



Promises


Sunday 4th February 2024

GALATIANS 3:15-18

Promises. That word carries a lot of weight; a lot of influence in your life. For some of you it is the kept promises that hold you up on a down day. For some of you it's the broken promises that make the down days seem so heavy. But I suspect for most there is a swirling cocktail of broken and kept promises fighting to take control of the thought narrative in your mind and or the emotional narrative in your heart.


And then there are the promises of God from the ecstasy of finding the promises of eternal life in Christ Himself to the life-shattering moments when you utter the words, "But God I thought You said...But God, why this...But God where are your words?"

At this point there are two things I can give you – my words or God's words,

 Let us read our first verse (15),

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.

Paul draws our minds to the idea of a covenant, the nearest things you and I know are **weddings and wills** which is what the Greek word *diatheken* means. Once an agreement has been signed in the presence of two witnesses no one else can undo what has been written and no one else can add to it. Now hold that thought because Paul is taking a deep dive into spiritual reality with this in

 his back pocket in verse 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.

What promises is Paul referring to? Firstly these were made to Abraham, so we go back to his life to find these promises, Genesis 12:3 and then 22:18,

"...And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

“...In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice”

Paul is keen (as am I!) to point out that all the nations will be blessed as God fulfils His promises in and through Christ. Jesus alone carries the power to redeem us from sin; to save us from hell; to reach the most lost of all sinners; to clothe us in righteousness; to make us fit for heaven. This salvation is available to people from every nation, tribe and tongue – and that includes you!

➤ And this idea that pushes back on our idea of self-determination (I decide who I become) because in the end that won't work for two reasons – **(1) what you want changes and (2) your pursuit of those things changes.**

➤ Now Paul moves on to show something you need to hold onto today in verse 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.

Long after God had promised Abraham Moses is on the scene being given the Law by God. This was such a defining moment in the history of Israel you might think that maybe God has moved on from what He said to Abraham. Except

➤ for two things. Firstly, Titus 1:2

in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began

which clearly declares God cannot lie and then secondly this promise was established in Christ Jesus before time began (Paul says so in verse 18 and we find it Titus 1:2).

(Story about my Grandad)

➤ When he set out to visit us from his home in Wivelsfield He had in his pocket some £1 coins and his intent was to place these in these hands of us, his grandchildren. Whatever happened on the M25, however much we served him as a family, whatever we did for him, his mind was already made up that he would give us something and so it was with God. His mind was made up, long before the promises were spoken and long before we could do anything for him.

To some, that law was so big a deal it was taken to be the means by which someone could earn their salvation by pleasing God. But Paul has already established back in verse 11 that no one is justified by the law in the eyes of God.

So there is no way the law could make the promises of God in Christ Jesus of no effect.

And Paul finishes with this statement in verse 18,

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

If we are going to get salvation through keeping up with the demands of the law guess what it relies on – (1) you wanting to do that consistently every day and (2) you consistently doing it every day. And the saddest part of it all? Us trying to earn from God what He has already promised in Christ Jesus is us saying “God...I don’t need and I don’t want your promises.”

That would have been like me standing at the door saying goodbye to my grandad and saying I don’t need your £1, I’ll make myself rich. And the saddest part of that would have been my Grandad wasn’t trying to build my financial future, he wanted to drop a little joy into the hands of his grandchildren as a token of his great love for us.

BUT!


But ‘God gave it to Abraham by promise’

And this is how Abraham received it as it says in Hebrews 11:13

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

And that promise is available to you today in one place and one place only. IN Christ Jesus! He died to fulfil the promise, and He died to make the promise available to you and He rose again to defeat the empty promises of death.

So today, are you trusting in God’s promises to you in Christ Jesus? Are you relying on Him?


 In 2 Corinthians 1:30 God's word declares,

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.


God desires to show His glory through you, yes you! This can only happen when you surrender all to Him and stand on the truth – all God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Through no one and nothing else...ever.

 1 Peter 1:13 says,

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

 Believer, it's time to get serious in your thinking. Stop living like a partial experience of God's promises does not reduce the promises of God to being partially true. This does not mean you have somehow failed or come short and reduced their power.

Because God has fulfilled His promises in Christ we only have to believe on Him no matter how life feels no matter how much disappointment you face no matter how many others you see wander off because God has not done now what He has promised He will ultimately do.

 Are you fully relying on the promises of God in Christ Jesus?

1. Is your marriage standing on the promises and claiming the promises of God as your own?
2. What decisions have you put off because you don't see how God is going to come through?
3. What are you doing in your own strength because you're not sure God's promises are going to hold up?
4. To those who have yet to believe, how much longer are you going to stand on your own sinking sand?
5. To those who are holding back from obeying Christ in baptism, what more does your Saviour need to have done? (And why have you placed your wisdom above His?)