

**Galatians 3: 15 and 16; “The Seed is Christ”, Message # 18 in the series – “Christ has Made us Free”, prepared for the evening of November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 by Pastor Paul Rendall, and conducted at the church.**

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 are under the works of the law are 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 he 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, 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. He left Ur of the Chaldeans, it says in Genesis 12, and he took his family and Lot, and went to live in the land of Canaan 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, God told him in Genesis 15, that “He was his shield and His exceeding great reward”. And He took Abraham outside and 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 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 Abraham, on the basis of a covenant.

Turn with me over to Genesis chapter 17, verses 1-. “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; promise of personal physical blessing in having many descendants; indeed many nations, and even kings which would descend from him. And then out of God’s establishing that physical blessing and fruitfulness, which He would give to Abraham and Sarah, would come God’s establishing of an everlasting covenant of eternal and spiritual blessings through one particular line of Abraham’s descendants; that is the Jews.

But we also 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 grace. Eternal and everlasting salvation from sin, and 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 coming from ourselves. 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 in 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.'"

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, it was so wonderfully great. He knew and he believed, that rather than God's blessings his own efforts to bring these desired things about, that God was going to do what at first sight seemed to be to him impossible. He was going to bless Sarai with the ability to have a son. And it would be with Isaac that He would establish His covenant for an everlasting covenant, for 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? 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 that He would perform what was promised. Even as our text in Galatians says in verse 15, 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."

If this is the case with men's covenants, how much more so with God's. Look over at Hebrews chapter 6, verse 13-20. "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 and the promised Seed, Jesus Christ. He confirmed this by and 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.

**Then 2nd - We want to look at 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” 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, to go to Mt. Moriah, and offer up his son, his only son Isaac as a burnt offering. And Abraham went about to do this, but just went he was getting ready 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 he 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. Abraham’s physical descendants were multiplied as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore. They did literally possess the gate of their enemies; of the nations around them, when they came into the land. And 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 world in their preaching of the true gospel of Christ in 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 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 turn over also to John chapter 12, verse 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.” Jesus both literally and spiritually became that seed. In laying down His life, and enduring the sufferings of the wrath of God and unrighteous men to His soul and body, He became that seed which fell into the ground and died. Through His death He became the source of eternal life and blessing to both Jews and Gentiles, which was according to pre-determined plan and foreknowledge of God. But by this means of His going to the cross, and then falling into the ground in His death and burial, as a seed, He became the basis of God’s giving the gift of eternal life to all who would believe in Him. These words of the Lord Jesus in John 12 were spoken on the occasion of certain Greeks who had come up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast of the Passover, and they wanted to see Jesus. And it was at that very point that Jesus spoke these words of His becoming a grain of wheat, a seed, falling into the earth and dying; that others through His death might live forever. Jesus broke down the barrier between Jew and

Gentile and has made them into one new Man in the Church, which is His mystical spiritual body.

This truth of Jesus' being the Seed can also be seen very clearly in relation to the future conversion of the Jews and their being brought into the Church if you will turn with me over to Deuteronomy 30, verse 5 and 6. "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." And where are these verses re-stated in the New Testament Scriptures? In Romans Chapter 10, verse 4 and following where the Apostle Paul contrasts obtaining righteousness by the law and its works verses 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."

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, and not 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 is quoting 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." The Seed is Christ, and from that Seed many seeds come. 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.