

THE PROMISE (ACTS 1:4,5) 05/04/14  
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, KS PASTOR LEE HENDON

SOME PEOPLE, CHRISTIANS AT THAT, ARE AFRAID OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. YES, THEY ARE. ONE PREACHER REMARKED, "I PREACH ABOUT GOD THE FATHER & JESUS THE SON BUT I NEVER PREACH ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT." WHEN ASKED WHY NOT, HE REPLIED, "I'M AFRAID IT MAY LEAD TO **FANATICISM**." ANOTHER PREACHER SAID TO DR. E. STANLEY JONES, "EVERY TIME YOU MENTION THE HOLY SPIRIT, COLD CHILLS GO UP & DOWN MY SPINE." WHEN DR. JONES ASKED WHY, HE REPLIED, "I'M AFRAID OF RAM-PHANT **EMOTIONALISM**." I HAVE FOUND THAT MANY MEMBERS OF DISCIPLES' CONGREGATIONS DO NOT DISCUSS THE HOLY SPIRIT BECAUSE THEY FEEL INTIMIDATED & CONFUSED BY THE SO-CALLED **CHARISMATICS** - WE DO NOT WANT TO BE IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF **THEM**. NO, NO, NO. LET US WALK IN PERFECT CONFIDENCE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT & NOT BACK DOWN FROM **THE PROMISE** THAT IS GIVEN TO US. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT AS BORING AS MANY CHRISTIANS PRESENT. IT WOULD NOT HURT FOR US CHRISTIANS TO GET EXCITED ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT FROM TIME TO TIME.

FIRST OF ALL, I WOULD LIKE FOR US TO REALIZE THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS **THE PROMISE** OF GOD. JESUS SAID, "I SEND THE **PROMISE** OF MY FATHER UPON YOU." OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT A RANDOM, OPTIONAL HAPPENING. IT IS THE PROMISE OF GOD FOR US. LET US THEN, **BE EXPECTANT**. WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE PROMISE OF GOD, WE EXPECT IT TO BE FULFILLED.

OFTENTIMES PROMISES ARE WORTHLESS, ARE THEY NOT? PROMISES ARE OFTEN NOT KEPT. WOULD WE SAY TO GOD THAT HE HAS NOT FULFILLED HIS PROMISE? THE "ANGELIMA" OF GOD, OR PROMISE, IS A GREEK WORD WHICH EXPRESSES NOT MERELY THE PROMISE GIVEN BUT ALSO THE PROMISE FULFILLED. WITH GOD, THE PROMISE IS GIVEN, IT MUST BE, WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED. WHO WOULD DARE PREVENT GOD?

I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU AGAIN A STORY FROM SAM KEEN, IN TO A DANCING GOD, "ONCE UPON A TIME WHEN THERE WERE STILL INDIANS, GYPSIES, BEARS & BAD MEN IN THE WOODS OF TENNESSEE A **PROMISE** WAS MADE TO A LITTLE BOY.

ONE ENDLESS SUMMER AFTERNOON THE BOY'S FATHER SAT IN THE SHADE OF A PEACH TREE, CARVING ON A SEED HE HAD PICKED UP. WITH INCREASING EXCITEMENT & COVETOUSNESS THE BOY WATCHED WHILE THE FATHER FASHIONED A **SMALL MONKEY** OUT OF THE SEED. THE BOY WAS CONSUMED BY DESIRE FOR THAT PEACH-SEED MONKEY. IF ONLY HE COULD HAVE IT, HE WOULD POSSESS A TREASURE WHICH COULD NOT BE MATCHED IN THE WHOLE TOWN OF MARYVILLE! WHAT STATUS, WHAT IDENTITY, HE WOULD ACHIEVE BY HAVING IT. FINALLY HE MARSHALED HIS NERVE & ASKED IF HE MIGHT HAVE THE MONKEY WHEN IT WAS FINISHED. HIS FATHER REPLIED, 'THIS ONE IS FOR YOUR MOTHER BUT I WILL CARVE YOU ONE **SOMEDAY**.'

"DAYS PASSED & THEN WEEKS & FINALLY, YEARS, & THE **SOMEDAY** ON WHICH THE BOY WAS TO RECEIVE THE MONKEY DID NOT COME. IN TRUTH, HE HAD FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT THE PEACH-SEED MONKEY. LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS FATHER WAS EXCITING, SECURE & COLORFUL. HE DID ALL THOSE THINGS FOR HIS CHILDREN A FATHER CAN DO. THE FATHER DELIGHTED IN THE MERE EXISTENCE OF HIS CHILDREN. LATE IN LIFE EMPHYSEMA BEGAN SAPPING HIS ENERGY & ERODING HIS FUTURE.

