use of οἱ ἀποδεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον is noteworthy. Luke informs the reader that the crowd has “heard” Peter’s speech (verse 37) which pierced their hearts. And some of those present then went a significant step further and “received the word.” Luke’s characterization of the hearing and then receiving of the word is worth noting as it is summative of the experience of Peter exhorting and the crowd responding to that exhortation. But as for Peter’s exhortation itself: repentance, salvation, baptism, and calling are the primary words Peter uses to exhort to repentance, with the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., §18.1.

sending/receiving phrases constituting a significant lexical piece as well. But *how* Peter uses these key words is just as important to consider as the words themselves.

### *Syntactical Features*

The question from the crowd (verse 37) gives the reader a hint as to what to pay attention to syntactically within Peter's exhortation. The crowd's question *Brothers, what shall we do?* is a question about action. As Louw and Nida clarify, ποιέω is "a marker of an agent relation with a numerable event - 'to do, to perform, to practice, to make.'"<sup>82</sup> The verb is first person plural and in the subjunctive aorist, giving the sense that the crowd wants to know what they might/must do.<sup>83</sup> This instructs the reader to pay attention to any actions (verbs) that Peter might give in his response – particularly any imperatives. What the reader finds in Peter's exhortation are three imperatives: one is in the active voice and two are in the passive voice.

The active imperative is μετανοήσατε. This second person plural imperative is a clear call: "You all repent." The "spiritual about-face" that Bruce described is the first part of Peter's clear and direct answer to the question put to him. As the only *active* imperative (and as the first) this verb seems to carry a heightened importance within the pericope.

The first passive imperative (βαπτισθήτω) occurs together with μετανοήσατε and is clearly directed toward all his listeners as well, as ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ("each of you") makes

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., §90.45.

<sup>83</sup> Taking this as a deliberative subjunctive.



clear.<sup>84</sup> But while repentance is something they are to do (active voice), baptism is something that is to be done to them (passive voice), though presumably Peter's imperative implies their seeking after or requesting such baptism. These two imperatives (repent and be baptized) seem to be directly connected to the promised effects of salvation (the sending off of guilt and the receiving of the Holy Spirit.) The preposition εἰς marks a strong connection between the two imperatives and the described results, as Louw and Nida characterize the sense of this preposition, "extension toward a special goal - 'to, toward, in the direction of.'"<sup>85</sup> In this case the call (repent and be baptized) is "to, toward, in the direction of" the effects of repentance that Peter goes on to describe.

The third and final imperative (σώθητε) occurs a bit later in verse 40 which seems to be a summative verse of sorts, summarizing Peter's ongoing exhortation. This verb is also second person plural and therefore would seem to be directed toward Peter's listeners. As noted above this is often translated "save yourselves" as if it were in the middle voice,<sup>86</sup> but it is in the passive voice and therefore is more literally rendered "you all be saved." Initial indications would be (as with βαπτισθήτω) that σώζω is something that is done to Peter's hearers. The syntax would seem to point in the direction that while repentance is something his hearers do (active), baptism and saving are something that is done to them (passive).

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<sup>84</sup> βαπτισθήτω is third singular, not second plural, in order to agree with ἕκαστος which is singular.

<sup>85</sup> Louw-Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, §84.16.

<sup>86</sup> Such a rendering appropriately takes into account Peter's passionate urging – he is calling upon them to do something, urging them to repent. But while "save yourselves" better captures the *sense* of what Peter is saying, it is important in a syntactical analysis to note the original syntax in the text. In this case it is noteworthy that we have a second person plural passive verb.

So the reader is tipped off in verse 37 to pay attention to any imperatives and Peter gives three imperatives: repent, be baptized, and be saved. These three verbs are all a significant part of the lexical palette Peter is using and are a direct answer to the crowd's question. The importance of these three imperatives is underlined by the fact that each of them seems to be explicitly reported as being fulfilled in the summary account in verse 41.

In verse 41 we are told that there were “receivers of the word” (οἱ ἀποδεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον). If we take “the word” (τὸν λόγον) as a reference to either Peter's speech (verses 14-36)<sup>87</sup> or the gospel message which he was preaching, then this would seem to be a reference to those who had responded to Peter's exhortation and *repented*. Verse 41 goes on to report that all those who had received the word were baptized (ἐβαπτίσθησαν) and were added to the number of the disciples (προσετέθησαν). Peter's second imperative (be baptized) is fulfilled when they were baptized. The third imperative (you all be saved from this crooked generation) would seem to be fulfilled as they were added to the number of the believers (they were no longer members of the crooked generation, but now were members of the church). This fulfillment is further clarified in verse 47 where Luke describes the Lord adding to their numbers day by day. It would seem then that the active imperative is reported as fulfilled by a participle (they were the “receivers” of the word, they had received it) and that the two passive imperatives are reported as fulfilled by two passive indicatives (they were baptized, they were added.)

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<sup>87</sup> Verse 40 would support such a reading as the summary verse indicates that Peter continued to use many other words (λόγοις) to exhort the crowd.

The syntax within the pericope would seem to highlight these three actions then: repenting, being baptized, and being saved. However, there is much more going on in Peter's exhortation than syntax alone. Peter's use of rhetorical devices deserves mention as well.

### *Rhetorical Features*

A full and robust examination of the rhetoric involved in Peter's paraenesis pericope would necessarily involve a comprehensive study of Peter's entire speech. While such a study is beyond the scope of the present work there are a few notable rhetorical devices within the paraenesis section which warrant comment and which continue to provide clarity on what Peter is up to in this call to repentance.

Verse 37: The response of the crowd in verse 37 (pierced in the heart, wanting to know what they should do) makes sense when you consider the redemptive-historical nature of Peter's speech (verses 14-36) and his rhetorical decision to appeal often and at length to Israel's history and theology. As Green points out,

*Why some sort of response is necessary is also clear in the Pentecost address. According to Peter, the exaltation of Jesus and the consequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit have signaled a dramatic transformation in history. Because these are 'the last days' (2:17), life can no longer be the same. To put it somewhat differently, the message of Jesus' witnesses calls for a radically different understanding of the 'world' than that held previously.<sup>88</sup>*

Peter's speech tells the redemptive-historical story of what God has been up to leading up to the current events in Jerusalem. By invoking the Joel prophecy Peter is making it clear that a corner has been turned, "the last days" are now upon the people. Peter's proclamation of what time it is (redemptive-historically) helps us understand in its

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<sup>88</sup> Green, "Salvation to the End of the Earth", 102.

rightful, natural place Peter's exhortation to repent, and also makes it clear that Peter is functioning within the "well-established OT and inter-testamental tradition of prophetic speeches of repentance."<sup>89</sup>

Verse 39: Peter's claim that the promise of salvation is also for "all who are far away" is language that would have had held great meaning for his Jewish listeners. As Soards points out, "As should be apparent, the language of this statement resounds that already encountered in v. 21, and now it goes on to complete the quotation from Joel (3:5b), which was left incomplete in the previous section."<sup>90</sup> It is significant that various prophets speak of God not only saving his people, but also saving nations who are "far off" (EG Isaiah 5:26, 66:19; Jeremiah 31:10). Peter's language connects the dots for his listeners, making it clear that God's clear interest in all the nations (from his call to Abram forward) is being fulfilled through Jesus.

Verse 40: Luke gives the reader a summative description of Peter's rhetorical tone in verse 40 ("With many other words he testified solemnly and urged them"). While there is evidence of a "solemnity of speech" throughout his entire speech,<sup>91</sup> this added detail about Peter's rhetorical tone is significant and makes it clear that Peter's rhetoric within the paraenesis pericope is different than the rest of the speech. Soards describes this rhetorical shift as a move from a "judicial" rhetoric (the speech up to the paraenesis section) to a "deliberative" rhetoric (the paraenesis section).<sup>92</sup> Luke's summary verbs

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<sup>89</sup> Bayer, "The Preaching of Peter in Acts", 263.

<sup>90</sup> Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 38.

<sup>91</sup> Bayer observes, "We note an emphatic and solemn tone of speech in 2:14... 2:21; 2:29; 2:36..." Bayer, "The Preaching of Peter in Acts", 266.

