

## Pentecost Part 7: Acts2:39-40 'The Promise; And The Warning!'

Friends, some months ago when looking at Peter's walk through his life with Jesus, (An ordinary man serving an extraordinary God), entitled 'Pentecost part 6: What shall we do?' I said that it would be our final look at Peter's sermon on that day. However, when looking at the text again I was convicted that not only had I not finished the chapter, but more importantly, I had failed to complete the event. It was verses 34-38 of Acts chapter 2, in which we only looked at 2 main principles.

Firstly, that the message of Jesus Christ should never leave us remaining comfortably in our self-sufficient lives, of being deaf, dumb and blind to the truth of God! Peter had laid the death of Jesus at His hearer's feet. Verse 37 "when they heard this they were cut to the heart." Yes they were "cut to the heart" as they were illuminated to their sin blackened souls and their bloodstained hands and lives. Being moved by God's Spirit they cry out to "Peter and the other apostles brothers what shall we do?" No, Jesus` Truth (if we are truly His), will never leave us where it finds us: dead in our sins.

And Secondly, that repentance, (like the cross, the fear of God, Sin and hell), seems to have almost disappeared from much of modern day preaching. The true change of the state of our soul must lead to the beginning of the transformation of our lives. Yes God's Spirit has hovered over the waters of our souls, and as in Genesis 1:3, God has said "let there be light". Yes, repentance is a foundational stone of the building of one`s house in Christianity. Repentance is that which the Holy Spirit uses as the first stirrings of righteous, Jesus-like desires. And without repentance, there is no Salvation in our hearts!!

And so we pick up the text this morning: 'Pentecost part 7: Acts chapter 2:39-40 Children Of The Promise; And the warning.'

Acts 2:39 "the promise is for you and your children and all who are far off." Now brothers and sisters, although we have touched upon this verse earlier in this series, I do believe that it merits another viewing, because what this verse does is to remind us of who we were when Jesus first called us! There is no one that I know personally who is of the line of Abraham by birth. What I mean is, we are not of the Hebrew, or the Jewish line in the flesh. I am an Australian born of Hungarian parents. My son Caleb's girlfriend Jess is an Australian born of Chinese parents. Others have English, Filipino, Greek, Dutch, Irish or a myriad of other lines of ancestry. My point is simply this: We are those ones whom Peter spoke of when he said "and for all who are far off". No, we are not Hebrews by birth, so not raised in the Jewish faith. Not circumcised on the eighth day if we are males. Not schooled in the Torah, nor abiding in clean and unclean things. So we not of "the true Vine" by birth, which Jesus calls Himself in John 15, no. We are those ones who Paul speaks of in Romans 11 that were "branches of wild olive trees, that have been in grafted" to the root, being Jesus, and the natural plant, being the Jewish nation through Abraham.

So we were "far off". Yes, we were "far off" with regard to being chosen, as it were, by natural birth. And not only this, but we were also "far off" in our lives of self-sufficiency and arrogance. Living our lives our own way and upon our own terms. Walking upon our own road. And while also in our vanity and ignorance blind to the fact, that that same "broad road" (which the world walks upon), was carrying us down the path to hell! But beloved, though we be not Jews by birth, our birthright holds us in a far greater privileged position, and a far greater stead. For we are children of the promise. Romans 4:13 "It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith." Or in other words, the keeping of the law, (which would not come into existence for over 400 years) or being Abraham's children according to the flesh, are not what saves us. It is being his descendants and his children of the promise! In response to Abraham's appeal to God, that His blessing be poured out upon his illegitimate son Ishmael (through his wife Sarah's Egyptian maidservant), Genesis 17:19 "then God said, "yes but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you

will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant.” And Galatians 3:26-29 “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” So we are Abraham's seed, (or Abraham's descendants,) not according to the flesh but eternally more significant than that, we are his seed according to the promise of God, having been born of His Spirit!

