

39. Under the Mosaic Law, Jews were prompted to produce acts of human good. Under this new dispensation, they have the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to produce divine good from an inventory of truth acquired in the soul.
- Romans 8:5** - Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (NASB)
40. Baptism should be a ritual that reflects the person's understanding of the following principles:
- (1) By immersion, believers are identified with Christ in His spiritual death, physical death, and burial and therefore dead to human good. Filled with the Holy Spirit they no longer had to perform it.
 - (2) By emersion, believers are identified with Christ in His session at the right hand of the Father, assurance they could not lose their salvation.
 - (3) They understood they now had the power to perform divine good while awaiting the resurrection.
41. What follows next in the verse is the phrase "in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."
42. The Lord certifies that faith alone in Him results in salvation while the ritual of baptism demonstrates the principle of a new spiritual species functional in the Church Age.
43. Having been saved, each individual receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. The word "gift" is the singular noun **δωρεά (dōreá)** and does not refer to the spiritual gifts associated with the Holy Spirit.
44. It is important to reiterate the biblical meanings of the words "repent" and "forgiveness" in Acts 2:38.
45. "Repent" is the translation of **μετανοέω (metanoēō)**. The prefix *meta-* denotes a change of condition or disposition while the verb *noeō* means "to perceive, to apprehend, or to gain insight."

46. Thus *metanoéō* means to change one's perception regarding a state of mind. This concept can be applied in several ways, for example: **(1) at salvation:** one changes his perception of Jesus from that of an historical figure to personal Savior; **(2) post-salvation:** one changes the perception of his lifestyle from acceptable behavior to unacceptable sins, motivating **ὁμολογέω (*homologéō*)** or rebound: confession alone to God alone; and **(3) filled with the Holy Spirit:** if one changes his perception of right and wrong through spiritual growth it brings his thinking into line with divine viewpoint.
47. In Peter's response to the Jews in Acts 2:38 his first word is *metanoéō* which can refer to the change of mental attitude with reference to Christ as Savior or, for believers, with reference to personal sins.
48. The word "forgiveness," is the noun **ἄφεσις (*áphesis*)** and can refer to pre-salvation sins being forgiven at salvation or post-salvation sins being forgiven at rebound.
49. The situation in Acts 2:38 is complex in that the words used have various applications dependent upon the context in which they are used. It is the resolution of this that will lead us to an accurate translation that maintains harmony within Scripture with regard to all these subjects.
Acts 2:38 - And Peter said to them, "All of you repent (and let each one of you all be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ), for/because of the forgiveness of the sins of all of you; and all of you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
 1. This presentation by Peter resulted in the Holy Spirit successfully convicting the souls of these Jews so that having realized they were complicit in the execution of Jesus they were simultaneously struck with guilt. Peter demonstrated that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ but they were stunned, not knowing what to do with that information.

Acts 2:37 - Now when they heard this [Peter's rhetorical address in verses 22–36] they were pierced [κατανύσσω (*katanússō*)] in their hearts [καρδία (*kardia*)] and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

14. The word *katanússō* is a compound of *kata-* which intensifies the verb *nussō* which means "to stab" or "to pierce." The verb *nussō* is found in John 19:34 to describe the Roman soldier at the cross piercing the Lord's side with his spear.

John 19:34 - One of the soldiers pierced [νύσσω (*nússō*)] His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.

Both *katanússō* in Acts 2:37 and *nussō* in John 19:34 are hapax legomina (ἄπαξ λεγόμενον): they are each used only once in the corpus of the New Testament.

15. Consequently we see a correlation between the two. The thrust of the soldier's spear pierced the Lord's physical heart out from which flowed blood and water revealing He was physically dead.
16. The realization by the Jews that they had a complicit hand on that spear whose point pierced the Lord's physical heart caused them to be "pierced" in their hearts: *kardia*, the stream of consciousness of the soul.
17. The word *katanússō* is used here metaphorically to describe the pain connected with the realization of guilt. Where on the one hand the Lord's "physical heart" was pierced, on the other hand these Jews' "streams of consciousness" were convicted of betraying Jesus.
18. Peter's final statement, "God has made this Jesus, Whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ," caused the Jews to respond with the question, "Brethren, what shall we do?"
19. It is from their question that we are able to conclude that these men are convicted of their complicity in the execution of Jesus, but are at a loss of what to do about it. It is at this point that controversy arises: Are the Jews saved in verse 37 or verse 38? Here are some analyses.