<sup>92</sup> "The speech is clearly structured with its parts marked by Peter's repeated addresses to the crowd (vv. 14, 22a, 29a) and narrative remarks that report the reaction of the crowd (v. 37) and summarize the content

shine a bright light upon this deliberative rhetoric: Peter testifies solemnly (διεμαρτύρατο) and exhorts (παρεκάλει) the crowd, details which lead Zehnle to conclude that this call to conversion “is the most solemn and complete of all the discourses.”<sup>93</sup>

Another rhetorical note within verse 40 is Peter’s use of the phrase “this crooked generation” (τῆς γενεᾶς τῆς σκολιᾶς ταύτης). Stenschke’s work on this phrase indicates that there is something significant in this syntagmatic combination. When γενεα (generation) is used in combination with a demonstrative or an adjective throughout the scriptures it is typically a negative use. Jesus uses such a syntagmatic combination ten times in the gospels, and the reference is always a negative observation about the current generation.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, Stenschke’s work suggests that Jesus’ use is a clear echo of familiar Old Testament occurrences in the LXX of the same syntagmatic combination (E.G. Genesis 7:1, Psalm 11:18.)<sup>95</sup> As Stenschke summarizes, “Jesus and the apostle(s) employ these expressions again introducing an old ‘acquaintance’, evoking a well-defined set of associations.”<sup>96</sup> This would indicate that Peter’s use of the term is rhetorically purposeful – he is using a syntagmatic combination and a specific phrase that his hearers would have heard time and time again in the reading of their scriptures. In this

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and tone of Peter’s speech (v. 40a). The first continuous portion of the speech is *judicial* rhetoric... the final two brief remarks (vv. 38-39, 40b) are *deliberative* rhetoric.” Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 31.

<sup>93</sup> Zehnle, *Peter’s Pentecost Discourse*, 36.

<sup>94</sup> Stenschke, “The Need for Salvation”, 135.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-137.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-138.

sense, “It is noteworthy that the adjective in Peter’s charge of his audience as γενεᾶ σκολιᾶ in Acts 2:40 also ‘rings bells’ for the reader familiar with the OT.”<sup>97</sup>

These few rhetorical observations give a clear sense that Peter was quite purposeful in both his tone and his word choice. His tone held an urgency and passion. And his word choice was redemptive-historical in nature (using phrases and words from the Old Testament that would carry special weight and meaning for his hearers.) His word choice could also be characterized as contextualized or “incarnational” – using words and phrases that were particularly meaningful and clear to his Jewish audience. Peter chose a lexical palette of words that were clear and meaningful, he used those words syntactically in quite meaningful ways, and did all of this with a rhetorical care that brought his exhortation directly and passionately to the ears of his particular hearers. But what does all this clarify about Peter’s theology of salvation and conversion?

### *Theological Features*

Taking the above lexical, syntactical, and rhetorical observations together, a basic theology of salvation and conversion can be seen as imbedded within Peter’s exhortation to repentance. Obviously Luke is not presenting a comprehensive soteriology nor is he reporting Peter’s attempts at developing a thorough soteriology. Peter is clearly about the business of addressing the marketplace, not catechumens. Neill and Wright have aptly observed that one must approach the New Testament documents recognizing “the essentially missionary character of the greater part of the work of the Church in the period before, during, and after the writing of the Gospels.”<sup>98</sup> Peter’s exhortation then

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 138-139.

<sup>98</sup> Neill & Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, 292.

represents a road-ready, *kerygma*-based call to repentance which has imbedded within it a basic theology of salvation. This basic theology is made up of three areas of clarity: people's need to repent, the church's practice of baptism, and God's role in salvation.

*Repentance: People Need to Repent*

It has already been observed that Peter's call to repent holds a highlighted place within his exhortation. Asked what they must do in response to Peter's words, the crowd is told with a clear active imperative: repent. The rationale for repentance seems to operate on two levels within Peter's exhortation: the Jews need to return to the God of their Fathers in response to God's recent activities through Jesus, and the Gentiles need to repent to be saved from the corruption within them that all humanity suffers from. The latter reality is not only significant for Gentile readers of Acts, but would have been an important reality for these Jewish converts in the early church to realize as the church would soon enter into Gentile lands.

Bayer's work in examining Peter's early speeches in Acts suggests that "At least during the initial stages of witness in Jerusalem, repentance and belief in Jesus was preached within the ancient Jewish and prophetic framework of calling the chosen people of God to return to the God of the Fathers."<sup>99</sup> Why must the Jews repent? Because there is a new chapter in the redemptive-historical story which requires their response, as Peter's entire speech makes plain. Again, Bayer:

*Taking into consideration that the death and vindicating resurrection of Jesus as well as the outpouring of the Spirit were preached as recent eschatological events, unprecedented 'fuel' for a new emergence of prophetic repentance speech*

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<sup>99</sup> Bayer, "The Preaching of Peter in Acts", 263.

*to Israel on account of the renewed work of God among his people was at hand.*<sup>100</sup>

Bayer goes on to analyze the features of such prophetic calls to repentance and finds Peter's speech at Pentecost fits this shape. In this specific historical context, as noted above, Schnabel argues that the call to repent "means that listeners regret their (active or passive) involvement in the crucifixion of Jesus, that they turn away from their former, negative attitude concerning Jesus, that they believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah and exalted Lord."<sup>101</sup> So, Peter's call to repentance along these lines reveals his belief that all Jews needed to repent in response to God's great work through Jesus.

There is evidence within his exhortation, however, that Peter understood the need to repent to be a need that all humanity shared. Peter's proclamation that the promise was not only for the Jews in his audience and their children but also for "all who are far away" indicates his understanding that salvation was on offer to all people (CF Isaiah 5:26, 66:19; Jeremiah 31:10). Peter's use of the Joel prophecy seems to indicate that he saw this universal scope to have been within God's redemptive-historical plan all along. But why do people far away need to repent? Stenschke's extensive work on the anthropology in Luke asks the question, "Is the generation present corrupted 'only' by the events surrounding the recent rejection of Jesus or is a more general characterization of the Jews or even humankind in general in view? Do people need to be saved because they are part of a corrupt generation, which has, in its dealings with Jesus simply demonstrated this very corruption?"<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>101</sup> Schnabel, "The Language of Baptism", 232.

<sup>102</sup> Stenschke, "The Need for Salvation", 132.



To answer this question Stenschke does extensive work on Peter's use of the phrase "this corrupt generation" (as commented on above) paying particular attention to the various adjectives that are used to modify "this generation" and comes to the conclusion:

*If we introduce these observations and the connotations from the OT into our quest for understanding the range of Peter's corrupt generation in Acts 2:40, we have to allow that the reference is wider than the events referred to in Acts 2:23 and point to a deeper problem with people. Both the close OT parallels to Lukan usage and his choice of adjectives modifying γενεᾶ suggest that people have a deeper problem in their relationship with God than what could be termed moral-ethical.<sup>103</sup>*

This hint at a deep problem within all humanity, combined with the promise of forgiveness that is for "all who are far off", suggests that Peter's theology of salvation points toward a need in all people to repent and receive salvation. This element of his theology, combined with his role as a prophet calling God's chosen people to repent gives us a sense of Peter's theology of salvation. As Stenschke offers, "Peter's verdict in Acts 2:40 and the investigation of the other references to the γενεᾶ allow the conclusion that people need to be saved because they are part of one of the many generations that have failed or is presently failing before God and thus constitute a corrupt humankind."<sup>104</sup> In other words, Peter believed that all people have a need to repent. And given Peter's deliberative, passionate tone rhetorically in his exhortation to repent, it would seem that this need is an urgent one.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 140.

*Baptism: The Church Baptizes*

Imbedded within Peter's theology of salvation is a theology or understanding of human conversion. Clearly this is centered upon repentance (as seen above) but his exhortation at Pentecost also implies a theology of baptism. The second imperative Peter gives the crowd (which is seen fulfilled in verse 41) does not receive any description or commentary or instruction by Peter. The call is simple: be baptized. Their response is likewise simple: they were baptized. As seen above this was partly understood within the context of Jewish purification rites in local *miqvaot*, but was notably different in that it is something done by the community (as John's communal, public baptism). But here Peter does not elaborate on *how* the baptisms were to take place. While there are no instructions or details given as to how to be baptized, it is clear that their repentance and baptism went together. As Keener comments on repentance and baptism in Luke, "...under normal circumstances, one does not separate the two."<sup>105</sup>

Some see within this pair of imperatives (repent and be baptized) a normative course for conversion, as for example B. Sauvagnat.<sup>106</sup> Others resist such a linear read, as for example Krodel, "For Luke, repentance, Baptism, forgiveness, and the gift of the Spirit form a unity rather than a series of three or four successive experiences, or stages in one's spiritual journey."<sup>107</sup> While a more extensive study throughout the scriptures on the theme of baptism would likely yield a much more robust theology of baptism, it would be pressing the current pericope beyond its bounds to suggest any more detail into

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<sup>105</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 975.