Beloved, Jesus didn't die for the whole world. He didn't even die for the whole Jewish nation. No, He died for His People of the promise who have been born of the Spirit. John 3:5-6 “Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, no one can enter the Kingdom of heaven unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” What was Jesus saying? My Kingdom and My people are not of this world. They even have a supernatural beginning. They are born of the Spirit of God. They are Abraham's children, not of the flesh; they are the children of the promise of God! Beloved, that's who we are. The ancestry and inheritance which we can lay claim to, and the privileges in future which we can lay claim to, reach far beyond this life and this world, because they were born of a promise. Again, even the promise of God! Yes “the promise is for you and your children and all who are far off.” We were those “far off” ones. Far off” according to our flesh or our ancestry.” Far off” according to privilege and yet now because of Jesus, we are both children of the promise and privilege. Praise God! Yes we are all part of this “for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

And I want you to notice what Peter says next. Verse 40 “with many other words he warned them, and he pleaded with them “save yourselves from this corrupt generation”.” Now friends, firstly, we all need to understand that Peter is not implying in any way shape or form that we can somehow “save ourselves”; no, we need to remember that he is responding to the question, which arose out of his preaching “brothers what shall we do?” In verse 37.

So Peter is telling them, in light of what you now have heard of the truth about Jesus revealed and explained “save yourselves” flee from this perishing world (as it were) and run to Jesus! But beloved, what I'd really like us to see here, (with me perhaps stating the obvious,) is that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a warning. Yes, it is about God's love to His people. Yes it is about the forgiveness of sin. Yes it is about being reconciled to Himself through his Son our Lord Jesus Christ's own sacrifice. And yes it is about our assured future of an eternity with Him, His son, His Spirit and all of the heavenly host, and all of His people for whom Jesus died from Adam and Eve to the last who will be born again, through His Spirit. But beloved, it is also a warning. Verse 40: “with many other words he warned them and he pleaded with them. Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Listen to how the old Collins dictionary defines the word corrupt. To make rotten. To change to a putrid state. To defile. To contaminate. To deprave. To make evil. Tainted with vice or sin. I wonder how the modern dictionaries define such a word? Yes I wonder how those dictionaries define the word when language itself has become so corrupted today.

Friends the gospel of and about Jesus is a warning. Like the many signs of warning which surround us today. Beware of the dog. Enter at your own risk. Trail closed due to landslide. Private property keep out. Shark infested waters. Beware, dangerous currents. Trespassers will be prosecuted. Brothers and sisters, what are all these things saying at their core? Heed the warning, or face, and live with the consequences of your actions, your own foolish actions. Brethren you've heard me say it many times before: yes Jesus gospel is about God's love, and yet it is also His two edged sword. It cuts to both heaven and hell.

Again, hell is one of those words which seems to have gone missing today from Christ`s gospel. Men want to tell us that God loves us loves us loves us loves us; live any way you like or choose, because God will accept you as you are. He just waits longingly in hope that one day some people might choose to come to Him. Well no. What rubbish. What utter contempt such ideas cast upon the eternal power and council and sovereign will of God. “With many other words he pleaded with them, save yourself from this corrupt generation.” “Save yourselves” from this putrid, contaminated, defiled, evil and sin filled world. Beloved, our God is a holy God. He will not accept you as you are. If He would have, why then did Jesus die? If all roads lead to heaven why did Jesus say John 14:6 “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me.” If you remain in your sin friends, you will perish with Satan and his Angels in the “lake of fire”, Revelation 21. Oh brethren, come to Jesus run to Jesus while there is yet time, because there is a day of reckoning which is coming upon your eternal soul!

