

*I was a reasonably young fella at the time, so it must've been a **long** time ago, but I reckon it was probably in the early 1980's. It was a time when great angst and threats and violence, had descended upon the shearing industry. And it was all an argument over 23mm. – that's the difference between this one (a wide comb) and this one (a narrow comb).*

*It was a fight between the AWU (the Australian Workers union) and somebody else, and I don't know who that somebody else actually was. If you asked the union who they were fighting against, they'd probably would've told you it was the cockies (because they're always the enemy aren't they?) And they would've said the cockies were trying to bring in the wide combs, so shearers could shear more sheep in a day, and therefore they'd have a good argument for dropping the shearing rates, because shearers don't get paid by the hour – they get paid by how many sheep they shear.*

*But actually, if you asked many of the shearers – those who were actually **using** the wide combs – they'd tell you the AWU were flexing their muscles and fighting against its members, and more particularly against non-union labour or very reluctant union members.*

*Now, I don't know all about the politics, but there were a few shearings that we went through, during the wide comb dispute... And I suppose every district had its legendary team that was said to be “the last team in Queensland, to take up wide combs” .... And the contractor who used to do our shearing, well I was always told that his team was the last team in Queensland to take up wide combs. But since*

*I've moved to St George, I've heard other teams have been given that title....*

*But what I remember of it, was the argument, and the doomsday statements about how bad these wide combs were. The shearers who came to our place told me how they would **never ever** take up wide combs. They said:*

- “You cannot properly shear a Merino with a wide comb – they might be alright on those plane-bodied New Zealand cross breeds, but you could never shear a merino with one.*
- They said, “they’re no faster – you think they’re faster, but they’re not” – “not if you’re going to be tidy”*
- They said, “When you’re shearing a younger ewe, around the rear end, you can’t help but cut off one of the two things that starts with the letter “T”<sup>i</sup>*
- They said that wide combs left half the wool on sheep*
- They said “You can always tell a sheep that’s been shorn with a wide comb, because they had great big ridges left where you can’t get that big, wide comb flat on the skin.*
- The way they talked, you’d think that anyone who ever used a wide comb, was a servant of anti-christ, and they would be responsible for the death of the wool industry....*

*But as the years went by, more and more shearers took up these ‘evil’ wide combs. Right across Australia, it just became patently obvious, that all the scare mongering had been untrue. Yeah sure, some sheep did have ridges on them, but so did the sheep that were shorn with narrow combs – it depended on the ability and the quality of the shearer – not the comb.*

*But our shearers, continued, year after year, to turn up with their narrow gear, and they continued to say how **bad** those wide combs were. They knew they were wrong – it was painfully obvious they were wrong – it was obvious to them and to everybody else. But no way on this earth would they ever admit it, and take up wide combs.*

*But you know what??? One year they turned up for shearing, and it was just as well us boys already had wide gear, otherwise Dad would've had to rush into town and buy himself a new pendulum<sup>ii</sup>, because every one of them turned up with wide gear...*

Sometimes it's hard, when you make a stand, to later on admit that you were wrong. And on some issues, when you realise that you've been on the 'wrong side of the fence', it's a **big deal** to cross over to the other side. It's a **big deal**, to swallow your pride, admit that you were wrong, and to completely change your direction..... And that's what happened in the wide comb debate, and that's also what happened when Peter preached at Pentecost.

Peter is addressing the Jewish, religious crowd – He addresses them as “Men of Israel”. “When Jesus lived, He **proved** to you that He was from God. Mighty works, wonders, signs, that God did through Jesus, all attested to this fact: that Jesus had God's stamp of approval on Him.”.. Jesus did the sorts of things that only a man of God can do, and they knew it. The men of Israel knew it...

They knew it, but they wouldn't accept it.

And so even though they knew it to be true – even though the evidence was plain for them to see, to prove their point,

they made up lies. Jesus was a good guy. Jesus was **proved** to be of God. But with their lies and their scaremongering, they convinced themselves, and they convinced the crowds, that Jesus was a baddy who could not be tolerated...

And so they crucified Him (or more accurately, they handed Him over to the Romans to be crucified), and so Peter laid the blame right at their feet **"you crucified and killed [Him] by the hands of lawless men."**

And then from the Scriptures, he proved to them, that this was not some tragic, unplanned, twist-of-fate. It all happened **according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God...** Now, I find this absolutely incredible – that God, from the beginning of time, knew that to make a point, His chosen people, would unjustly crucify His Son. And yet that was all part of God's plan to die for us – It was all part of God's plan, to take the punishment that we deserve, so we can be forgiven... It was God's plan, to be rejected, so that we can be accepted. It was God's plan to die, so that we can live.

