

## Promises Were Made

**Text:** Galatians 3.15–18

**Theme:** God's Covenant promises are kept by God through Jesus Christ

### Introduction — Glawspel: the damning mixture of law and gospel

- this is the shirt I purchased at the conference I attended a week ago
- it tells of the horrible problem of trying to do something more with the gospel of Christ
- the Judaizers were experts at this and it would cost them their eternal souls if no repentance
- our text open before us this morning speaks to this
- even as Paul continues to speak of the law-gospel relationship, he builds our assurance
- for the assurance of our salvation, of our justification is grounded in Jesus Christ
- and God's covenant, ratified through Jesus, is as certain a thing as can ever be
- let me say that again:
- God's covenant is kept by God through Jesus Christ

### This is what Paul continues to put forward in our text this morning

- those who came to lay a burden of more law upon the believers were all confused
- therefore, they were confusing the Christians in Galatia
- so Paul keeps on showing the clear distinction between the law & the gospel
- the Judaizers were guilty of putting forth “glawspel”
- they held to the gospel, but they were mixing & adding law to the gospel
- this renders the gospel null and void
- so Paul shows what God has done, not man
- he shows what God has done to fulfill His covenant promises thru Jesus

*In v. 15, we see the...*

#### I. FULFILLMENT IN COVENANT

- note, first off, that Paul addresses his readers more gently now: “brothers”
- this is not only because he is a gentle shepherd for them
- it is also to make sure they are identified with him in the family of God
- this is a point he will stress soon enough

#### 1. “To give a human example”

- this is Paul's way of saying, “let me give you an everyday example”
- he is being carried along by the Holy Spirit here
- God is breathing out His words for Paul to record here as well
- so he goes to something all of us can understand: a last will & testament

#### 2. “a man-made covenant”

- the word Paul uses here that the ESV renders as “covenant”
- it is the same word used for when we speak of the Old Testament or the New Testament
- when the OT was translated into Greek for the Greek-speaking world to read...
- this word was used over 350x
- a covenant is simply an agreement between two parties
- a will & testament operates on the same basis: one person makes the will; others agree by receiving from it later
- when a will is made, it can be changed...as long as the person making it is still alive
- but once that person has died, the will cannot be changed, added to, or taken away from
- it would be the same in an agreement to sell & purchase a home

- you sign an agreement for \$200,000; the owner cannot come along and say “I want \$250,000”

### 3. Let’s go back to Genesis & Abraham to see this covenant being made

- Genesis 15; this is the passage where righteousness was imputed to Abraham by faith
- Paul has already dealt with this: Galatians 3.6–9, and 10–14
- Abraham wants to know how he can know God will fulfill His promise to him
- so God gives explicit instructions: Genesis 15.9–11
- **<sup>9</sup> He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” <sup>10</sup> And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. <sup>11</sup> And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.**
- this was a way of saying: if I do not fulfill My promise, may it be done to me what was done to these animals!
- note very carefully what happens next in verse 12
- **“As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.”**
- Abraham is unconscious, unable to affect what is going on
- in verses 13–16, God fills out the details of His promise covenant
- v. 17 is essentially the sealing of this agreement
- except Abraham is unconscious; God is doing everything
- which is exactly the point: God promises, God delivers, God fulfills
- man has no part other than the believing and receiving

### 4. God is His own interpreter

- He is also the giver of promises as well as their fulfiller
- the writer to Hebrews put it this way:
- (Hebrews 6:13–15 ESV) **<sup>13</sup> For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, <sup>14</sup> saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” <sup>15</sup> And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.**
- there it is again: God made the promise, agreed to fulfill it on the basis of who He is
- no one can annul it, add to it, or break it—God is God and there is no other
- Abraham believed God and righteous was credited to him...all on the basis of faith

*In v. 16, we see the...*

## II. FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

- this could seem complicated, but it is really quite simple
- Paul, in looking back to Genesis 15 and God’s covenant promise made to Abraham...
- ...tells us how we are to understand what God said those thousands of years previously
- God very specifically said “offspring”—singular—not “offsprings”—plural
- He could have, and later He does
- but here, God is wanting Abraham to recognize that there will be One who will come
- and that One will be the Christ, the Promised Deliverer from Genesis 3.15
- but this isn’t the only time God puts it this way
- **Genesis 12:7—Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.”**

- and again: Genesis 17:7—**“And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”**
- this is God’s promise: I will deliver you and I will do so through My promised One
- to David, this same promise is given
- 2 Samuel 7:12–14 <sup>12</sup> **“...I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>14</sup> I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.”**
- there are many other references like this in the Old Testament
- the New Testament makes it clear, this seed, this offspring is Jesus the Christ
- **Matthew 1:1—The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.**
- the covenant promise made to Abraham is fulfilled in Jesus Christ

