

**Galatians 3: 15 and 16; “The Seed is Christ”, Sermon # 18 in the series – “Christ has Made us Free”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

In the book of Galatians the Apostle Paul is using as many convincing arguments as he can, with the people in the churches of Galatia, to persuade them that justification is in no way by the works of the law. He has told them before, that “as many as were under the works of the law were under a curse”. He has told them that they did not receive the Spirit of God by the works of the law, but rather by the hearing of faith. In these verses Paul is speaking of Abraham’s salvation in terms of a covenant which God made with Abraham and His Seed. That covenant was made with Abraham in the form of promises of what God Himself would do for him and His Seed, not what he would do for God. This is what we want to think about this afternoon. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – We want to look at the covenant made with the man Abraham. Then 2<sup>nd</sup> – We want to look at the covenant made with the Seed; that is, our Lord Jesus Christ.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Let’s look at the covenant which God made with the man Abraham.**

Verse 16 says: “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made.” The covenant which God made with Abraham was a Covenant of Purpose. It was a very personal covenant of His purposes to bless him so that he would become a blessing to all the nations of the world. Abraham did not really understand all the implications of what God was intending to do through him, but he believed whatever God revealed to him, and he acted upon it. When he was given his first promise by God, he left Ur of the Chaldees, it says in Genesis 12, and he took his family and Lot, and he went to live in the land of Canaan; that land which God said He would give to him as an everlasting inheritance. A few years later, when Abraham was growing discouraged over his not having any physical descendants.

Even though he had received these great promises and had not seen them fulfilled, still God told him in Genesis 15, that “He was his shield and His exceeding great reward”. And then, you will remember, He took Abraham outside, and He had him look at the stars. And then He said to him, “So shall your descendants be”. And it says there that “Abram believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”. Abraham was, at that very moment, formally declared righteous by God on the basis of his faith in the promise of God alone. God’s saving purposes, to have a distinct and separate people for His own name, began with Abram, on the basis of a covenant that He made with him where he changed Abram’s name to Abraham. You will see that His covenant with Abraham became more specifically revealed to Abraham many years later when the promise itself was made more clear to Abraham.

Turn with me over to Genesis chapter 17, verses 1-7. “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.’ “And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.” “Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ‘As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.’ “No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.” “I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.” “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.”

The thing that you should notice here is that God’s covenant with the man Abraham was established on two levels; first, the promise of personal physical blessing in his being able to have many descendants; indeed many nations, and even the kings which would descend from him. And second, in connection with God’s establishing that physical blessing and fruitfulness which He would give to Abraham and Sarah, He would give to them this revelation of an everlasting covenant of eternal and spiritual blessings, through one particular line of Abraham’s descendants; that is the Jews. We need to understand that God would further particularize those eternal and spiritual

blessings to certain specific individuals within the nation of Israel, in showing them electing love and giving them saving grace. In this covenant God would grant to all elect Jews that they would find through faith in His promise, everlasting salvation from sin. Their coming to know God was intended from the beginning, to be all of grace through faith in His promise of Christ. There was not included anything of their own work, anything coming from themselves.

For look down at verses 15-21. After God tells Abraham that He wants him to circumcise himself and all of his family as a sign of this covenant, He commands that all of his physical descendants would recognize the covenant that He was making with him at that time, by their circumcising their children. And so it says in verse 15 - "Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.'" "And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her." "Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old?'" "And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" "And Abraham said to God, 'Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!'" "Then God said: 'No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.'"

So, you can see that Abraham was very surprised that God was not going to establish His covenant with him based upon his own efforts to have children with Sarai's maid Hagar. He even laughed about it, the idea was so wonderfully great. He now knew and he now fully believed, that rather than God's blessing his own efforts to bring these desired things about, that God was going to do, what at first sight, seemed to be impossible to him. He was going to bless Sarai with the ability to have a son. And it would be with this son Isaac that He would establish His covenant with Abraham, for an everlasting covenant. For our Lord Jesus Christ would be descended from Isaac, not from Ishmael. What was God asking Abraham to do in relation to all of these good and saving things coming about? Was He asking for Abraham and Sarah's works in relation to the law that He would give? No, the law had not yet been given and would not be given for another 430 years as it says in verse 17 of our text.

What God was asking for was faith from Abraham, that He would perform what was promised; even as our text in verse 15 says. That is, if we are to think about a man's covenanting with another man, when the promises are made, and it is confirmed by an oath, or the further promise of something to be done by either party, no one is going to make it null and void later on by attaching other conditions to it. That is what these Judaizers were doing. They were saying that the law which came later, modified this covenant of God's with Abraham, to require that Jews, or anyone else seeking to enter it, had to be circumcised and do the works of the law in order to be saved. But Paul is saying here in verse 15 of our text, "Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it."

And so, if this is the case with men's covenants, how much more so is it the case with God's covenants. Let me read to you Hebrews chapter 6, verse 13-18. "For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.'" "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." "For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute." "Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us."