Brothers and sisters, there are numerous warnings which are coming from God and are heralding His imminent return. You've heard it before. What are the Hurricanes, the cyclones and the great storms of the world all about? What are the floods and droughts, the famines and the plagues telling us? What are the wars, unrest and threatening's around the world about? And what has this coronavirus been about? They are all God's great threatening's and warnings telling us? That there is a great reckoning coming because of sin. Return to Me while there is still time. Yes "with many other words he warned them and he pleaded with them." You know it's interesting, when you look up the word "plead" in the dictionary it speaks of 'evidence which is presented on behalf of another'. We might think of it as begging, but it's not. No, Peter wasn't begging them: he knew that *begging* wouldn't lead anyone to come to Jesus. "With many other words" he was presenting the evidence; he was presenting and explaining the whole truth about Jesus as he knew it.

Our Lord's gospel is not a social message. It's not a humanistic message. And it's not a political message. It's the warning of God that an eternal reckoning is coming and that it is time for people to return to Him before it's too late. His Almighty hand of judgement and wrath is coming to fall upon the world with mankind found wanting. So yes, hear the evidence and heed the warning before it's too late! Friends, this is the message which we are to carry to the lost world of humanity. God does love His people so much that he sent His only Son to die in our place, but failure to heed the warning will have eternal consequences. It is a fire and brimstone message dear friends, be not mistaken, even though such things are mocked and ridiculed even in Christian circles today. Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever." God does not change; He has not changed He will not change. The God who appeared to Abraham is still the same.

The gospel is not about froth and bubble and fairy floss, it is about the eternal souls of humankind. In Mark's gospel in chapter 16:15-16 we read "he said to them go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever does not believe will be condemned." Again, notice the words "will be condemned". It's not that there is heaven for God's people and everyone else will have a playing restful sleep in peace, no. "Will be condemned" it's the proclamation of a judicial judgement. For thousands of years being "condemned" has meant "condemned to death", and it means the same here in the words of Jesus. Revelation 2:11b "he whoever comes will not be hurt at all by the second death." Revelation 2:6 "blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them." Revelation 20:14 "then death and hades were thrown into the Lake of fire. The Lake of fire is the second death." And finally revelation 21:8 "but the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts, the idolaters and all liars, their place will be in the fiery Lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

Friends, death entered into mankind when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's imperative, and were cast out of the garden, they were separated from God. Do you remember God's words concerning the forbidden fruit? Genesis 2:17 "for on the day you eat of it you will surely die." Yet they didn't immediately die physically, did they? If they had have, humanity would already have been lost, literally. But no, what did take place was that death came to them, when they were separated from God! Death is not so much being separated from the land of the living, because man's soul is eternal; no it's more about being separated from the author and the source of all life, God. And so Jesus' Words in Mark 16 "will be condemned" speak of that ultimate separation from God in hell. That is "the second death" which all mankind should fear.

Beloved, hell is not a place where God isn't as some say, hell is the place where God is, and yet all of His common mercies and goodnesses have been withdrawn. His love and kindness and benevolence, any of His other mercies do not exist in hell. In Jesus' recounting of Lazarus and the rich man, do you remember the rich man's words Luke 16:19-24? "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire."

Yes, "I am in agony in this fire". Friends, hell is not metaphorical and it's not allegorical, hell is real. Jesus spoke far more of hell than He did of heaven. Yes beloved, hell is real, and it is for all of those who do not heed Jesus' warnings of the gospel. Brothers and sisters, as Billy Graham preached many years ago, the storm clouds are gathering overhead. Yes the lights are flashing beloved, because the days are exceedingly dark and mankind is increasingly depraved and anti-Christ. God's warnings in His creation are becoming more and more frequent and more and more furious, because He will not tolerate sin forever. He is calling His people to flee to Him and be delivered from the coming of His wrath.

The question is dear friends, have you heard His voice? Can you hear His voice, will you hear His voice? Can you hear Jesus calling out to you in the midst of these evil times? "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." Oh beloved, in the words of the great Mr George Whitfield. 'I urge you, I implore you, if you have not made your peace with God, through Jesus Christ His Son, then come dear friend, yes come, nay run, dear sinner to Jesus, and He will set you free!'

Let's pray.