<sup>106</sup> Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 37.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

Peter's theology of baptism outside of this basic shape: a part of the human conversion process is being baptized by (and into) the church, in the name of Jesus. Again, Keener, "What is most striking is not the activity of baptism but its use for initiation specifically into the community of Jesus' followers, identifying them as a distinguishable sect within Judaism. That is, they practiced baptism 'in the name of Jesus'."<sup>108</sup>

*Salvation: God Saves*

One more feature of Peter's theology of salvation is revealed within this pericope: namely how great and God-authored salvation is. Salvation is a great thing: the transaction described in verse 38 (guilt being sent away, the gift of the Spirit being received) is a sublime exchange. The change in status from being a member of a "corrupt generation" to being "added" to God's people is profound. As mentioned above  $\sigma\phi\zeta\omega$  and its cognates carry with them rich connotations, such that Peter characterizes salvation as "the promise" which is held out to all peoples.<sup>109</sup> Salvation, then, is understood by Peter as sublime in nature and far-reaching in scope. Peter's exhortation also suggests that he believes God to be the author of salvation. It is God who chooses to "call" people to himself, and those people "are saved" (passive voice), presumably by the God who is calling them to himself. Within Peter's exhortation is imbedded this core understanding that salvation is great and God-authored.

Taken all together, then, these features of Peter's exhortation seem to suggest a theology of salvation that contains three basic convictions: 1) all people have an urgent need to repent, 2) the church should baptize those who have repented, and 3) God is the

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<sup>108</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 976.

<sup>109</sup> The flow of verses 38-40 would seem to indicate that "the promise" (verse 39) is a reference to the two effects of repentance just described in verse 38 (forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit), all of which is summed up as "being saved" (verse 40).

one who saves. Having examined the lexical, syntactical, and rhetorical features that form this basic theology of salvation within Peter's exhortation at Pentecost, do we see these same features (and this same basic theology) in Peter's other exhortations to repentance as well?

### **Chapter 3: Paraenesis in Peter's Other Speeches**

Having established an exegetical and theological sense of Peter's exhortation at Pentecost, it is now possible to examine paraenesis sections found within Peter's other speeches to see if the lexical, syntactical, rhetorical and theological shape of this initial call to repentance is found echoed there. Soards posits that Peter's directions in 2:38 have "echoes" in elements of various speeches in Acts<sup>110</sup>, but in particular this study will focus on three occasions when Peter explicitly calls a person or group to repentance and three occasions when Peter is reporting about *past* exhortations to repentance.

- Acts 3:19-21 Peter's Speech at Solomon's Portico
- Acts 8:20-24 Peter's Exhortation in the City of Samaria
- Acts 10:42-48 Peter's Speech at Cornelius' House
  
- Acts 4:11-12 Peter's Report to the Jewish Council
- Acts 11:4-18 Peter's Report to the Circumcision Party
- Acts 15:7-11 Peter's Report to the Jerusalem Council

While a thorough exegetical and theological analysis of these pericopes is beyond the scope of the present study, particular attention will be paid to the continuities and discontinuities between the paraenesis at Pentecost and these other paraenesis pericopes.

#### *Lexical & Semantic Continuity*

At Pentecost the call to "repent" (μετανοήσατε) and corresponding result of hearers being "receivers of the word" (ἀποδεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον) formed the first lexical note within the chord of exhortation that Peter sounds out. This lexical cluster (repenting/receiving the word) played a prominent role in Peter's exhortation at Pentecost, but do we find this same lexical cluster throughout Peter's exhortations in

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<sup>110</sup> Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 37. Cf Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: a Literary Interpretation, vol. 1, The Gospel According to Luke (Foundations and Facets)* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991)

other speeches? The following table suggests there are significant echoes of this lexical cluster throughout Peter's exhortations and even within his reporting about exhortations.<sup>111</sup>

Table 1

Pentecost	Lexical & Semantic Continuities	Pericope
μετανοήσατε (2:38)	μετανοήσατε (3:19) <u>ἐπιστρέψατε</u> <sup>112</sup> (3:19)	Solomon's Portico
	μετανόησον (8:22)	City of Samaria
		Cornelius' House
		Jewish Council
	<u>τὴν μετάνοιαν</u> (11:18)	Circumcision Party
		Jerusalem Council
<u>ἀποδεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον</u> <sup>113</sup> (2:41)	<u>πολλοὶ δὲ τῶν ἀκουσάντων τὸν λόγον</u> (4:4) <u>ἐπίστευσαν</u> <sup>114</sup> (4:4) τῇ πίστει τοῦ ὀνόματος <sup>115</sup> (3:16)	Solomon's Portico

<sup>111</sup> In the following tables words used by Luke in his narrative (but not spoken directly by Peter) will be underlined to make the distinction between direct quotes and the surrounded material apparent.

<sup>112</sup> ἐπιστρέψατε – ἐπιστρέφω has a semantic range that includes “return”, “change one's beliefs”, “cause to change beliefs”, and “change one's ways” (Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §2659), which can carry the connotation “to change one's manner of life in a particular direction, with the implication of turning back to God - 'to change one's ways, to turn to God, repentance.’” (Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §41.51) Thus ἐπιστρέφω can be seen as lying semantically quite close to μετανοήσατε.

<sup>113</sup> While this is the only time ἀποδεξάμενοι is used in Acts, λόγον occurs 31 times in Acts (and λόγος another 9). The advance and proclamation and reception of the word are major themes in Acts.

<sup>114</sup> ἐπίστευσαν – the verb πιστεύω and its cognates have the sense of “to believe something to be true and, hence, worthy of being trusted - 'to believe, to think to be true, to regard as trustworthy.’” (Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §5158) and thus lies semantically quite close to the sense of “receiving the word,” IE to receive the word is to believe it as true.

<sup>115</sup> Here we see an addition to this lexical cluster: some new believers are described as “receivers of the word”, others as those who “believe”, and here we have those who “believe in his name.”

	πίστις ἢ δι' αὐτοῦ <sup>116</sup> (3:16)	
		City of Samaria
	πάντα τὸν πιστεύοντα (10:43) <u>πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας τὸν λόγον</u> (10:44)	Cornelius' House
	οὐδὲ γὰρ ὄνομά ἐστιν ἕτερον ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν τὸ δεδομένον ἐν ἀνθρώποις (4:12)	Jewish Council
	πιστεύσασι ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν (11:17) <u>ῥήματα</u> <sup>117</sup> (11:14)	Circumcision Party
	ἀκοῦσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὸν λόγον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου καὶ πιστεῦσαι (15:7) τῇ πίστει (15:9)	Jerusalem Council

As this table makes clear not only is this prominent lexical cluster from Peter's speech at Pentecost echoed throughout his other speeches, but it is also enriched at Solomon's Portico. The call to "repent" is enriched by the related lexical term "turn back" (ἐπιστρέψατε); the action of "receiving the word" is enriched by the related lexical term "believe/faith" (πιστεύω and its cognates); and the "word" which is "accepted" at Pentecost is further described by the related concept of believing in "the name" (ὄνοματος) of Jesus.

Considering this entire lexical cluster, it becomes evident that while not *every* lexical feature from Pentecost is present in *each* of the six additional paraenesis pericopes, *some* part of the lexical cluster is used on all six occasions. Are these initial

<sup>116</sup> Again, note the connection between faith/belief and Jesus.

<sup>117</sup> ῥήματα – at times translated "message" (as ESV, NIV, RSV) or "words" (as NASB) ῥήματα has the semantic sense of "word" or "statement" (Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §5648) and thus would seem to lie within the lexical cluster which includes receiving the "word" (λόγον) that brings salvation.

indications of lexical and semantic continuity confirmed when considering the other major notes sounded at Pentecost?

