

THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM

TEXT: GALATIANS 3:14-18

Introduction:

1. I mentioned two weeks ago (when I preached from verses 6 through 9) that Abraham is referred to 311 times in the Bible -- 237 times in the Old Testament, and 74 times in the New Testament.
2. Abraham is mentioned nine times in the book of Galatians (cf. 3:6-9, 14, 16, 18, 29).
3. The theme of this epistle is we are saved by grace through faith, not the law. Abraham could not be saved by keeping the law because Abraham lived over 400 years before God gave the law to Moses.
4. In Galatians 3:6, the apostle Paul is quoting Genesis 15:6 -- "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted (or "imputed") it to him for righteousness." "Impute" is an accounting term which means to count, or put to someone's account (cf. Rom. 4:16-25).
5. This is the principle of justification by faith.
6. In Galatians 3:8, Paul is quoting Genesis 12:3. This is what is referred to as "the Abrahamic Covenant" (Gen. 12:1-3).
7. The word "promise" is used eight times in this chapter (Gal. 3:14, 16, 17, 18 twice, 19, 21, 22, 29).
8. This promise refers to God's promise to Abraham that in him would all the nations of the earth be blessed. This is part of the Abrahamic Covenant.
9. In the context of Galatians 3, the promise refers specifically to the blessing of salvation by God's grace through faith in the promised Messiah, who would be Abraham's seed (3:16).
10. Tonight we will consider three aspects of this blessing.

I. THE BLESSING IS SALVATION BY FAITH (3:14).

1. Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 (Gal. 3:6). The blessing of salvation is not just for the physical descendants of Abraham. Galatians 3:7 says, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (cf. 3:7-9, 26-29).
2. The blessing includes "the promise of the Spirit" (3:14).
3. Our Lord referred to the promise of the Holy Spirit as "the promise of my Father" in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4.
4. The term is also used in Acts 2:33 and 39; and in Ephesians 1:13.
5. "The promise of the Spirit" is received the same way we receive forgiveness of sins and salvation in Christ -- by faith (Gal. 3:14).

6. FB Meyer said, "To me this text once came as a perfect revelation. It was the clue to unravel perplexity, the point around which truth held long in solution suddenly crystallized. Before this verse spoke to my heart it had been my constant endeavor to feel the Spirit's presence as the sign of my having received; but now it became clear that one might receive by simple faith God's very richest communications, even though the emotion tarried long."
7. Romans 4:13 says, the promise was not through the law, "but through the righteousness of faith."
8. This is stated repeatedly in Paul's epistles, especially in the epistle to the Galatians (cf. 2:16, 21; 3:11).
9. The blessing of Abraham is available to all -- both Jews and Gentiles -- and it is based solely upon God's grace (3:14).

II. THE BLESSING IS "THROUGH JESUS CHRIST" (3:14).

1. The blessing was to come through "Abraham and his seed," specifically through the Lord Jesus Christ (3:16).
2. The Bible concept of the "seed" goes back all the way to Genesis 3:15, after the fall of man.
3. God said to the serpent (Satan), "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."
4. There would be a long conflict between Satan's seed and the woman's seed. Satan's goal throughout the Old Testament, and into the beginning of the New Testament was to keep the Messiah from being born.
5. The devil knew the seed of the woman would crush his head, so he tried many times to extinguish the Messianic line. He unsuccessfully attempted to destroy the Messianic line so Christ couldn't even be born.
6. Pharaoh and Haman and many other evil men tried to wipe out the Jews.
7. You may recall how Saul tried several times to kill David. Our Lord was descended from King David.
8. You may recall how wicked Queen Athaliah killed the royal descendants (her own grandchildren). She killed them all except for little Joash.
9. Jehosheba, the sister of Ahaziah, who was married to the high priest Jehoiada, rescued Joash, the little son of King Ahaziah, and hid him until he was old enough to be crowned the king of Judah.
10. Our Lord was descended from King Joash.
11. Revelation 12:4 says, "The dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born."

12. At our Lord's birth, King Herod issued a decree to find the baby Jesus and kill Him. Matthew 2:16 says, he "slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under."
13. Joseph was warned by God in a dream, and so he took Mary and the little baby Jesus and escaped to Egypt.
14. When that Satanic plot didn't work, the devil tried to conquer Christ in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11).
15. God made His covenant with Abraham "through Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:16). This is not very clear in the Old Testament, but it is very clear in the New Testament.
16. Galatians 3:19 says, "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made."
17. "The seed" in Galatians 3:19 is singular, and it refers to Christ (cf. 3:16).
18. This is why our Lord said to the Jews in John 8:56, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."
19. Then our Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). They responded to this by attempting to stone Him (John 8:59).

III. THE BLESSING CANNOT BE ANNULLED BY THE LAW.

1. God's covenant with Abraham was a covenant of grace. Abraham did not make a covenant with God. God made a covenant with Abraham.
2. God did not lay down any conditions for Abraham. It was an unconditional covenant. In fact, when the covenant was ratified, Abraham was asleep (see Genesis 15).
3. The covenant was based completely upon the grace of God.
4. Paul brings out that Abraham's descendents (Israel) broke God's law, but nevertheless the blessings of God were not annulled.
5. Disobedience brings God's chastening, but God will never break His promise (Gal. 3:17).
6. The word "disannul" means "to cancel; make void." In other words, "disannul" means "to annul."
7. The Judaizers taught that the giving of the law changed the original Abrahamic Covenant. Paul argues that it did not (3:15).
8. Paul makes the point that if men of the world respect covenants, how much more does God? (Gal. 3:15).
9. God's promise to Abraham preceded the law by more than 500 years (3:17). The Judaizers tried to add the law to God's covenant, but they were not part of the original covenant. The two parties were God and Abraham, so the Judaizers could not alter the covenant.

10. The "four hundred and thirty years" in Galatians 3:17 have puzzled some Bible readers because the interval between Abraham and Moses was more than 430 years. Paul seems to conclude here the culmination of the promise of the patriarchs who came later (e.g., Jacob, Abraham's grandson).
11. The point here is that the law could not possibly set aside an unconditional covenant that God had already made and confirmed.
12. In Galatians 3:18, Paul states that since the inheritance was promised to Abraham, it could not have come from obedience to the law.
13. Likewise, the promise concerning salvation through faith was made long before the law was given.

CONCLUSION:

1. Last week I said the law is like a mirror. A mirror shows us we need to get cleaned up, but a mirror cannot clean us up.
2. Another example would be to compare the law to a plumb line. Carpenters check their work by using a string with a weighted plumb-bob on the end of the string. When the plumb line reveals that something (a wall or a door, etc.) is not plumb or straight, the plumb line cannot correct it.
3. The carpenter must get out his tools (hammer and saw) to correct the problem.