You can see from these words that the blessings related to Abraham's having a son, and our being able to be saved through faith in Christ, all rest upon God covenant faithfulness. His counsel and purpose was unchangeable in his covenant with Abraham, in regard to his own son Isaac, and also in regard to the promised Seed, His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He confirmed this by an oath-bound promise so that we, all those believing in Jesus, the promised Seed, might have strong

consolation; we who have fled for refuge to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. Dear Christian, all the promises of God are “Yes”, and they are “Amen” in Him.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – I want you to think with me about the covenant made with the Seed, our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Verse 16 says: Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made.” “He does not say, ‘And to seeds’, as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed, who is Christ.” Paul’s distinction here is between the ‘seeds’ which were the many descendants of Abraham, which eventually became known as Israel, and Christ who is the Promised “Seed”. It is helpful to know that the same word which is translated “seed” and used in a plural sense to refer to Abraham’s descendants, is also translated “Seed” (singular) in relation to Christ. Turn with me over to Genesis Chapter 22, verses 13-18. Here, God commanded Abraham to take his son, his only son Isaac, and go to Mt. Moriah and offer him up as a burnt offering. And Abraham faithfully went about to do this. But just as he took the knife and went to slay his son, the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said that he should not lay a hand on him. For now He knew that Abraham feared God since he had not withheld his son, his only son, from Him.

But look now at verse 13 – “Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns.” “So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.” “And Abraham called the name of the place, The Lord will Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.” “Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld you son, your only son – blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.” “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

In the King James version, it rightly translates all the words “seed” – “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.” These words have a double fulfillment; one in Abraham’s literal physical descendants who are his “seed”, and then secondly in Christ who is the “Seed” referred to in Galatians in the passage that we are studying. Abraham’s physical descendants were multiplied as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore. They literally did possess the gate of their enemies; of the nations around them, when they came into the land.

And we should understand that there is, yet to come, a truly wonderful sense that those physical descendants of Abraham, when they are converted to Christ in a coming day, shall literally become a blessing to all the nations of the world in their preaching of the true gospel of Christ during the time of the Millennium. But the word “Seed” truly and primarily refers to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that all the promises belonging to both physical and spiritual Israel are fulfilled. Genesis 3: 15 was the first promise of Him in the Bible. “And I will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman, between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

But I want you also to turn over to John chapter 12, verses 23 and 24. “But Jesus answered them, saying, ‘The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.’ “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” So Jesus both literally and spiritually became that seed of the promise to Abraham. In laying down His life, in His taking upon Himself the work of redemption, He suffered at the hands of unrighteous men. In what they would do to His body, and what God would lay upon Him in His soul, He became that seed which fell into the ground and died. In enduring these sufferings He became the source of eternal life. He became the source of all spiritual blessings to both Jews and Gentiles who will trust in Him. This was according to the pre-determined plan and foreknowledge of God.

The words that I have just read to you from John chapter 12 were spoken on the occasion of certain Greeks who had come up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast of the Passover. They wanted to see Jesus. And it was at that very point that Jesus spoke these words; of His becoming a grain of wheat, of His being a seed, falling into the earth and dying; that others through His death might live forever. And this is how the Lord Jesus broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile, and made them into one new Man in the Church, which is His mystical spiritual body. I want you also to be able to see that this truth, of Jesus' being the Seed, is also linked to the future conversion of the Jews and their being brought into the Church. You will see this if you will turn with me over to Deuteronomy 30, verse 5 and 6.

It says here – “Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it.” “He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.” “And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants (your seed, it says in the King James), to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.” And lest you think that this was somehow fulfilled in Old Testament times, it goes on to say in Deuteronomy 30, verse 11 – “For this commandment which I command you this day, is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off.” “It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’” “Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’” “But the word is very near you in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.”

Now, where is it that these verses are re-stated in the New Testament Scriptures? They are found in Romans chapter 10, verse 4 and following, where the Apostle Paul contrasts obtaining righteousness by the law and its works, versus obtaining righteousness by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” “For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, ‘The man who does those things shall live by them.’” “But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is to bring Christ down from above) or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” “But what does it say?” “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Now, this is the great salvation which we have had preached to us, and which we believe by faith; that we should trust in God's righteousness which He has demonstrated in and through Jesus Christ. We should not trust in our own works to save us. And this is the great salvation which shall also one day come to the Jews as a nation and a people with saving strength. You find it clearly stated in Romans 11, verse 25 – “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’” (that is, their sins as a nation and a people)

The Apostle Paul also quotes from Isaiah 59: 20 – “The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, says the Lord” “As for Me, says the Lord, this is My covenant with them (that is, with the Jews); My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants (your seed), nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants (your seed's seed), says the Lord, from this time and forevermore.” So the Seed is Christ, and from that Seed many seeds will come, both Jew and Gentile. Those believing in Jesus's finished work, as a seed planted in the ground, are born again to a living hope, through faith in Him. And according to the riches of God's grace and His power, His purpose and His working, the Church of Jesus shall be built, composed of Jews and Gentiles, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.