The second major lexical feature noted at Pentecost was the call to be baptized (βαπτισθήτω) and the report that those who had repented “were baptized” (ἐβαπτίσθησαν). As Table 2 indicates, there is a fair amount of lexical discontinuity with this lexical feature.

Table 2

Pentecost	Lexical & Semantic Continuities	Pericope
βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (2:38) <u>ἐβαπτίσθησαν</u> (2:41)		Solomon’s Portico
		City of Samaria
	μήτι τὸ ὕδωρ δύναται κολῦσαι τις τοῦ μή βαπτισθῆναι τούτους (10:47) <u>προσέταξεν δὲ αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ</u> <u>Χριστοῦ βαπτισθῆναι</u> (10:48)	Cornelius’ House
		Jewish Council
	Ἰωάννης μὲν ἐβάπτισεν ὕδατι, ὑμεῖς δὲ βαπτισθήσεσθε <sup>118</sup> ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ (11:16)	Circumcision Party
		Jerusalem Council

While clearly the baptism of Gentiles is a major emphasis of the narrative of events at Cornelius’ house (and Peter’s later reporting of those events to members of the Circumcision Party) and while Peter speaks of baptism using the same lexical features

<sup>118</sup> Note that this particular reference is to baptism with the Holy Spirit.



(i.e. “in the name of Jesus”) baptism is simply not an explicit lexical element in all of Peter’s speeches.

By contrast, σῶζω and its cognates are echoed quite consistently throughout the six additional pericopes as Table 3 illustrates.

Table 3

Pentecost	Lexical & Semantic Continuities	Pericope
σώθητε (2:40)		Solomon’s Portico
		City of Samaria
		Cornelius’ House
	σωτηρία (4:12) σωθῆναι (4:12)	Jewish Council
	σωθήσῃ (11:14) εἰς ζωὴν ἔδωκεν <sup>119</sup> (11:18)	Circumcision Party
	σωθῆναι (15:11)	Jerusalem Council
(saved from danger) <sup>120</sup>	ἐκείνου ἐξολεθρευθήσεται ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ (3:23)	Solomon’s Portico
	εἰς γὰρ χολὴν πικρίας καὶ σύνδεσμον ἀδικίας ὁρῶ σε ὄντα <sup>121</sup> (8:23)	City of Samaria
	κριτῆς ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν (10:42)	Cornelius’ House

<sup>119</sup> Being led to life could be seen as related with this lexical cluster of being saved from assumed danger.

<sup>120</sup> A key semantic sense of the lexical cluster σῶζω and its cognates is that of being saved *from danger*. Green points out that “salvation” was, in Luke’s time a semantic cousin to “benefaction” and as such, “...salvation had to do with the exercise of beneficent power for the provision of a variety of blessings, ‘a general manifestation of generous concern for the well-being of others, with the denotation of rescue from perilous circumstances’. This might include the health of the state, including its internal safety and the security of its borders; being rescued from a disaster at sea; the healing of physical malady; and more.” Green, “Salvation to the End of the Earth”, 87. This implicit sense of needing to be saved from danger is echoed explicitly throughout the remaining pericopes as Table 3 illustrates.

<sup>121</sup> It is noteworthy that Peter’s description of the danger in which Simon lies has such an effect upon Simon that, in verse 24, he prays that what Peter is describing would *not happen to him*. Simon is, in essence, praying that he would be *saved* from the stated danger.

		Jewish Council
		Circumcision Party
		Jerusalem Council

One of the lexical features of Peter’s paraenesis at Pentecost was the mention of God calling the people (προσκαλέσεται). While this emphasis upon God’s activity in the act of salvation is found throughout the remaining paraenesis pericopes (see *Theological Continuity* below) this particular lexical expression of that reality is not found in any of the remaining pericopes.

The final significant lexical feature at Pentecost was Peter’s description of the *effects* of repentance. Two significant phrases were used – “the forgiveness of sins” (ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν) and “receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit” (λήμψεσθε τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος). As Table 4 indicates, there is a significant amount of lexical and semantic continuity with these two elements.

Table 4

Pentecost	Lexical & Semantic Continuities	Pericope
ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν (2:38)	ἐξαλειφθῆναι ὑμῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας (3:19)	Solomon’s Portico
	εἰ ἄρα ἀφεθήσεται σοι ἡ ἐπίνοια τῆς καρδίας σου <sup>122</sup> (8:22)	City of Samaria
	ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν λαβεῖν διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος (10:43)	Cornelius’ House

<sup>122</sup> Here ἀφεθήσεται σοι is often translated “may be forgiven you” (as ESV) or “will forgive you” (as NIV) and clearly lies within this lexical cluster. In this pericope it would seem that Peter is exhorting Simon to repent of a specific sin (rather than his sinfulness all together) though the lexical and semantic continuity is clear: forgiveness of sins is associated with repentance.

		Jewish Council
		Circumcision Party
	καθαρίσας τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν <sup>123</sup> (15:9)	Jerusalem Council
λήμψετε τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (2:38)		Solomon's Portico
		City of Samaria
	ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον (10:44) <u>ἢ δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐκκέχυται</u> (10:45) οἵτινες τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔλαβον ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς (10:47)	Cornelius' House
		Jewish Council
	ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ' αὐτοὺς (11:15) βαπτισθήσεσθε ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ (11:16) τὴν ἴσην δωρεὰν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς (11:17)	Circumcision Party
	αὐτοῖς δοὺς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον (15:8)	Jerusalem Council

Notably, at the Jewish council neither of the phrases has a close echo.

### *Syntactical Continuity*

The syntactical analysis of Peter's exhortation at Pentecost pointed towards three verbs being emphasized: repenting, being baptized, and being saved. The first imperative (μετανοήσατε) was in the active voice in 2:38, and βαπτισθήτω and σώθητε were in the

<sup>123</sup> καθαρίσας has the sense of "to cause something to become clean - 'to make clean, to cleanse, to clean.'" (Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §79.49) and this word used in conjunction with "hearts" (cf 2:37 and 8:22) places this phrase within this lexical cluster.

passive voice. Notably, the two other occurrences of μετανοήσατε (3:19 and 8:22) are both active imperatives, and the related term in 3:19 (ἐπιστρέψατε) is also an active imperative. The syntactical continuity between Peter's exhortation at Pentecost and the six other exhortation pericopes is further strengthened when we consider that three of the four occurrences of βαπτισθήτω in the 6 other speeches are in the passive voice (10:47, 10:48, 11:16).<sup>124</sup> Thus Peter's syntax at Pentecost related to baptism (they were baptized, presumably by the apostles) is echoed throughout his speeches (those repenting are baptized, by church leaders.) Finally, it is notable that the final passive imperative from Pentecost (σώθητε) finds its echo in Peter's other speeches as well. Every other time Peter uses this verb (4:12, 11:14, 15:11) it is also in the passive voice.<sup>125</sup> Taken together it would seem that the syntactical features in Peter's Pentecost speech (repent, be baptized, be saved) are echoed in Peter's remaining exhortations.

### *Rhetorical Continuity*

Two rhetorical features of Peter's exhortation at Pentecost were noted earlier: his tone (which was urgent in nature) and his word choice (which was redemptive-historical and "incarnational" in nature.) Do the six additional exhortation pericopes give evidence of these rhetorical features?

Luke's explicit description about Peter's tone at Pentecost ("with many other words he testified solemnly and urged them") does not find an exact echo in all the other exhortation pericopes. However Luke does give some indications of tone that do seem to point to an urgency in Peter's exhortations, as Table 5 illustrates.

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<sup>124</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> occurrence (ἐβάπτισεν in 11:16) is in the active, but is a reference to John baptizing others.

<sup>125</sup> This continuity is striking and will be explored below in Chapter 4.

