

The Unchangeable Promise

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You know, I am always amazed at the way God chooses to reveal new truths to us. It might come through hearing a sermon or reading an article. Or maybe just having a conversation and something new opens our eyes.

Sometimes God teaches softly like a gentle whisper and other times it is like a thunderbolt that shakes us to the core.

Well, as I was working through my notes for that conversation with "Cajun" Paul, one of those lightning bolt moments hit me. I did not get it at first, but I knew God was showing me something important. It happened while I was studying Galatians, where Paul talks about God's promise to Abraham. He says that promise cannot be changed, cannot be dissolved, and nobody can ever add to it. And I thought, well, hold on a second. What exactly does that mean for us?

So that is what we are going to look at today: the promise God made to Abraham and why Paul calls it unchangeable and how that promise reaches all the way to us.

In chapter 3, verse 15 of Galatians, Paul writes,

Galatians 3:15-16 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. 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.

So Paul is pointing us right back to the promise God made to Abram. Let us flip back to Genesis chapter 12 to see this promise.

Genesis 12:1 God said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you."

Genesis 12:3 "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Down in chapter 15, verse 7, it says,

Genesis 15:7-8 Then He said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." And he said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"

Now, here is where it gets interesting. God tells Abram to prepare a sacrifice. Abram cuts the animals in two and lays the pieces opposite each other. This was a well-known custom at the time. Both parties would walk between the pieces to show they were bound by the agreement.

But Abram never walks through. Instead, only God passes between the pieces, appearing as a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. God was showing Abram and us that this covenant did not depend on Abram at all. Abram had nothing to sign. God Himself guaranteed the promise.

Continuing in verse 18.

Genesis 15:18 On the same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants, I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates."

So this is where it all begins, this one man, one promise, and a plan designed to reach the whole world.

So back in verse 15, Paul reminds us that once a covenant is confirmed, you cannot just change it later. Even in our modern world, once a contract is signed, you cannot just go scribbling in extra terms afterwards. Now, if this

is true for man's legal contracts, would you not reckon the same applies when God seals a covenant?

So this covenant was not about what Abraham did. It was a one-sided promise sealed by God. That is why it could not ever be changed or have anything added.

The promise included both a physical and a spiritual side. Physically, God promised Abraham land. Spiritually, the blessing would extend to all nations on earth.

Genesis 13:15 "For all the land which you see, I give to you and your descendants forever."

Then in Genesis chapter 17, in considering Abraham's change in actions and thinking, God determines he is converted and changes his name to Abraham. Then in verse 7, God says,

Genesis 17:7 "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant."

The key word here is *everlasting*. So how could Abraham and his descendants possess something forever if they died long ago? Did God fail in His promise?

The book of Hebrews tells us they all died not receiving the promise. So the only way it can be fulfilled is Abraham must somehow live again. So that means a resurrection.

Brethren, eternal life is built right into the promise. God was revealing the very heart of the gospel, the good news of the Kingdom of God, long before Christ was born.

Abraham believed God would honor His promise, and that belief, his faith, was counted to him as righteousness. That is the same faith we are called to have.

God did not just say it once, no. He repeated and expanded the promise over and over.

Genesis 26:3-4 . . . I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. . . . I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

Genesis 28:13-14 . . . the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants, . . . and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Genesis 35:11-12 . . . a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you. . . . The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.

Each time the promise expands, more descendants, more nations, more spiritual depth. By the time Christ arrives, Abraham's descendants carried that promise deep in their identity. But the real promise was never just about land. It was always about an everlasting relationship with God.

Let us turn to Galatians chapter 3, please. Paul states in verse 17,

Galatians 3:17 The law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

In other words, the law did not replace the promise. It could not. Once God seals something, it is sealed.

Paul says the law was given because of transgressions to show what sin is and to guide people in God's way of life until Christ came to live it perfectly. And here is the important part. *The promise came before the law*, showing the promise is the foundation. Nothing could be added to it. The law simply built on what already existed.

Now think about Genesis chapter 26, verse 5,

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Genesis 26:5 "Because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

God's law already existed long before Sinai. And in Genesis chapter 7, verse 2.

Genesis 7:2 "You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female."

This is showing Noah these clean and unclean characteristics existed from creation. So these principles were not new. They had been there since the beginning.

The law could be included in the Old Covenant, but it was not exclusive to it. Just like the promise, it was always part of God's relationship with His people.

Now when God gave His law to Israel, He was not just dealing with one faithful man like Abraham or Noah. No. He was dealing with millions of unconverted people. So He added something extra to help them. Along with the Ten Commandments, His eternal spiritual law, He gave civil and sacrificial laws to guide their daily lives. The Old Covenant, like the promise, had both spiritual and physical elements. The spiritual part, the Ten Commandments was eternal. The physical part included sacrifices, the Levitical priesthood, and civil rules about community life.

When Israel broke the covenant, that physical part ended. But the spiritual law still remains.

Christ came and fulfilled everything those old laws pointed to. He became both the High Priest and the perfect Sacrifice. And now under the New Covenant, God's Spirit writes His laws in our hearts so we do not need animal sacrifices or an earthly priesthood anymore. We live by love for God and love for our neighbor, just as He intended from the very beginning.

Let us go back to verse 16 of Galatians chapter 3 again. Paul says,

Galatians 3:16 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.

Brethren, this is the critical point to understand in the entire plan of God. The original promise was made directly to Jesus Christ. He is the true Heir, the one Seed, the One who brings the whole plan together.

Hebrews 9:15 . . . He is the mediator of the New Covenant, . . . that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

So here is the big thunderbolt. The covenant made to Abraham and the New Covenant in Christ are one continuous promise.

Christ did not come to change the promise. He came to confirm it. He was the first to receive that eternal inheritance.

Now, here is where it becomes real for us, brethren. Paul continues in verse 29.

Galatians 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

This eternal inheritance promised to Abraham, confirmed through Christ, now belongs to each of us through faith. It has never been about lawkeeping for salvation. It is about believing God, just like Abraham did.

This belief leads to obedience. As we know, faith without works is dead, but the foundation is always faith in God's promise. John tells us in Revelation chapter 21, verse 7,

Revelation 21:7 "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he will be My son."

That is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise. It began with Abraham, it was confirmed through Christ, and will be completed when God's Kingdom is established on earth. That is when the unchangeable promise becomes eternal reality.

Brethren, that is the gospel message Christ came to deliver. So when Paul says, if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, meaning the same promise of eternal inheritance belongs to us.

Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. God recognized Abraham's desire for a relationship by his willingness to conform to God's way of life. He was motivated to be in a right and good relationship with God.

This is what God looks for in a relationship. If someone believes God, you are going to live a different way. Belief transforms life. Faith produces obedience.

When we believe God through Christ, the same promise applies to us. And brethren, that is why it is called the unchangeable promise, because it was never built on what man could do but on what God has already done.

The world changes. People break promises. False traditions twist the truth, but God's promise still stands unbroken.

So the real question to ask ourselves is, "Am I part of that promise?" If you belong to Christ, that inheritance is yours. Eternal life is yours.

Brethren, our hope does not depend on how perfectly we perform, but in how faithful God is to keep His word. The same God who said to Abraham, I will bless you, is saying to us through Christ, I will give you eternal life.

So hold on to that, brethren. Live like you believe it, because everything else in this world may fade, but the promise of God never will. And one day just like Abraham we will stand in the reality of that promise. Not by sight, but by the power of the God who swore by Himself.

Then we will understand what we have only believed by faith all along. That His Word is sure. His covenant is forever, and His promise, the unchangeable promise, was worth trusting all along.