**The Covenant Confirmed by Christ**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Galatians 3:16-19**

**Wednesday Evening**

**July 20, 2022**

**Galatians 3:16-19**

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. 17 And this I say, that 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.

18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

**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.**

Saints, this verse would probably make more sense in the flow of the text if it appeared in parentheses. If the promise was meant for Abraham and his many descendants alone (to all his “children”), then it might appear that the promises had already been fulfilled, and that the law had come as a new phase in God’s dealing with his people.

But the promises had been given to his child—that is, Abraham’s most famous descendant, Christ, who came many years after both Abraham and the law. The law has an important function, but salvation by grace through faith was God’s promise from the beginning of time.

**Ephesians 2:8-10**

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Saints, the Jews had always believed that God’s promises would be fulfilled in a single person, the Messiah. God’s promise remained intact even though Abraham himself only had one descendant through Sarah. Further, the promises were not fulfilled prior to the giving of the law, nor by the giving of the law. Instead, they were fulfilled when Christ came. Christ alone fulfilled the messianic aspects of God’s covenant and showed that God’s promises are in effect for all time. Many claimed to be rightful heirs to God’s promises to Abraham by their being his offspring, but Paul pointed out the only true, rightful heir was Jesus.

**17 And this I say, that 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.**

**Acts 7:6-7**

6 But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years. 7'And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.'

Saints, Moses received the law and gave it to God’s people 430 years after the time of Abraham. While there is debate about the exact period of these 430 years, the point is not the number of years, but rather that the law came “later” than God’s promise to Abraham.

For four centuries God had been blessing Abraham and his descendants on the basis of their faith, not by Moses’ law, for it did not yet exist. When the law was given, it did not cancel God’s agreement with Abraham; otherwise God would be breaking his promise.

The giving of the law itself was an integral part of God following through on his covenant. God had preserved his people in Egypt and had overseen their Exodus. Then, through Moses, God had provided the law as a written standard of his own legitimate expectations of those in covenant with him.

The law neither replaced nor improved the covenant of promise (by faith through grace).

As Paul would later develop, the law’s main function is to demonstrate how crucial the covenant of faith is in allowing people any hope at all. As a paragraph in God’s gracious covenant, law provides guidance; but taken alone the law becomes a grinding foe, constantly pointing to our shortcomings.

In other words, the Judaizers were wrong. The promise of justification by faith is still in effect; the law does not set that aside or annul it.

**18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.**

**Romans 4:13-16**

13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, 15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

**Psalm 105:5**

O seed of Abraham His servant, You children of Jacob, His chosen ones

**Micah 7:18-20**

18 Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. 19 He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. 20 You will give truth to Jacob And mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old.

Saints, there is yet another reason why salvation cannot be through law, or through faith plus law. The words law and promise are opposites in nature. Like oil and water, they cannot be combined. Inheritance here refers to believers’ enjoyment of what they receive through the promise: salvation, eternal life, and removal of the curse.

Thus, if our salvation and enjoyment of God’s gifts depend on obeying the law, then they cannot depend on a promise, for it cannot be both ways. People do not need to work to attain what has been promised to them.

Instead, God gave it to Abraham as a promise. God gave the promise because he loved Abraham, not because Abraham deserved it. God “gave” the promise—the verb implies something that is both free (or unearned) and permanent.

That way of salvation was still in effect in Paul’s day, as well as in our own. God in his grace gives us salvation by our faith alone. He grants graciously and generously, not reluctantly; in love and compassion, not in judgment; abundantly and without reservation.

**19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.**

Saints, In the previous verses, Paul made four distinct observations about the law:

**1. The law could not give the Holy Spirit**

**2. The law could not give righteousness**

**3. The law could not justify, it could only condemn**

**4. The law could not change the fact that righteousness always comes by faith in God’s promises.**

Paul’s opponents, and especially the Judaizers, could still be expected to raise the question, Why was the law given? Paul’s arguments could sound as though he believed the law had no purpose whatsoever and that he was actually opposed to it.

So Paul explained the true purpose behind God’s giving of the law and its place in the plan of salvation. The law had two functions:

**1. It had a negative function: It was given to show people how guilty they are meaning that God had given the law to punish sin.**

**2. It had a strong positive function: The law reveals the nature and will of God and shows people how to live; it guarded and protected people until they could believe in Christ.**

Saints, the little word until indicates that the law was meant as a temporary measure, and certainly not as the permanent and final means of salvation. The law was in place until the coming of the child to whom God’s promise was made. When Jesus Christ came, the law was finally fulfilled (see Matthew 5:17-20).

**Matthew 5:17-20**

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Saints**,** God’s promise to Abraham dealt with Abraham’s faith; the law focuses on actions. The covenant with Abraham shows that faith is the only way to be saved; the law shows how to obey God in grateful response.

Faith does not annul the law; but the more we know God, the more we will see how sinful we are. Then we will be driven to depend on Christ alone for our salvation.To show the inherent inferiority of the law, Paul explained that while God personally gave the promises to Abraham; the law, however, was given to angels to give to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people.

This was not a new idea made up by Paul; it was already a Jewish belief. Although it is not mentioned in Exodus, Jews believed that the Ten Commandments had been given to Moses by angels (see Acts 7:53; Hebrews 2:2).

**Acts 7:53**

“who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."

**Hebrews 2:1-3**

1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,

Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**