Table 5

Pentecost	Lexical & Semantic Continuities	Pericope
<u>ἐτέροις τε λόγοις πλείοσιν</u> <u>διεμαρτύρατο καὶ</u> <u>παρεκάλει αὐτοὺς λέγων</u> (2:40)	NA	Solomon's Portico
	NA <sup>126</sup>	City of Samaria
	παρήγγειλεν <sup>127</sup> (10:42) διαμαρτύρασθαι <sup>128</sup> (10:42) κηρύξαι <sup>129</sup> (10:42) <u>προσέταξεν</u> <sup>130</sup> (10:48)	Cornelius' House
	NA <sup>131</sup>	Jewish Council
	<u>λαλήσει ῥήματα πρὸς σέ</u> <sup>132</sup> (11:14)	Circumcision Party

<sup>126</sup> While Luke gives no explicit commentary upon or descriptor of Peter's exhortation to Simon, the content of the exhortation ("May your silver perish with you", "this wickedness of yours") does seem to carry an urgent tone.

<sup>127</sup> Peter reports that God had "commanded" him to exhort the people to repent. This is a strong word for his marching orders (*ἀπαγγέλλω*: to announce what must be done - 'to order, to command.' (Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §33.327) which does seem to imply an urgency of sorts to Peter's calling to preach and testify.

<sup>128</sup> Note the explicit echo from 2:40.

<sup>129</sup> Another strong verb to describe what Peter was doing (and how he saw his marching orders.) *κηρύσσω* has the sense of "to announce in a formal or official manner by means of a herald or one who functions as a herald - 'to announce, to proclaim.'" (Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §33.206)

<sup>130</sup> Peter's tone when instructing the people to be baptized is noteworthy, the verb carrying the sense of "to give detailed instructions as to what must be done - 'to order, to instruct, to tell, to command.'" (Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §33.325)

<sup>131</sup> While no indications of tone are present in Luke's reporting of Peter's account to the Jewish Council, it is noteworthy that the Council was struck by the "boldness" of Peter and John (4:13). Here the term *παρρησίαν* means "a state of boldness and confidence, sometimes implying intimidating circumstances - 'boldness, courage.'" (Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, §25.158)

<sup>132</sup> No sense of tone seems to be hinted at in this pericope.

	διὰ τοῦ στόματός μου <sup>133</sup> ἀκοῦσαι τὰ ἔθνη (15:7)	Jerusalem Council
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The other noteworthy rhetorical feature at Pentecost was Peter's word choice which was redemptive-historical in nature and perfectly suited for his Jewish audience. While we see significant redemptive-historical language (and familiar Jewish concepts and phrases) at Solomon's Portico (throughout 3:11-26, e.g. "Men of Israel", "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob), the God of our Fathers"), before the Jewish Council (4:7-12, e.g. "all the people of Israel", "the stone that was rejected by you, the builders"), while addressing the Circumcision Party (e.g. "nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth"), and before the Jerusalem Council (e.g. "the Gentiles", "placing a yoke on the neck", "our fathers"), it is noteworthy that the two exhortation pericopes that feature Peter speaking to Gentiles (in the City of Samaria and at Cornelius' house) have fewer redemptive-historical or specifically Jewish words and phrases. This high incidence of redemptive historical language indicates continuity with Peter's rhetoric at Pentecost. The diminished use of such language in Samaria and at Cornelius' house seems to point towards Peter's "incarnational" rhetoric at Pentecost being a rhetorical feature throughout his exhortations: he made the rhetorical decision to speak as people could understand.

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<sup>133</sup> While no clear sense of tone is explicitly stated or even implied here, it is noteworthy that Peter's self-reflection upon his proclaiming/exhorting (IE what he is proclaiming with his mouth) is imbedded in a grand story: God himself made a choice that Peter would do this proclaiming/exhorting among the Gentiles. Peter's characterization of his own role as speaker is significant and points towards a serious self-perception about his proclaiming/exhorting.

### *Theological Continuities*

As seen above the basic theology of salvation seen imbedded within Peter's exhortation to repentance at Pentecost is made up of three areas of clarity: 1) people's need to repent, 2) the church's practice of baptism, and 3) God's role in salvation. Do we find these basic theological themes echoed in Peter's other moments of exhortation?

At Pentecost, Peter's basic theology that people have a need to repent had two elements within it: the Jews' need to repent because of the new redemptive-historical events, and all people's need to repent because of their corrupt nature. At Solomon's Portico Peter is explicit that sin is what creates the need for repentance (sins need to be "blotted out"), but at the conclusion of his speech, Peter again nuances this human need for repentance for Jews and for all. Note that he reminds the Jewish crowd that they, as "sons of the prophets and of the covenant", need to "turn from their wickedness," but he also clarifies in the same verses (3:25-26) that while Jesus was sent to the Jews "first" the plan has always had "all the families of the earth" in mind. Once Peter stands before the Jewish Council to defend his actions at Solomon's portico, his bold response voices the same anthropology: Jesus is the cornerstone, and while the Jews have "rejected" him (a stance they implicitly must repent from, as Jesus has now been "raised from the dead"), the salvation he brings is given "under heaven among men."

At Cornelius' house Peter again underscores the human need for repentance (there is a "judge of the living and the dead" and there is a need for "forgiveness of sins"), but he again nuances this need for repentance for Jews (the word was "sent to Israel" and Jesus' ministry occurred "in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem") and then for all humanity (salvation is for those "in every nation.") In fact, the reality that salvation is on

offer to all humanity (even Gentiles!) is clearly a major theological emphasis of Peter's exhortation at Cornelius' house, as is clear within the pericope itself and which is affirmed when Peter recounts those events before the Circumcision Party (11:4-18) and when he later speaks before the Jerusalem Council (15:7-11).

In fact, the only one of the six remaining paraenesis pericopes that doesn't contain echoes of this dual anthropology is Peter's call to Simon the Magician to repent. This pericope is unique among the seven pericopes being considered in that it deals with an exhortation directed to a single individual (not in a speech to a crowd), directed to an individual who has already "believed" and been "baptized" (8:13), and apparently an exhortation to repent of a specific sin.<sup>134</sup> Even so, it is noteworthy that Peter's call to Simon to repent is underscored by what a *great need* there is for Simon to repent.<sup>135</sup>

It would appear then that Peter's basic anthropology at Pentecost (people need to repent: Jews because of what has happened redemptive-historically, and all people because of their sins) is strongly echoed whenever he is exhorting people to repent or when he is reporting about those exhortations to others. But what of his ecclesiology? Is Peter's basic theology that the church baptizes (which was present at Pentecost) echoed in the remaining pericopes?

As noted in the section on Lexical Continuities above, with the exception of Cornelius' house (and Peter's report of that event before the Circumcision Party) baptism simply does not "come up" in the speeches of Peter as Luke has recorded them. When

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<sup>134</sup> See however James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: a Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching On the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1977).

<sup>135</sup> His "heart is not right before God", he has committed "wickedness", he is in "the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity". (Acts 8:20-23)



Peter does speak of baptism in these pericopes his words accord with the basic theology expressed at Pentecost (new believers are baptized by the church.) Most notable is Peter's speech before the Circumcision Party where he expresses 1) that Jesus had commanded them to baptize (11:16), and 2) that to withhold baptism would be to "stand in God's way." (11:17) So while Peter's few mentions of baptism *accord* with the basic ecclesiology expressed at Pentecost, there is not a demonstrable *echo* of that theology repeated throughout all his exhortations.

When it comes to Peter's soteriology, however, we do find such an echo. The soteriology noted at Pentecost (which was not overly comprehensive and detailed, but perfectly suited for the mission field) had two components: the fact that salvation is great, and the fact that salvation is God-authored. When looking at Peter's other paraenesis pericopes, one finds words and phrases that point toward a similarly shaped soteriology.

At Solomon's Portico Peter uses the evocative phrases "sins may be blotted out" and "times of refreshing"<sup>136</sup> to describe salvation – both of which underscore the greatness of salvation. In the section above on Lexical Continuities it was noted how language describing the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit are echoed throughout the six remaining pericopes as well, phrases which illustrate the greatness of salvation.

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<sup>136</sup> It must be noted that some see this as a reference not to the present-day effects of salvation, but rather as an eschatological reality. Ridderbos, for example has written, "We are of the opinion that the difficult expression 'times of refreshing' in verse 20 is also to be understood of the future messianic time of salvation and the second coming of Christ." (Ridderbos, *The Speeches of Peter*, 30.) But regardless of *when* this phrase refers to, it is a reference to the results of repentance, a description of God's great salvation.