Acts 2:37. [*Katanússō*] connotes a sharp pain associated with anxiety and remorse. The way the men address the apostles, “Brothers,” shows that their hearts had already been won over.²

This text [Acts 2:38] seems clearly to say that the hearers must be baptized to get their sins forgiven and then, but only then, will they be given the gift of the Holy Spirit. An effort is sometimes made to avoid this conclusion by rendering the word “for” (Greek, *eis*) as “because of,” but this procedure lacks adequate linguistic substantiation.

What the text does *not* say is how the hearers were “regenerated” and “justified.” But the Pauline and Johannine answers to this question are the only Biblical ones that can be given: they were justified and regenerated by faith. *There is nothing in Acts 2:38 to contradict this!*

On the contrary, Peter concludes his address with the assertion that “God has made this Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (2:36). His hearers then reply, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (2:37). But such a reaction presumes their acceptance of Peter’s claim that they have crucified the One who is Lord and Christ. If this is what they now believed, then they were already regenerate on Johannine terms, since John wrote: “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1; cf. John 20:31³).

It seems plain that in Peter’s audience there are many who accept the claims of Christ. But they are enormously convicted of their guilt in the crucifixion and ask what they need to do now. Acts 2:38 is the answer.⁴

20. Hodges bases his evaluation in the function of the preposition **εἰς** (*eis*): “for the purpose of” or “because of.” It must be remembered that when one is saved he is immediately justified before the Supreme Court of Heaven. Justification is the judicial verdict based on the imputation of divine righteousness to the believer.
21. Hodges interprets the preposition with “for,” claiming the Jews responded positively in verse 37 to Peter’s revelation that Jesus is both Lord and Christ. What happens next must be considered unique to this specific generation of Jews.

² Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1981), 9:282.

³ 1 John 5:1, Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. John 20:31, ... these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. (NASB)

⁴ Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel under Siege: A Study on Faith and Works* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1981), 101.

22. This generation is exhorted by Peter in Acts 2:40, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” The word “perverse” is the adjective from **σκολιός (skoliós)**, which literally means “crookedness of a bodily part.” It is the word from which we get the English medical term “scoliosis” for the lateral curvature of the spine.
23. In verse 40, Peter uses it metaphorically to describe the mental attitude of the present generation of Jews: crooked in the sense of being unscrupulous, dishonest, unjust, wicked, or perverse.
24. Perverse is the best word to describe their disposition: these Jews have turned away from what is right, they have been obstinate in doing so, and as a result they are corrupt.
25. For these Jews forgiveness – not salvation – is based on two factors: **(1)** repentance and **(2)** water baptism, both related to the baptism of John the Baptist.
26. Therefore, Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 and the response to it by the Jews in his audience require a system by which they can be transitioned from the dispensation of the Incarnation including John’s offer of the Kingdom, to the dispensation of the Church and the offer of the gift of the Holy Spirit.
27. On the other hand, R. B. Thieme, Jr., translates the preposition with “because of the forgiveness of sins,” in answer to the question, “What shall we do?”

The word “for” is a very sticky pronoun. It can be translated many ways and in other passages it is translated “because of.” For example, Matthew 3:11 in the NASB is translated, “for repentance,” but should be “because of repentance.” Matthew 12:41, the NASB correctly reads, “because they repented.” In Acts 2:38, it should be “because of the forgiveness of your sins.” The sins had already been paid for. [Audio MP3: Acts 1965]

28. The word “forgiveness” is the causal noun **ἄφεσις (áphesis)** which means, “because of the forgiveness⁵ of your sins, you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

(End CR14-79. See CR14-80 for continuation of study at p. 791.)

⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 490.