

Preached on 1/15/23 at GBC - Ruston

"The Covenant Of Grace, Pt.2"

Gal.3:17-18

The Apostle Paul, as well as the other Apostles understood the eternal consequences of error when it comes to a sinner's justification and salvation before God. Paul stated it about as plainly as it could be stated when he preached the Gospel in the synagogue at Antioch on the sabbath day, preaching plainly and dogmatically that the elect of God's salvation is by **COVENANT PROMISE** to "**Abraham's SEED**", "**which IS CHRIST**", without any assistance or cooperation by the sinner – "**And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took [him] down from the tree, and laid [him] in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, [now] no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another [psalm], Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men [and] brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.**"(Acts 13:29-39) God's elect are saved according to the terms and conditions of the covenant of grace, a covenant between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. According to Paul's words in the previous verses a "**covenant**" or will cannot be disannulled or changed by anything that came after or was added after this covenant was made between them. These false teachers thought the law was part of the covenant, seeking to place these believers back under the law in order to be saved. The Apostle has made it very clear by his words to Peter – "**We [who are] Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, [is] therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness [come] by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."(Gal.2:15-21) We **MUST** be Scripturally correct on **THIS POINT!****

Look at the first part of Vs.17 – "**And this I say, [that] the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ.**" Let me read it to you from YLT – "**and this I say, A covenant confirmed before by God to Christ.**" Everything the Apostle sets forth in this verse and the following verses have to be understood in light of what he wrote in the previous verse – "**Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.**" These "**promises made**" were "**to Abraham and His SEED.**" The original promise made to Abraham in **Gen.12:1-3**, was that God would bless him and make him a great nation, and

would bless all the families of the earth through him. Somewhere around **10 years** passed, and God appeared to Abraham again in **Gen.15:1-6**. The Lord entered into a solemn covenant with Abraham that contained **THREE DISTINCT PROMISES** – **1st** – That the one who had been childless so long would be the father of many nations; **2nd**, that Jehovah would be a God to him and his seed; **3rd**, that He would give the land of Caanan as an everlasting possession to Abraham and his seed. All of these promises received a literal and spiritual fulfillment. The literal fulfillment of the **1st promise** was the multitude that sprang from this childless man Abraham, national Israel. Paul himself was of Abraham’s national lineage. The **SPIRITUAL FULFILLMENT**, which the **LITERAL FULFILLMENT** typified or pictured, is what our text is about. Paul told those at Rome – “*Therefore [it is] of faith, that [it might be] by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the SEED; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, [even] God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*”(**Rom.4:16,17**) In this sense, Abraham is the father of **ALL BELIEVERS**, whether Jew or Gentile, **and their Father only** – “*They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, [even] God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? [even] because ye cannot hear my word.*”(**Jn.8:39-43**) The **2nd promise**, that God would be Abraham’s God and his children’s God had its literal fulfillment in the riches and prosperity of Abraham and Israel **AFTER THE FLESH**, being brought into the covenant by their physical relationship to Abraham. Until the time of the promised seed, Jehovah was their God and acknowledged them as a peculiar people. **Keep in mind**, this covenant with Israel **AFTER THE FLESH** was a conditional covenant – **ELABORATE**. The **spiritual fulfillment** of this promise was God becoming the **GOD** of **SPIRITUAL ISRAEL**, Abraham’s children **BY FAITH**, and unlike the covenant with national Israel, the writer of Hebrews declared – “*But now hath He (which is Christ, the promised SEED) obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*”(**Heb.8:6**) All the conditions of this covenant rested on Christ, Abraham’s seed. The **3rd promise** had its literal fulfillment in national Israel’s conquest and occupation of the land of Canaan. This too was a **CONDITIONAL PROMISE!** The **SPIRITUAL FULFILLMENT** of this promise concerns the possession of a “*better country*” which all of Abraham’s seed inherit eternally – **Turn to Heb.11:8-16**. Which brings us back to Paul’s words in our text – “*the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ.*” The phrase “*that was confirmed before*” is one word in the original, and it means ‘sanction, ratify, or **ESTABLISH BEFORE HAND**’. The word translated “*of*” mean ‘by’. The word translated “*in*” means ‘to or unto’. So this “*covenant*” or last will and testament was “sanctioned, ratified, and established beforehand’ by God **TO** or **UNTO CHRIST**. Remember what we harped on in the last time – “*For all the promises of God in him [are] yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*”(**II Cor.1:20**) This is the heart and soul of the **COVENANT OF GRACE**. None of **THIS COVENANT** is conditioned on the sinner, but are the covenant engagement of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to glorify and honor **THEMSELVES** in every attribute of Their character as both “*a just God and a Savior.*” Three verses come to my mind – “*The LORD thy God in the midst of thee [is] mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love,*

he will joy over thee with singing.”(Zeph.3:17); “Herein is LOVE, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son [to be] **THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS.**”(I Jn.4:10); “And all things [are] of God, **who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.**”(II Cor.5:18,19) You could also throw **John 3:16** into the mix on this point!