It is noteworthy, as well, that Peter's clarity at Pentecost that God is the author of salvation is echoed<sup>137</sup> at Solomon's Portico (the effects of salvation "come from the Lord" (3:20)), in Samaria (Simon begs Peter to "pray for me to the Lord" (8:24)), at Cornelius' house (not only did God command Peter to preach but God also "appointed" Jesus as the judge of the living and the dead<sup>138</sup> (10:42)), before the circumcision party (the salvation at Cornelius' house had been "God's way" that Peter refused to resist (11:17), and even before the Jerusalem Council (note 15:7-8 where God is the subject of various verbs<sup>139</sup> associated with the bringing of salvation.)

### *Notable Discontinuities*

While the continuities (lexical, syntactical, rhetorical, and theological) are noteworthy throughout Peter's exhortation speeches, there are some notable discontinuities. A contextual analysis of the pericopes would seem to suggest that different contexts account for different emphasis in some of Peter's speeches.<sup>140</sup> For example, Peter emphasizes the great need for repentance when speaking with Simon – such was the serious nature of the temptation this new convert was facing. At Cornelius' house Peter emphasizes that salvation is on offer to those in every nation – a relevant point given these were the first Gentile converts to the faith. Before the Jewish Council

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<sup>137</sup> The one exception would be Peter's defense before the Jewish Council after the healing at Solomon's Portico where no explicit characterization of God as author of salvation is present.

<sup>138</sup> God's authority over judging the living and the dead would seem to relate with salvation as Peter has spoken of it, namely the need for one's guilt to be taken away.

<sup>139</sup> In these two verses Peter speaks of God making a choice, knowing the heart, showing acceptance, and giving the Holy Spirit.

<sup>140</sup> Ridderbos has noted, "The speech in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost serves especially to explain the pouring out of the Holy Spirit; the speech in Acts 3 lays emphasis on the fact that the door of salvation is still not shut for the Jews, even though they crucified Jesus, in fact it stresses that God appeals to them first of all. The speech in Acts 10, on the other hand, especially opens the door to the Gentiles." (Ridderbos, *The Speeches of Peter*, 12)

Peter lingers on the “name of Jesus”, an emphasis which seems to be in response to the Council’s request that Peter stop speaking the name of Jesus. And before the Circumcision Party and the Jerusalem Council Peter places a heavy emphasis on God’s authorship of salvation, a powerful defense for why Peter would call Gentiles to repent – God called Peter to the task because God himself makes no distinction.

There is one discontinuity that context alone doesn’t seem to easily account for: the eschatology in Peter’s speech at Solomon’s Portico. The second coming of Christ which Peter seems to speak of has been the source of much theological debate. Some see this particular eschatological claim (that Christ’s return waits for our repentance) as very rare in the New Testament. For example, H. Windisch has concluded that “the notion that repentance will bring on the final divine intervention at the end of time (or at the coming of Jesus) is rarely found in the New Testament. Besides Acts 3:19*f.*, the only text which reflects the notion is 2 Pet. 3:12...”<sup>141</sup> But others, such as Richard F. Zehnle, have argued that this particular eschatology is not so rare after all. Zehnle argues that the concept of repentance leading to God’s visitation and redemption is found throughout rabbinical literature, Intertestamental literature, the canonical scripture, and early Christian literature.<sup>142</sup> But for the present study, regardless of whether this particular theological feature is found elsewhere in the New Testament it does not seem to be found in any of Peter’s other paraenesis pericopes.

Even taking these discontinuities into account, the lexical, syntactical, rhetorical, and theological continuities between Peter’s exhortation to repent at Pentecost and the remaining six pericopes is striking. The three imperatives Peter used at Pentecost (repent,

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<sup>141</sup> Zehnle, *Peter’s Pentecost Discourse*, 73.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-75.

be baptized, be saved) form a three-fold view of salvation (people need to repent, the church baptizes, God saves) which is strongly echoed every other time Peter exhorts people to repentance or recounts and defends such exhortations. If, as posited above, Peter's speech at Pentecost is indeed paradigmatic this is exactly what one would expect to find. But did this strong paradigmatic exhortation (people need to repent, the church baptizes, God saves) pave the way for the entire early church? Do we find any evidence that Peter's way of exhorting and understanding salvation became paradigmatic for the church?

## Chapter 4: An Outlook on the Unified Apostolic Witness

At Pentecost Peter exhorted the crowds to repent. An exegetical analysis of this exhortation reveals that Peter emphasizes that 1) people need to repent, 2) the church baptizes, and 3) salvation is great and God-authored. Examining Peter's other moments of exhortation (and moments of reflection on his exhorting) reveals a significant echo of these same three features (with a slightly softer echo of the second point.) But does the echo end there, or does Peter's way of exhorting ultimately shape the early church's way of exhortation? Do we hear these same three echoes throughout Acts?

### *People Need to Repent*

People's need to repent is indeed a major emphasis throughout Acts. As Zehnle observes, "The words *μετάνοια-μετανοεῖν* are found frequently in Luke-Acts, and the call to conversion is essential to the apostolic preaching according to Luke (CF. Acts 17:30; 26:20)."<sup>143</sup> While *μετάνοια-μετανοεῖν* and their cognates occur 4 times in Matthew, 3 times in Mark, and no times in John, there are 23 such occurrences in all of Luke-Acts. Soards' research has categorized various explicit calls, implicit calls, and references/reports of repentance throughout Acts.<sup>144</sup> This emphasis on repentance is not just found with Peter but throughout Acts, including the Pauline material (E.G. 17:30, 26:20, 20:21). As Stenschke notes, "Paul has one and the same message for all people:

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>144</sup> Explicit calls to repentance: 2:38,3:19,14:15,17:30; implicit calls to repentance: 3:26,4:10,5:31,10:42-43,13:38,26:20-23,29; and references/reports of repentance: 15:19,20:21,26:20. (Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 192)

Repentance in its most general sense is needed; the Jewish sin of rejecting Jesus is not particularly in mind. All people are away from God and need to turn to him.”<sup>145</sup>

Throughout Acts not only is there a pattern of calling people to repent, but there is the same anthropology that emerged in Peter’s exhortations: the clear message that people have a desperate *need* to repent. Soards’ study on the temporal phrases<sup>146</sup> that are used in Peter’s, Stephen’s, and Paul’s speeches, suggests that,

*These small but crucial markers show us one vital function of the speeches in Acts. The speakers recognize the critical nature of the moments in which they and their audience stand, and with their very words the speakers effect a contrast between past and present that exposes the real character of the human situation.*<sup>147</sup>

Stenschke’s significant survey of Lucan theology (and anthropology) leads him to conclude, “It seems that people need to be saved because of their alienation from God which shows itself in their attitude towards him, towards themselves and their fellow people, and which culminated in the rejection of Jesus, who had come with a mission to seek and save what was and is lost (Luke 19:10).”<sup>148</sup> The types of sins from which people need to be saved do vary, as Stenschke observes, “In Luke’s calls to repentance people are challenged to turn away from various kinds of sins. They need to be saved from the sin of having rejected and murdered God’s Christ, from sins of a more general nature, from the sin of lacking spiritual understanding, from the sin of idolatry and failure to

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<sup>145</sup> Stenschke, “The Need For Salvation”, 142.

<sup>146</sup> Such phrases include καὶ νῦν (and now), τὰς ἡμέρας ταύτας (these days), καὶ τὰ νῦν (and now), νῦν (now), τὰ νῦν (now), ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν (from now on), νυνὶ (now). These phrases are employed often in speeches in Acts, including 3:17, 4:29, 5:38, 7:34, 20:22, 20:32, 22:1, 24:13, 26:6, 27:22). Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, 190-191.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>148</sup> Stenschke, “The Need For Salvation”, 144.

recognize and properly worship God...”<sup>149</sup> But regardless of the specific sin, the response called for in the Lucan material is always the same: repent. As Stenschke observes, “In Luke’s calls to repentance people are challenged to turn away from various kinds of sins...Admittedly, this wide reference is not yet apparent in Peter’s first sermon in Jerusalem. But by the time Paul sets out for Rome the attentive reader has learned that people need to be saved because they are sinners alienated from God and have no alternative should they wish to escape his wrath.”<sup>150</sup>

Green’s analysis of the various calls to repentance in Acts leads him to the conclusion that there is no singular *way* of repentance that emerges.