And from the Scriptures, Peter also proved that it was not only God's plan for Jesus to die, but that there was no way that He was ever going to stay dead. His body would never see corruption – that means, Jesus' body didn't rot – He never got to the stage where He stank... He rose from the dead before the rot set in.

And so Peter could lay the blame, right at their feet. **"You killed Him"**. **"You knew** that He was from God, and yet you killed Him." And now, He is risen from the dead, and

He has sent His Holy Spirit – there's **more** proof for you...  
And then Peter said: <sup>36</sup> **Let all the house of Israel**  
**therefore know for certain that God has made him**  
**both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you**  
**crucified."**

Woah.... How would you like to be in their shoes? They  
killed Jesus. They killed God's son... What was God going  
to do to them, in retaliation? What sort of doom do you  
think this lot would be expecting to come upon them?

Could they ever possibly be forgiven????

Well, of course they could. The whole purpose of Jesus'  
death, was to bring forgiveness.

And if those who killed Jesus can be forgiven, what sin  
could you or I have possibly committed, that would be  
worse than that. Let's not down-play it though – some of us  
here have probably done some pretty nasty stuff, and  
sometimes we might find ourselves wondering "How can **I**  
ever be forgiven". Well let me say, "If God will forgive  
those who killed His son... He'll certainly forgive you..."

I don't know if you realise it or not, but what we read today,  
is the pattern for "How to get right with God?" .. How **do**  
we get right with God? How do we find forgiveness? How  
do we become a Christian? How **can** I be saved?

And here's the process:

1. Firstly, I have to recognise my predicament

We are all sinners, and the punishment for sin is death. On the day of the Lord – when Jesus comes as our judge, on our own merits, not one of us is righteous. And so the first step is, we have to **recognise** our predicament.

Sadly, most Australians have not come to this point. They feel they don't **need** a saviour. Having a very distorted, self-righteous view of themselves, most people see themselves as “a **good** person”, and so they feel, on their **own** merits, they've earned their way to heaven. But the truth of the matter is “They're not a good person”. On **my** own merits, **I'm** not a good person. God says: **All** have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The truth of the matter is, **without** Christ, **no** one is righteous...

The truth of the matter is, until we give up on our self-righteousness, and depend on Christ for **His** righteousness, we're not God's friends – we're God's enemies.

So, the first step, is to recognise the hopeless state of our predicament.

2. The second step is, to then want to do something about it.

Peter laid out their crime before them (they'd killed the Lord their God) (oops), and **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?"

They realised their predicament. They realised that if things stayed the way they were, there was no hope for them, and so they wanted to do something about it.

But what brought them **to** this point?... How did they come to the point of both, realising their predicament, **and** wanting to do something about it?

I'll tell you: Peter preached.....

V40 says : <sup>40</sup> And with many other words [Peter] bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."

"Preachy" Christians get a bit of a bad rep, hey??... and we're always told "No-one likes to be preached to." .... But how will people ever know that they need to be saved, unless someone tells them? 3000 people were saved that day, because Peter preached.

Peter "**bore witness**". God was doing His work, and Peter "**bore witness**", that means he told them what he had seen and knew and experienced of Jesus Christ. And he "**continued to exhort them**", that means he didn't let up... He urged them and urged them.

You know, too often, we give up **way** too soon... We tell someone a little bit about Jesus, and if they don't fall on their knees there and then, and repent and give their hearts to Jesus, we give up, and go "Oh well, they're not ready..."

But Peter bore witness and **continued** to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."

He didn't give up on them. You know, when somebody's happy with their place in the world, they **need** to have someone who is willing to **not** give up on them. They need someone who is going to witness to them, and continue to exhort them, and urge them to save themselves... They need to be told, that there is an alternative route. They need to be told, that there is a highway that leads to destruction, and they're on it... And they need to be told, where the "off ramp" is, that takes them to the narrow road that leads to life...