Seeing that the covenant of grace is between all three Persons of the Trinity and none of the covenant was conditioned on man, but on “**Abraham’s seed**”, the Holy Spirit by Paul dogmatically declares this concerning that which these Judaizers were insisting upon – “**the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.**” The “**LAW**” which refers to the entirety of the **LAW OF MOSES**, i.e., the moral, ceremonial, the tabernacle and later the temple, all the sacrifices, and the priesthood, which was given **430 years AFTER** this **PROMISE**. This 430 years comes from Exo.12:40,41 – “**Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, [was] four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt**”, which is what God had promised Abraham in **Gen.15:13**. Paul declares plainly that **THE LAW** “**cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.**” The word “**disannul**” means ‘render void or deprive of force and authority’. The phrase “**of none effect**” means ‘to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish’. These words echo back to Paul’s words in **Gal.2:21** – “**I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness [come] by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.**” This heretical error that obedience to the Law by the sinner is necessary to either secure or evidence their salvation isn’t just a little mistake, but a **LIFE OR DEATH ISSUE**. The elect’s salvation doesn’t rest in anything done by them or in them, but exclusively on what Christ did for them in fulfillment of His covenant engagement with the Father under the terms and conditions of the covenant of grace. Listen to the writer of Hebrews – “**For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation [is] to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of **his counsel**, confirmed [it] by an **oath**: That by **two immutable things**, in which [it was] impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which [hope] we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, [even] **Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.**”(Heb.6:13-20) When God **PURPOSED** to save His people by grace **ALONE**, in Christ **ALONE**, the **TERMS OF THE COVENANT** were settled and established and they could never be altered or “**disannulled**”!**

Look at **Vs.18** – “**For if the inheritance [be] of the law, [it is] no more of promise: but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise.**” By “**the inheritance**” Paul meant either the eternal inheritance, i.e., everlasting life and happiness in heaven which is the gift of God through Christ, and cannot be attained to and enforced by the works of the law, **OR** I think Paul was more specific, meaning he was talking about the eternal blessing of justification promised in the covenant to Abraham and his spiritual seed. This promise was not only to the believing Jews, but also to the Gentiles, **and inherited by them.** **Listen to me closely: YOU DO NOT DO ANYTHING TO EARN AN**

INHERITANCE, IT IS FREELY GIVEN TO YOU AS A BENEFACTOR. Paul said that if the “*inheritance* [be] *of the law*”, you **DISANNUL** the promise, which he declared to be impossible in the previous verse. This “*inheritance*”, Paul tells us the inheritance is not obtained through obedience to the law of works, nor does it belong to those who seek for it by the deeds of the law, because those who seek it by the “*deeds of the law*” **are not heirs of it** – “*For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, [was] not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law [be] heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, [there is] no transgression.*”(Rom.4:13-15) Paul drives the **death knell** into their logic with the next statement – “*but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise.*” “**GOD GAVE IT**” to Abraham **FREELY**, without any regard to the works of the Law. The word translated “*gave*” means ‘to give graciously, give freely, or **BESTOW**’. Here’s the same word – “*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*”(Rom.8:32); “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*”(I Cor.2:12) **THIS IS SO IMPORTANT:** God gave it to him and all the elect “*by promise*”. Mr.Gill stated it this way: “Wherefore justification is not by works, but by the free grace of God, through faith in the righteousness of Christ; and in this way men become heirs according to the hope of eternal life: all which is directly opposite to the notion of the Jews, who say: “for the reward of the commandments, men shall inherit paradise.” God’s Word states clearly – “*But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*”(Tit.3:4-7) Like Abraham, the Father of the faithful, we believe that the God who **MADE THE PROMISE** is faithful to **FULFILL HIS PROMISE**. Like Abraham, and by the same “*faith of God’s elect*”, **ALL GOD’S ELECT** “*believe on Him who JUSTIFIES the ungodly.*”

Then what part does the Law play and why did God give it? Lord willing, we’ll deal with that in the next message.