*Although Luke is concerned with conversion from one form of life to another, then, he outlines no ‘typical’ way of understanding the nature of that conversion. In effect, the necessary response to the salvific message is initial and ongoing identification with God’s purpose, manifest in the Way. Beyond this, the Lukan narrative supports no technique or pattern of conversion.*<sup>151</sup>

Green points out that there is a wide lexical range used throughout Luke’s writing when speaking of the human act of repentance, “What is the appropriate response to the good news of salvation? Luke addresses this question with an arsenal of possibilities – *e.g.*, believe, be baptized, turn to God, listen, see, repent, and so on – but singles out no particular pattern of response as paradigmatic.”<sup>152</sup> So while it would seem that Peter’s emphasis on the need for people to repent echoes throughout Acts, the way it is spoken of varies. Green’s analysis of this lexical spread does lead him, however, to acknowledge

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Green, “Salvation to the End of the Earth”, 103-104.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 105.

that, “To deny that Luke presents a particular pattern of response is not to deny that some forms of response might be regarded as typical in some sense.”<sup>153</sup> Green identifies three forms of response that are more typical: baptism, repentance, and faith. All three of which we find within Peter’s exhortations.

### *The Church Baptizes*

Above it was noted that after Pentecost (with Peter’s explicit call to the crowd to be baptized) there is not as significant an echo of this call within Peter’s other exhortations. When Peter does speak of baptism (e.g. at Cornelius’ house and before the Circumcision Party) his words do *accord* with what he expressed at Pentecost, though there is not as strong an echo of this prominent feature of his exhortation at Pentecost. When looking at all the other verbal occurrences of “baptize” in Acts it is noteworthy that the syntactical feature found within Peter’s exhortation (the people *are baptized*, passive voice) is indeed found *throughout* Acts. Of the 20 verbal occurrences of “baptize” in Acts only 4 are in the active voice (1:5,8:38,11:16,19:4) and each of these is a reference to a leader of the church baptizing new converts. All other occurrences are in the passive voice.<sup>154</sup> When people do speak of baptism in Acts they speak of it in the same way: people are baptized by church leaders. Baptism is a function of the church. As noted above, this was a marked departure from the Jewish understanding and practice of immersion in water – Jews would immerse *themselves* (at one of the many *miqvaot* in the area.) Peter’s striking call to allow someone else (a leader of the church) to immerse one is consistently echoed throughout the rest of Acts.

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>154</sup> Note that though 22:16 is in the middle voice, the sense of the occurrence is clear: Ananias is calling Saul to *be baptized* into the church.



*Salvation is Great and God-Authored*

Salvation is not only proclaimed as great and sublime within Peter's exhortations, but it is perhaps the largest theme in all of Luke-Acts. Green observes that, "It has long been noted that the NT vocabulary of salvation... congregates especially in Luke-Acts, occurring 21 times in Acts, both in narrative and speech materials."<sup>155</sup> While the theme of salvation has been signaled numerous times in Luke's first volume, "In Luke's second volume, the salvation theme is sounded in an explicit and programmatic way in Peter's sermon at Pentecost."<sup>156</sup> Green goes on to examine not just the occurrence of salvation, but the content of these occurrences and concludes that, "salvation [is] the *theme* which unifies other textual elements within the narrative."<sup>157</sup>

Not only is salvation the pervasive, cohering theme within Luke-Acts (a repeating bell which is perhaps rung loudest at Pentecost in Peter's exhortation), but the *shape* of this soteriology (that salvation is God-authored) is also echoed throughout Acts. Bayer observes that "It is at this point that we observe a particular Petrine concentration on God's sovereign will. Soards and others are correct in stating that this theme is assumed and prominent throughout Acts."<sup>158</sup> Recall that every time Peter uses the term σωθητε (2:40, 4:12, 11:14, 15:11) he uses it in the passive. Salvation, for Peter, is something that is ultimately done to people by God. Brian S. Rosner's work on the repeated summaries of the advance of the gospel found throughout Acts confirms Bayer's conclusion. He

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<sup>155</sup> Green, "Salvation to the End of the Earth", 86. Green goes on to list these occurrences: Acts 2:21,40,47;4:9,12;5:31;7:25;11:14; 13:23,26,47;14:9;15:1,11;16:30,31;27:20,31,34,43;28:28.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>158</sup> Bayer, "The Preaching of Peter in Acts", 271.

notes that these summary statements (which are a significant and conspicuous literary feature within Acts) perform three functions: 1) they act as transitions, 2) they confirm that progress is taking place (and that it is impressive and far reaching), and 3) they clarify that God is the author of this progress. As Rosner puts it, "...in reporting progress the summaries consistently stress divine causation... In giving God the credit for progress the summaries are in accord with much else in Luke."<sup>159</sup>

It would seem then that the basic contour of Peter's exhortation at Pentecost is not only found throughout his remaining exhortations, but is found throughout the entirety of Acts. Perhaps Peter's exhortation at Pentecost did fill a paradigm-forming function for the church, as many New Testament scholars have suggested.<sup>160</sup> Is this merely because Peter happened to speak first? "But in Acts a positive thrust is given to the call to conversion by the inclusion of elements *first* mentioned in the Pentecost discourse."<sup>161</sup> (Emphasis added.) As noted above Luke explicitly signals to the reader that Peter is a "responsible speaker of the corporate apostolic group."<sup>162</sup> As Perkin's work on Peter suggests, "Peter is clearly the central character among the apostles in Jerusalem. He is usually the spokesperson<sup>163</sup> for the group."<sup>164</sup> It should not be surprising then to find

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<sup>159</sup> Rosner, "The Progress of the Word", 222-223.

<sup>160</sup> Gordon T. Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion & Authentic Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 114.

<sup>161</sup> Zehnle, *Peter's Pentecost Discourse*, 61.

<sup>162</sup> Bayer, "The Preaching of Peter in Acts", 262.

<sup>163</sup> Perkins has done an analysis of 2nd century data on Peter and has found that Peter figured for Gnostic and orthodox Christians as "...the spokesperson for the understanding of Christian truth held by the majority of Christians. They also agree that Peter provides the model for those who seek to defend that tradition." PHEME PERKINS, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church* (Minneapolis: Portress Press, 2000).

<sup>164</sup> Perkins, *Peter*, 95.

evidence within Acts that suggests Peter functioned as the first voice of a unified apostolic witness. As Bayer put it, “According to Luke, then, we are not so much to identify idiomatic Petrine elements in the initial Petrine speeches and statements in Acts 1-9:32 as much as we are to view them as collective, apostolic witness establishing the foundation for the rest of Acts.”<sup>165</sup>

The unity of this apostolic witness – first sounded forth by Peter at Pentecost - is even less surprising given that Peter doesn’t seem to have creatively invented the shape of his exhortation, but rather took his cues from the strong, well-established model of the prophetic call to repentance.

#### *The Prophetic Pattern of Exhortation*

The prophetic call to repentance is a pattern suggested throughout Luke’s writings. As Bayer observes,

*Luke, in fact, takes up the long-standing tradition of chronicling prophetic calls of repentance in Israel, beginning with the repentance preacher John the Baptist, continuing with Jesus and concluding with Peter, Paul and others. Since the well-established phenomenon of repentance preachers can surface at any time in Israel (esp. in Jerusalem!), the Lucan report of the Spirit-filled and prophetic witness of Peter (cf., Acts 2:1-4) captures the motif-historical and historical potential of the times.*<sup>166</sup>

Bayer reasons that this prophetic pattern would have been natural for Peter to adopt, “The origin of prophetic, and now Christ-centered repentance speeches (the God of the Fathers is always the initiator) is conceivable at any stage in early Christianity. Based on its long

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<sup>165</sup> Bayer, “The Preaching of Peter in Acts”, 262.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 265.

history and the current deeds of God the form and content of the prophetic repentance speech ‘lies in the air’, so to speak.”<sup>167</sup>

It wasn’t just Peter who exhorted in this prophetic way, but it would seem that Peter’s instincts to exhort to repentance as the prophets was an instinct that became the norm for the early apostles, “The motif-historical evidence... suggests the simultaneous use of this motif by various early Christian preachers, including Peter (esp. as speaker of the collective apostolic witness), Stephen, Philip and Paul.”<sup>168</sup>

If it is true that Peter was a spokesman and leader for the apostles and that he “subscribes to a traditional form of prophetic repentance speech”<sup>169</sup> then it should not be surprising that his initial exhortation at Pentecost would indeed take a shape that would then become normative for the church’s understanding of salvation and practice of exhortation. Bayer’s work on the motif of the prophetic call to repentance leads to the conclusion that indeed the “initial speeches in Acts set the stage for the entire unfolding narrative.”<sup>170</sup> Bayer goes on to note that this hypothesis has to be further verified by other studies, and this present exegetical and theological analysis of Peter’s exhortation at Pentecost would seem to support Bayer’s hypothesis.