Let me give you an example of exhortation:

*One of the worst, preventable workplace injuries I know of, is exploding 44 gallon drums. Someone wants a bin for a workshop, or for some reason they want to cut the top out of a drum... So, they quickly pick up the oxy-torch, or the plasma cutter, or the angle grinder, and they start cutting... Kaboom... Fuel vapour and air ignite. The drum explodes. And the person is engulfed in a ball of flame, nearly always severely burnt / or killed...*

*There **are** ways to do it safely, but I won't go into it now.*

*Now, what would you do, if you saw someone, about to cut the top out of a drum? You'd warn them wouldn't you???*  
*"Look, it's highly likely that drum's going to explode and you'll end up in hospital..."*

*What are you going to do, if they say "She'll be right..."*

*You're not going to give up that easily, are you? "Look, I'm serious, this is really dangerous – what you're about to do..."*

*"It'll be right – I've done it before" ... What are you going to do???*

*When it comes to OH&S, there's a thing called "a duty of care"... That means if you know that someone is in danger, you have "a duty of care", (it is your legal responsibility) to do everything you can, to prevent that from happening... You will urge them. You will exhort them. You will continue to tell them – "It's not worth the risk – unless you're going to do it right, don't do it at all" ...*

*Now, if it's worth arguing and exhorting, and urging someone, to save them from the fires of an exploding drum, don't you think it's worth exhorting and urging someone to save themselves from the fires of hell???*

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we have "a duty of care" to urge and exhort the lost, to be saved... It's not the most popular past time... But I tell you what, those who **are** saved because you didn't give up on them, will be very glad you had the courage to preach and exhort and urge....

### 3. The third step, is to Repent

Repentance, is to realise that you were wrong, and to begin a new direction. *Our shearers repented, when they put away their narrow gear, and bought themselves some wide gear.*

That's what repentance means: to realise that you were wrong, and to begin a new direction.

The Scriptures are quite clear: There is no forgiveness without repentance. If I know that I've done wrong, and confess that sin to God, but have every intention of continuing that sin, well that's not repentance... Repentance is an action.

John the Baptist preached "repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand". <sup>Luke 3: 10</sup> **And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?"** Alright, they knew that repentance meant they had to do something – they had to change what was wrong in their lives – they had to begin living with a new perspective – a perspective given to them by God...

<sup>11</sup> **And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."** <sup>12</sup> Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" <sup>13</sup> **And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."** <sup>14</sup> Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

Repentance meant a change in direction... And that's a question we all have to be constantly considering, "How is God calling me, to repent?"

4. The fourth step, is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is the key to repentance – you once used to reject Jesus – Now you believe in Him. You used to think that those people who used to follow Jesus were crazy, or deceived, or weak, or weird... But now you've become one of them. You've repented.

5. The fifth step, is to be baptised

I do **not** believe that baptism is an “optional extra” for becoming a Christian.

Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized **every one of you** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And as we work our way through acts, we're going to see that Baptism is very much a part of the normal Christian birth process.

6. The sixth step, is to be filled with the Holy Spirit

Sometimes God fills people with the Holy Spirit **before** they're baptised... But regardless of the order, as we discovered last week, we are living in the last days, and in the last days, God fills the disciples of Jesus Christ, with His

Holy Spirit. We should desire Holy Spirit. We should expect Holy Spirit. And certainly never be afraid of Holy Spirit.

7. So, that's how you become a Christian:

- You recognise your predicament
- You come to the place where you want to do something about it
- Repent
- Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ
- Be baptised
- Be filled with the Holy Spirit....

That's where discipleship begins, but that's not where it ends... Living the Christian life – living a Spirit-filled life, is very different to our old life, and we're going to look at that next week.

What about today?:

- Well, for some of us, it's been a big deal to admit that we've been on the wrong side of the fence, and to cross over to the right side of the fence. It's a big deal to realise that you've been on the wrong side of Jesus, and need to get on the right side of Jesus... Maybe just recently, or maybe for a lot of years, God's been proving to you that this Christianity thing – hey, it's actually true... But it's been a big deal to accept it. It's been a big deal to repent; believe; be baptised; and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Don't put it off. God is drawing you to Himself for a reason. He loves you, and He wants to save you.

- Secondly, I believe God is calling us to be a people who preach; to urge; to exhort; to continue to invite people to save themselves.

And we need to be a people prepared to ask God for His Holy Spirit, to fulfil that calling.

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<sup>i</sup> Teat or a twat

<sup>ii</sup> The Pendulum is a magnetic device used to hold the comb or cutter during the grinding (sharpening) process. Wide gear needed a different pendulum to narrow gear.