

“The Greatest Promise!”

Acts 2:36-41

Intro. – It was 4 AM and five of the six Nichols boys were returning home to Lamar, CO from the Kiamichi Men’s Clinic. We had gotten to bed late and had some six hundred plus miles before getting home. Dad was sleepy. I remember sitting in the front seat of the 1969 Oldsmobile 98 with a Coleman trailer behind. We were on curvy, hilly dirt roads. We were out of camp about five minutes when we headed to a curve. I said out loud – “Too fast, Dad, too fast.” Well, he had fallen asleep and away we went into the ditch. Damage was extensive enough there was no way we were getting home in the Olds. So here we were, five of us, at 4 AM with no wheels to get us home. What were we going to do?!

Our text deals with this very idea. It was Pentecost (1 of 3 major Jewish feast – equal to our Thanksgiving for Jews to gather from all over the world. Peter preached the first Gospel message: Jesus the Christ 1) Approved by God the Father... 2) Delivered ... 3) Crucified... 4) Risen from the dead.... Then Peter said, “You have crucified your hope!”... Then came that exclamation: “What are we to do?!” The people at that moment realized their sinfulness more than ever in crucifying their King. Peter replied giving the greatest promise as his answer. Because of this promise given in reply to their terror, it must be seen then that all the promises given within the Bible are centered round this one promise!

Purpose: to better understand what the greatest promise is

I The CONTENTS of the Promise

- what makes this promise so great, so special?

A. The Forgiveness of Sins (must fully understand sin in order to appreciate forgiveness of sin)

1. What is sin?

- a. all unrighteousness (1 John 5:17)
- b. lawlessness (1 John 3:4)
- c. undone good act (James 4:17)
- d. act done in question (Romans 14:23)

- act of omission and commission of God’s law = separation from God!

2. Who has *sinned*?

- Romans 3:23; 5:12; says ALL (accountable people) have sinned... = BIG problem of man

3. What are the results of sin?

- a. Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death...”*
 - b. James 1:15 *“...and when sin is accomplished it brings forth death.”*
 - c. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 *“And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”*
- in summary: HELL is the results:
- Jude 13 *“...for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.”*
 - Hebrews 10:27 *“...the fury of fire which will consume the adversaries.”*
 - Revelation 21:8 *“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”*

DEATH/total separation from God! To be forgiven of sin means punishment PAID IN FULL!

B. The Gift of Holy Spirit

1. What/Who is Holy Spirit?

- a. a divine person – part of the Godhead
- b. actual indwelling presence of God in one’s life...

2. What is the purpose of this gift?

- a. comforts and encourages (Acts 9:31)
- b. guidance (Romans 8:13,14)

- c. help in overcoming the desires of the flesh (Romans 8:12)
- d. help in our prayers (Romans 8:9; 5:5)
- 3. Results of this gift
 - a. only way to produce “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23)
 - b. assurance of salvation (Romans 8:9; 5:5)

The promise then, is the promise of salvation... What greater promise can one receive than this?!

II The HEIRS of the Promise

- The contents of the promise are clear...; now, who is assured of this promise?

A. The People Peter was Addressing

- 1. People of Judea; i.e. this promise was offered to the Jews first...
- 2. Their children as well...

B. Those Whom God Calls

- 1. *“Those who are far off”* = generations to follow... includes you and me!
- 2. How are they called? Through the Word of God (2 Thessalonians 2:14 – *“And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*)
- 3. All are given a choice to accept or reject this Gospel, this Gift of Grace, this Salvation...

In summary, the heirs (receivers) of the greatest promise are those who have been called of God by His word and having accepted it on His terms are heirs of this promise. What are His terms?

III The Terms of the Promise

- The terms (God’s conditions) as to when one receives this gift/promise

A. Repentance and Faith

- 1. Change of intellect
 - a. knowledge of sin = Isaiah 6:5 *“...Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips...”*
 - Luke 5:8 Peter said, *“...Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”*
 - 1 Timothy 1:15 Paul said, *“It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”*
 - b. acknowledgement can’t go it alone = i.e. one once ignored sin(s) now fully aware of them...
- 2. Change of emotions = true sorrow for breaking the law of Christ
 - a. *“Godly sorrow”* - 2 Corinthians 7:10 *“For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”*
 - b. Illus. – WS = getting caught = distress
GS = genuine sorrow... recognizing the hurt caused to God...
- 3. Change of will – heart of repentance – resolve to fight and forsake sin
- 4. Faith = believing... and trusting...

B. Confession of Faith

- 1. Declaring one’s faith/devotion/allegiance in and to Christ
- 2. Declaring to all one needs a Savior... and that Savior is Christ alone!

C. Immersion Into Christ

- 1. Baptism is a work – not a work of man... but a work of God - Colossians 2:12 *“Having been buried with Him in baptism in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead.”*
- 2. Baptism is the *occasion* one becomes a new creature in Christ, a Christian... Where one’s sins are covered by the blood of Christ and the gift of Holy Spirit is given.

Conclusion: Promises – something that is always being made, but often not being kept. Look, for example, at the typical politician. Here is great promise maker, but it can hardly be said that he/she is a perfect promise keeper. I don't have to tell you that Christ is not only the perfect promise maker, but He is also the perfect promise keeper. Thus, this promise, the promise of salvation, is the greatest promise ever given simply because the Perfect Promise Maker gave it.

This promise was first given to those who heard the first Gospel message and who realized just how lost and helpless they really were apart from Christ. O that people here today would be convicted of their helpless state and brought to the exclamation of "What must I do to be saved?!" In response to that question, we are given the greatest promise ever given!!