"IN THE PURE AIR & DRY HEAT OF AN ARIZONA AFTERNOON ONE SUMMER DAY, THE BOY & HIS FATHER SAT UNDER A JUNIPER TREE. THE SON LISTENED AS HIS FATHER WRESTLED WITH THE TASK OF TAKING THE MEASURE OF HIS SUCCESS & FAILURE IN LIFE. THERE CAME A MOMENT OF SILENCE THAT CRIED OUT FOR TESTI-MONY. SUDDENLY THE SON REMEMBERED THE PEACH SEED MON-KEY & HE SAID, 'IN ALL THAT IS IMPORTANT YOU HAVE NEVER FAILED ME. **WITH ONE EXCEPTION**, YOU KEPT THE **PROMISES** YOU MADE ME - *YOU NEVER CARVED ME THAT PEACH SEED MONKEY.*'

"NOT LONG AFTER THIS THE SON RECEIVED A SMALL PACK-AGE IN THE MAIL. IN IT WAS A PEACH SEED MONKEY & A NOTE WHICH READ, '***HERE IS THE MONKEY I PROMISED YOU.*** YOU WILL NOTICE THAT I BROKE ONE LEG & HAD TO REPAIR IT WITH GLUE. I AM SORRY I DID NOT HAVE TIME TO CARVE A PERFECT ONE.' TWO WEEKS LATER THE FATHER DIED. HE DIED ONLY AT THE END OF HIS LIFE, HIS PROMISES FULFILLED."

THE PEACH SEED MONKEY DELIGHTS US WITH THE MESSAGE THAT **PROMISES GIVEN ARE BEST WHEN KEPT.** WE ARE THE

ONES ENTRUSTED WITH THE PROMISE OF GOD - THE HOLY SPIRIT. LET US MAKE SURE THAT WE CLAIM THE PROMISE! MAKE IT OURS! EM-BRACE IT, BE CONSUMED BY IT. THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS GIVEN OVER **400 YEARS BEFORE** JESUS TO THE PROPHET JOEL, "IN THE LAST DAYS IT SHALL BE," GOD DECLARED, "THAT I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL FLESH." JESUS MADE THIS PROMISE TO THE DISCIPLES, "IT IS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE THAT I GO AWAY, I WILL SEND HIM (THE HOLY SPIRIT) TO YOU." THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTINUES FOR **US** THE SAME VANTAGE POINT HELD BY THE FIRST DISCIPLES - **PROMISED BY GOD, PROMISED BY JESUS.**

I FEAR THE TIME WHEN BECAUSE OF INTELLECTUAL SNOB-BERY & SOCIAL SOPHISTICATION WE THINK WE CAN PURSUE A SO CALLED "**ENLIGHTENED**" FAITH THAT PRESUMES WE DO NOT NEED THE PROMISE OF GOD, AS IF WE CAN MAKE IT ON OUR OWN. I AM AFRAID OF A CHURCH THAT CAN BECOME SO INSTITUTIONALIZED & STRUCTURED THAT IT CAN MUDDLE THROUGH ON ITS OWN TRADI-TION. ***LET US NOT PRESUME WE CAN CARVE THE PEACH SEED MONKEY FOR OURSELVES.*** NO, WE MUST RELY ON GOD TO MAKE FULL HIS PROMISE - **SEND US THE HOLY SPIRIT!**

WHAT'S AT STAKE HERE? ANY SKIN OFF OUR NOSES? CAN YOU IMAGINE YOUR LIFE TODAY W/OUT ELECTRICITY, GASOLINE, OIL OR NATURAL GAS? LIFE AS WE KNOW IT, ENDED, ALL GONE BECAUSE THE SOURCES OF ENERGY & POWER HAD BEEN TAKEN AWAY. THAT IS OUR CHRISTIAN EXISTENCE WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT. JESUS SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, "STAY IN THE CITY UNTIL YOU ARE CLOTHED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH." INDEED, THEY DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO MAKE IT TO THE CITY LIMITS.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IMPARTS THE VERY LIFE-GIVING PRESENCE & POWER OF GOD. JESUS KNEW THAT NO ONE COULD BE IN HIS KINGDOM-MOVEMENT & LIVE THE LIFE HE HAD LIVED, DOING WHAT HE HAD DONE, WITHOUT THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. LIKE MANY CHRISTIANS TODAY, THE DISCIPLES KNEW JESUS & WERE CONVINCED OF HIS LORDSHIP BUT THEY NEEDED SOMETHING MORE. IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE A **BELIEVER** & NOT HAVE **POWER**; IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO LIVE THE ADVENTURESOME LIFE JESUS INTENDS FOR US WITHOUT IT. ***IT IS ONE THING TO BELIEVE IN JESUS & QUIET ANOTHER TO HAVE THE SPIRITUAL & PERSONAL POWER TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT!***

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTINUES TO LIBERATE THE CHURCH & ITS MEMBERS FROM BEING A MEMORIAL SOCIETY TO BECOME A **SOCIETY OF MOVERS & SHAKERS**. THE CHURCH IS TO BE A JOYOUS FELLOWSHIP OF THOSE WHO WILL WRITE A NEW CHAPTER IN THE BOOK OF ACTS. WE ARE NOT THE *EMBALMERS* OF THE PAST BUT THE **ENABLERS** OF THE PRESENT & THE EMPOWERED PEOPLE FOR A **NEW AGE**! THE GREATEST SINGLE NEED TODAY IS TO REDISCOVER THE PRESENCE & POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT! MILLIONS OF CHRISTIANS ARE BEING CRUSHED BY THE PRESSURES OF LIFE BECAUSE THEY DO NOT POSSESS THE POWER OF THE LIVING GOD. THE **PROMISE** OF JESUS IS FOR THE PRESENCE OF THAT RECOGNIZABLE POWER TO BE ACTIVE IN & THROUGH US.