



SERIES: We Are Free December 2022-January 2023

SPEAKER: TOM REMPEL

Saturday, December 31, 2022

Scripture: Galatians 3:15-18

TITLE: God, the Promise Maker and Keeper pt. 2

And suddenly the stern apostolic and paternal tone changes to a softer and more relational one as, instead of declaring them to be “foolish and bewitched,” he speaks to them as “brothers.”

Note: Paul the Jew extends to these converted Gentiles the kind of grace granted to him as the dreaded outsider when he returned to Jerusalem after his conversion experience and received the warm reception by James, the Lord Jesus’ brother. He has strongly reminded them that:

- The Law cannot bring life.
- The Law cannot deliver salvation.
- The Law cannot bring one rightly before God.
- The Law can only prove our sinfulness.
- The Law can never make one better.
- The Law can only make one worse.
- The Law can only convince one that he needs a savior.

And now:

To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

Galatians 3:15-18

Paul turns our attention back to a point of deep discouragement in the life of the great Abraham, the Father of the Jewish nation and in this text called, “The man of faith.” Time had marched on from those days when the Lord first called him out from among his people and when he had faithfully obeyed, believing fully in the promises God had made. Yet the necessary son for the completion of what was promised had year after year been withheld from him. Willing to settle for a bit less, Abraham suggests to God an adoption...take the first little boy born to one of his household servants, and adopt him as the son through whom the promise could be fulfilled. But God restated the promise He had previously made and repeated. “Look toward the heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them. So shall your offspring be” (Genesis 15:5).

And at this point the Gospel of salvation by faith alone was declared: “And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Then to set the seal upon His word, the Lord instructed Abraham to sacrifice animals, slaughter them, split them, divide them and lay them out on the ground in a manner that created a pathway between the animal halves. The act of “cutting a covenant” included two who were agreeing to the terms of the agreement would walk arm-in-arm along that path between. The purpose was to declare that if any aspect of the agreement were violated by either “signer,” the offending party would be as the dead animals beside them. And just when it was time for Abraham to lock arms with God for the confirming walk, the Lord caused him to fall into an immobilizing trance and God alone walked through. The purpose of this act on God’s part was to declare that all the points contained in this promise were dependent, not upon Abraham’s faithfulness, but upon His own unchanging character.

God is not only a Promise Maker but He is and always will be the Promise Keeper!

But then Paul pulls out the main point of the covenant the Lord cut with Abraham. It included land, that is, the Promised Land to which He had moved Abraham. It included blessing, the gift of salvation with the accompanying indwelling Holy Spirit. But most significantly, it included seed, that is, offspring. Now this covenant and all its components had been restated to Abraham on numerous occasions. And it was restated and promised to Isaac and then to Jacob. Each time it included the promise of becoming a great nation. That is, to be a rapidly growing and multiplying people. “As many as the stars of heaven or the sands of the seashore” (Genesis 22:17). But the real significance of the descendants that would be his was not on the multitude but on the One. One descendant who would be the fulfillment of this promise. And that One is Christ!

430 years after that incredible night of the cutting of the covenant, God had delivered the thousands of descendants of Abraham from captivity in Egypt, led them to the foot of Mt. Sinai and met Moses there to deliver to him the law that was not only a description of God’s true character but literally the extension of who God is. But Paul makes this point: That new word from the Lord with its promises of both blessing and cursing for obedience or disobedience, did not annul the commitment made by God to Abraham 430 years previous. “Abraham believed God and He counted it to him as righteousness.” God promised that salvation would come by faith and not by works of the law. “But God gave it to Abraham by a promise.”

God is both a promise maker and a promise keeper!

The Law makes demands and bids us to obey. The Gospel makes promises and bids us to believe!

Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone. Period!