

“Heirs of the Promise”  
Galatians 3:23 – 4:6  
(Preached at Trinity, February 24, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve been looking at Paul’s description of the wonderful transforming entrance of the Gospel. The promise has been fully revealed in Christ. What the Law could not do, faith has entered and with it God’s transforming grace.
2. "But now that faith has come"  
In the final verses of **Chapter 3** and continuing into **Chapter 4** Paul describes some of the blessings of the Gospel.
  - A. He began with the blessing of sonship.  
**Galatians 3:26** - "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."  
**Galatians 4:6 NAU** - "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
  - B. Second, Paul describes the glorious union with Christ enjoyed by the children of faith – they are covered with Christ  
**Galatians 3:27 NAU** - "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."
    1. Paul describes it as wearing Christ as a covering
    2. We have become partakers of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.
  - C. The third blessing promised to the children of faith is a wonderful unity within the body of Christ. In **Verse 28** Paul describes our equality within the body. The New Covenant has erased the divisions of the past. All who are in the New Covenant enjoy the rich blessings of God. The divisions and prejudices that plague mankind are replaced by the love and unity enjoyed by the body of Christ.
3. This morning I want to direct your attention to a fourth blessing promised to the children of faith. Paul states we have become heirs to the promise given to Abraham.  
**Galatians 3:29 NAU** - " And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."
  - A. Paul states that this blessing is only granted to those who belong to Christ—to those who are united to Christ, who are one with Christ; to those who are partakers of the New Covenant. Again, we find the unity of God’s people. ALL of God’s people belong to Him. ALL are united with Him.  
**Romans 12:5 NAU** - "so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."  
**Jeremiah 31:34 NAU** - "for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them"
  - B. Abraham had a particular offspring. God has a particular people.
    1. Those who are of the faith of Abraham are Abraham’s true offspring. They are the people of God.  
**Galatians 3:7 NAU** - "Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham."

**Galatians 3:9 NAU** - "So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer."

2. Now Paul adds:

**Galatians 3:29 NAU** - "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

C. "And if you belong to Christ"

1. The fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham is Christ

**Galatians 3:16 NAU** - "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ."

2. If Christ is Abraham's offspring then those who are united to Him by faith are also Abraham's offspring.

3. The promises to Abraham are shared by his true posterity.

**Galatians 3:7 NAU** - "Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham."

5. One of the blessings of being a son is sharing in the inheritance.

A. Abraham had many physical descendants –The Jewish people were very proud of this lineage.

**John 8:30-39 NAU** - "As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. <sup>31</sup> So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." <sup>33</sup> They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free '?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. <sup>35</sup> "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. <sup>36</sup> "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. <sup>37</sup> "I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. <sup>38</sup> "I speak the things which I have seen with *My* Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father." <sup>39</sup> They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham."

B. Not all of the descendents of Abraham were true sons. The true sons of Abraham were those who shared the faith of Abraham. These were his spiritual seed. It wasn't physical circumcision that God had ultimately designed for His people but circumcision of the heart.

**Galatians 6:15-16 NAU** - "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. <sup>16</sup> And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God."

C. The promises of the Covenant of Grace further revealed in the Abrahamic Covenant were fully revealed and fulfilled through Christ. We must always look upon their fulfillment from shadow to reality.

**Galatians 3:16 NAU** - "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ."

1. Many of the promises to Abraham were shadows and types which find their fulfillment in Christ. Through the Messiah the physical promises to Abraham find a spiritual fulfillment

2. All who are united to Jesus share in these promises  
**Galatians 3:29 NAU** - "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."  
**Galatians 3:16 NAU** - "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. "
6. This morning I want to remind you of God's covenant promises to Abraham, promises that we share with Abraham and all who are the faith of Abraham.  
**Galatians 3:9 NAU** - "So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer."
7. Of course, the ultimate promise is the promise of the Gospel—the promise revealed in the Covenant of Grace. We are the children of the promise fulfilled in Christ. We are the people of God.
8. The true people of God have always been the spiritual offspring of Abraham. They have the glorious blessing of the promised inheritance.
9. God made several promises to Abraham that had a physical fulfillment. But these promises were typical in nature looking to a much greater spiritual fulfillment. They were shadows looking future to their fulfillment in Christ.  
 Throughout redemptive history we find in the redemptive tension of the already and not yet. We have the inheritance and yet we wait for it. It has come and yet we do not yet have it in its fullness.
10. Abraham also understood this tension. For example, he knew God's promise of a land and believed it—but he knew God's ultimate fulfillment was more than a parcel of land in Canaan.
11. All of God's promises to Abraham have had a glorious fulfillment in Christ—promises that we enjoy as the people of God.  
 This morning I want us to look at these promises.
- I. God promised to Abraham and his posterity that He would be their God and they would be His people  
**Genesis 17:7-8 NAS** - "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. <sup>8</sup> "And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."  
 A. They were chosen above all the nations of the earth
  1. Israel enjoyed this blessing. They enjoyed the presence of God as the people of God.
  2. Under the Old Covenant this was provisional and required their obedience. Under the New Covenant it is an everlasting promise fulfilled through the righteousness of Christ.  
**Jeremiah 31:33-34 NAU** - "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>34</sup> "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD"

- B. We have this blessing now but await its fullness
1. We enjoy the abiding presence of Jesus Christ now  
**Matthew 28:20 NAS** - "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
    - a. We are now the people of God set apart as His particular possession. We hear God's covenant language throughout the NT  
**2 Corinthians 6:16-18 NAS** - "For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>17</sup> "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. <sup>18</sup> "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty."
    - b. The New Covenant is a glorious demonstration of God abiding with His people.  
 Greg Nichols: "Jehovah Jesus instituted the new covenant with this believing remnant of Israel. Then He blessed Christian Israel with the Holy Spirit, gave them the Lord's Day, and grafted Gentile believers into this theocratic society of the new covenant. In this way God took the theocracy away from Hebrew Israel and made Messiah's posterity the people of God." (*Covenant Theology*, 178)
    - c. But the Church hasn't replaced Israel. It is the full revelation of God's people. We are God's people and enjoy the riches of our inheritance.
  2. And yet, we have not yet received our inheritance in its fullness. Sin hinders our communion with Christ and we look forward to His return when we shall see Him face to face.  
**1 John 3:2-3 NAU** - "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."
  3. As we await His return He has given us His Holy Spirit as the down payment or earnest of our inheritance.  
**Ephesians 1:13-14 NAU** - " In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup> who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory."