Such a strong, paradigmatic pattern in the early church naturally raises two questions: Did this basic understanding of salvation and practice of exhortation continue to echo down throughout the centuries of the church’s life? And does Peter’s model at

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 273.

Pentecost still shape our theology and practice today? While the former question would require a thorough historical analysis to answer, the latter will receive brief reflection and comment in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Paraenesis in the Church Today**

Given the above analysis of Peter's exhortation at Pentecost (and its significance for the early church) it bears reflecting on how this basic, unified understanding of salvation and practice of exhortation is or is not shaping the church today.

In Acts we are not given a theological treatise on soteriology, but rather a road-ready, mission-contextualized understanding of salvation and practice of exhortation that is made up of three basic notes: people need to repent, the church baptizes, and God saves. These three notes together provide a basic, balanced understanding of salvation – together they make a “chord”, a rich and robust understanding of salvation. However, it is not uncommon in today's diverse church to find individual churches or whole denominations where one or more of these basic notes are either missing or underemphasized to such a degree that the resulting chord is not as strong and robust as it could be.

Take, by way of example, a church or tradition where the church's role in baptism and God's role in saving are emphasized, but the individual's need to repent is underemphasized. Some traditional churches (e.g. Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed churches) may do a wonderful job of giving glory to God as the author of salvation and underscore the importance of being baptized by the church (and into the church body) but it is possible to grown up within one of these churches (baptized as an infant, a faithful member of the church body) without having to individually weigh the need for repentance before God. In such a context, the basic chord sounded at Pentecost may not

be heard in its entirety. The question *Brothers, what shall we do?* is answered with a slightly incomplete “The church baptizes. God saves.” Repentance itself, such a major note in Peter’s (and the early church’s) answer to this question, can receive slight treatment in such contexts.

Or consider a church or tradition where the individual’s need to repent and God’s role in saving are emphasized, but the call to be baptized by (and into) the church body is underemphasized. Some parachurch ministries (e.g. campus fellowships, missions-sending organizations, evangelistic crusades) may do a wonderful job of calling individuals to weigh their need of repentance and giving glory to God as the author of salvation, but it is possible to “come to faith” in one of these ministries without ever coming into the church body through baptism (or even hearing that baptism is an important part of becoming a Christian.) In such a context, the basic chord sounded at Pentecost may not be heard in its entirety. The question *Brothers, what shall we do?* is answered with a slightly incomplete “People need to repent. God saves.” The result can be an individualistic understanding of the faith that does not have robust categories or perceptions of the church itself.

Or consider a church or tradition where the need to repent and be baptized into the church are emphasized, but God’s role as the author of salvation is underemphasized. Some churches (e.g. Baptist, Pentecostal, evangelical nondenominational) may do a wonderful job of calling individuals to weigh their need of repentance and underscoring the importance of being baptized by the church (and into the church body), but it is possible to grow up in one of these churches or “come to faith” in one of these churches with a sense that salvation is something the repentant sinner wisely chooses on their own,

rather than a gift that is given by God and authored by God alone. In such a context, the basic chord sounded at Pentecost may not be heard in its entirety. The question *Brothers, what shall we do?* is answered with an incomplete “People need to repent. The church baptizes.” Where the grandeur of grace and the sovereignty of God are underemphasized one’s conversion can seem a sensible decision rather than a great gift and the assurance that is meant to come from knowing who has authored one’s salvation can be weakened.

Of course there may also be church contexts where *two* of the three notes sounded at Pentecost are underemphasized or absent altogether. While “People need to repent” is an important part of exhorting non-Christians to faith, it is an incomplete answer by itself. This exhortation (well-intended and impassioned though it may be) leaves out the main actor of redemption (God who is pursuing those who are lost) and the landscape of redemption (the people of God into which the non-Christian is welcomed). Likewise, the exhortations “The church baptizes” and “God saves” *on their own* communicate nothing near what Peter communicated to the crowd on Pentecost.

It is also not hard to imagine churches where *additional* notes are added to the chord sounded by Peter at Pentecost. For example, it is unquestionable that new converts will be called to holiness in their new life (throwing off the old and putting on the new), but when this call to live differently is mingled with the initial call to faith, the resulting chord of exhortation can be confusing or unnecessarily weighty to those asking the all-important question *Brothers, what shall we do?* Such a “crowded” chord can unintentionally give the impression that one must begin living differently in order to be accepted by God, when the New Testament’s witness is that it is being accepted by God that makes it possible to live differently.



These few examples illustrate how Peter's basic understanding of salvation and way of exhortation (this paradigmatic chord which echoed throughout the early church) may not always present in today's church. This is not only reason to reflect *theologically* on our operating assumptions about salvation, but is also reason to reflect *linguistically* and *rhetorically* on how we talk about salvation and exhort people to repent.

### *The Language of Salvation*

Research suggests that there is a strong connection between the language of religion and the understanding and experience of that religion.<sup>171</sup> Smith points to the natural implications this has within the church, "...the language used within religious communities, especially by religious leaders, and especially the language of religious experience and conversion, requires careful attention. The reason for such urgency is that language, especially religious language, is formative."<sup>172</sup> Of course the connection between Peter's language (lexical, syntactical, rhetorical) and his theology has been plain within the present study, which points towards the importance today of not only examining our soteriology in light of scripture, but also examining our linguistic habits related to salvation. And this isn't just important for "religious leaders" as Dean M. Martin's work suggests. Martin underscores the practical reality that, "The language of religion (like any other language) is mainly learned by long exposure to the spontaneous and unrehearsed fashion in which adult believers – often, though not only, one's parents –

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<sup>171</sup> See, for example, Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* or George Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine* or Paul Holmer's *The Grammar of Faith*.

<sup>172</sup> Smith, *Beginning Well*, 39-40.

speak to one another and with those outside the faith.”<sup>173</sup> In other words *how* one talks about salvation is vitally important. Not only is it important in clearly and helpfully exhorting non-Christians to repent, but it is important for the Christian’s own experience. As Haughton stresses in her work, an authentic language of conversion clarifies and fosters an integral relationship between conversion and transformation.<sup>174</sup>

So how we talk about salvation and repentance is just as important (if not more so) as what we officially, doctrinally believe about salvation and repentance. All the more reason for reflecting on our theology and our linguistic habits in light of the basic, strong chord Peter sounds at Pentecost. Moving our language in the direction of Peter’s is quite possible. Parachurch ministries can be more purposeful in lifting up the local church and seeing new converts baptized into an ongoing, sustainable local church. Reformed churches and other padeo-baptist congregations can approach confirmation (or other “age of accountability” practices) with an emphasis on the need of weighing one’s own innate need for repentance and choice to accept and believe the word of the gospel. Evangelical churches can enrich their theology by dipping into the rich waters of the redemptive-historical narrative in scripture and God’s role in Salvation without becoming hyper-Calvinists. And we can all learn to speak of our own conversions (however long and involved that full process may be) using all three notes that Peter sounded 2000 years ago. Not only will this enrich and strengthen our own conversion process and understanding of salvation, but it will better equip us for those moments when, like Peter at Pentecost, a non-Christian (or group of non-Christians) stands in front of us, troubled

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<sup>173</sup> Dean M. Martin, “Learning to Become a Christian” in *Religious Education* 82, no 1 (Winter 1987): 94-114.

<sup>174</sup> Rosemary Haughton, *The Transformation of Man: A Study of Conversion and Community* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 225.

by the gospel message and wanting to know *Brothers, what then must we do?* As we join the well-tuned chorus of the church, sounding all three notes that Peter sounded at Pentecost, we will better be able to answer that all-important question with a clear yet robust answer: “You have an urgent need to repent and be baptized into the local church. Your salvation is a great and God-authored miracle.”

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