*Now look to v. 17 and see the...*

### III. FULFILLMENT IN TIME

- this is where Paul shows the great error in the Judaizers teaching
- they thought Abraham had been declared righteous on the basis of obedience to the law
- they said, “Abraham got circumcised, so he was living righteously before God”
- they got that wrong: Abraham believed & was declared righteous long before circumcision
- and now they get the law wrong also

#### 1. Getting the law wrong is a fatal error

- remember Deuteronomy 27.26?
- **“Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’”**
- and Leviticus 18:5 has already told us—**“You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.”**
- Jesus confirmed this to the young lawyer in Luke 10
- I’ve mentioned this passage in at least two sermons already; I’ll do so again
- In Luke 10.25, the lawyer wants to know **“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”**
- since the man is a lawyer, a student of OT law, Jesus asks him what the law says
- Luke 10:27—**And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”**
- to which Jesus tells him: **“You have answered correctly; do this and you will live**
- Jesus was citing OT instructions about the law: do this and live
- the law is what God requires; keep it, obey it, fulfill it and you will live eternally
- but just remember what comes from not keeping the law...
- ...personally, perfectly, perpetually: the curse, the wrath of God for all eternity

#### 2. The Judaizers get it wrong...just like the Pharisees before them

- their argument was: yes, God made a covenant with Abraham
- but then He gave the Law to Moses and Israel—this takes precedence
- to which Paul says: WRONG!
- God already made a covenant promise & it cannot be changed
- in v. 15, Paul used a human example, a lesser analogy
- then he moves to the greater, the far greater, higher and all-surpassing example: God’s will
- God’s will cannot change; it does not vacillate on a whim or a second-thought

- so, when God gave the law, He did so 430 years later
- it does not nullify, add to, or change what He said to Abraham
- the law has a purpose, and to that, I'll defer to next Lord's Day, Lord willing

### 3. The law does not alter grace or the gospel

- this is where the Judaizers go so terribly wrong
- they think they're making the gospel better
- yes, believe in Jesus; but let's make it certain, let's give you assurance
- get circumcised and follow the law, then you'll be sure that you're saved
- but the gospel cannot be added to or it ceases to become the gospel; it's just more law
- and law only condemns
- it is God who made the promise and He alone will fulfill it: that's the covenant made
- in Genesis 12, God made this abundantly clear
- *I will make you a great nation*
- *I will bless you*  
*and make your name great;*
- *and you shall be a blessing.*
- *I will bless those who bless you,*
- *and I will curse him who curses you;*  
*and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*
- salvation is all of God, all of His grace, nothing more, nothing less
- God's covenant promises are kept by God through Jesus Christ

*Lastly, consider v. 18, where we see the...*

#### IV. FULFILLMENT IN THE PROMISE

- if the inheritance—the promised covenant blessings—comes thru our obedience...
- ...then it no longer comes by the covenantal promise God made
- and if it doesn't come from God through Christ alone...
- it must come through...us and our own meritorious obedience and good deeds
- but the covenant came to Abraham as a promise from God and God alone
- the nature of law and faith are antithetical to each other
- they are spiritual oil and water; they do not mix
- sadly, too many through the ages, from these Judaizers to many evangelical preachers today...
- try to make it like a solution of water to which salt is added & stirred
- law is the salt, and if added, is done so in such high concentrations it will prove lethal to you
- no, the key to the fulfillment of God's promise is: God in the person of Jesus Christ
- it is His free gift: the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life
- this promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ
- all of Scripture turns on Jesus Christ, the promise of God
- there were never two plans of salvation, one for Israel and one for the church
- the people of God become the people of God by faith

#### Conclusion – these passages in Galatians should give us unshakable assurance of salvation

- at times, we doubt God's promises to us & we wonder if we're really saved
- we come into times of great anxiety, fear, and despair
- perhaps we even try to do things that will make God happy with us once again
- instead, we should simply rest in the promises God has made: they are absolutely sure
- rather than you running 90 mph on treadmill of life hoping it's good enough for God...
- rest in the fulfilled promise of One Jesus Christ

- Matthew 11:28—**“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”**

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said:**

- You are either a child of God or you are not, and once you are a child of God you are His child for ever and ever in that divine and eternal relationship. You cannot be a Christian one day and not the next day.
- as a child of God, by faith, rest in Him who loves you and gave His life for you
- God’s covenant promises are kept by God through Jesus Christ—that is certain