## II. Second, God promised Abraham a Homeland

### A. For Abraham's physical descendents this was Canaan

1. God removed the inhabitants of the Land of Canaan and gave it to Israel  
**1 Chronicles 16:15-18 NAU** - "Remember His covenant forever, The word which He commanded to a thousand generations, <sup>16</sup> *The covenant* which He made with Abraham, And His oath to Isaac. <sup>17</sup> He also confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, To Israel as an everlasting covenant, <sup>18</sup> Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan, As the portion of your inheritance."

2. It remained theirs as long as they remained a theocratic nation. But it was never meant to be the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise. It was an Old Covenant shadow that looked forward to a New Covenant fulfillment. The patriarchs never had full possession and always looked forward to the city of God.

**Hebrews 11:9-10 NAU** - " By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; <sup>10</sup> for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

### B. We look forward to the ultimate fulfillment of this promise

**Matthew 5:5 KJV** - "Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

**2 Peter 3:13 NAU** - "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

1. We sing hymns looking forward to his day

*On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,  
and cast a wishful eye  
to Canaan's fair and happy land,  
where my possessions lie.*

2. But we already taste of it. Every time we meet for worship we get a taste of the Heavenly Jerusalem

**Hebrews 12:22-24 NAU** - "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, <sup>23</sup> to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, <sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel."

## III. God promised Abraham in innumerable posterity

**Genesis 15:5-6 NAU** - "And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." <sup>6</sup> Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."

**Genesis 22:17 NAU** - "indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore"

**Genesis 26:4 NAU** - "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;"

- A. This had a physical fulfillment
1. Abraham did indeed have an innumerable posterity
  2. By the time they left Egypt they numbered over a million. God raised up a mighty nation from which came kings  
**Genesis 35:11 NAU** - "I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you."
  3. The bearing of children under the Old Covenant was of great importance  
**Psalms 127:3 NAU** - "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward."
    - a. It was essential for the Nation of Israel to become great and powerful. They had to survive as a nation in order for God's redemptive purpose to be fulfilled in Christ. Children were seen as the fulfillment of God's promise
    - b. Children today should be seen as a wonderful blessing from God. They are a treasure of God's grace. But we must never look to the Old Covenant as a mandate for large families.
- B. This too was a shadow that has a greater fulfillment in the New Covenant
1. Abraham was promised a seed – an innumerable offspring  
 We share in the blessings of this promise. We share in the fulfillment of this promise. But God's fulfillment in the NC is a spiritual offspring. Paul often referred to his converts as his children.  
**Galatians 4:19 NAU** - "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you"  
**1 Corinthians 4:14 NAU** - "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children."
  2. The church is being blessed by an innumerable host of converts  
**Acts 2:37-41 NAU** - "Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" <sup>38</sup> Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." <sup>40</sup> And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" <sup>41</sup> So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls."  
**Acts 2:47 NAS** - "And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."  
**Acts 4:4 NAU** - "But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand."
  3. We have converts from every tribe, nation, and tongue. The Gospel is going forth as a powerful, unstoppable force.

4. We should hunger and cry out for an innumerable offspring. And we should labor towards its accomplishment. This is a part of our inheritance. Spurgeon – “Not only shall the faithful be blessed with converts, and so with a spiritual seed; but those who are their spiritual children shall become fruitful also, and thus the multitude of the elect shall be accomplished; God shall increase the people, and shall increase the joy.”

IV. God promised Abraham peace and victory

**Genesis 22:17 NAS** - "indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies."

A. Israel enjoyed the physical fulfillment of this promise

1. The Israelites were feared by the nations  
Their enemies were removed from Canaan.
2. We can also see it in the mighty victories of King David
3. And yet, Israel never found ultimate peace and their enemies were never ultimately removed. Again, their victories were but a shadow of the fulfillment in Christ

B. We share the glorious inheritance of ultimate peace and victory

1. We are members of the church militant. We are marching forward as an unstoppable force—not with earthly weapons but with the power of the Gospel.

**2 Corinthians 10:4 NAU** - "for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. <sup>5</sup> We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,"

2. We have the promise of full and final victory
  - a. It is the already, and the not yet
  - b. God will deliver His people from sin, Satan, and the grave
  - c. The gates of hell will not prevail against the church
  - d. The sting of death has been conquered through the resurrection
3. The full and final victory is assured

**Romans 8:37-39 NAS** - "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. "

**Romans 8:37 KJV** - "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Conclusion:

1. All of these promises are ours. They are our inheritance that we share with all who are Abraham's true descendants.

**Galatians 3:29 NAU** - "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

2. Those who share the faith of Abraham enjoy the promise of Abraham. We share in his inheritance

3. Most important, Paul says in **Romans** that we share in the inheritance of Abraham's ultimate seed. We share in the inheritance of Christ.

**Rom 8:17** - "and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* in order that we may also be glorified with *Him*."

**Daniel 7:27 NAS** - "Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him."