

God Promised

Galatians 3.15-18 ~ April 3, 2011

Today's message is about a promise ~ *"Let's begin with a few quotes . . ."*

1. "Vote for the man who promises least; he'll be the least disappointing"
 2. "Promise Broken rulings on the Obameter" ~ 41 ~ Politifact c/campaign
 3. "The promise given was a necessity of the past:
 - *The word broken is a necessity of the present*" - Machiavelli
 4. "A promise is a cloud; fulfillment is rain" - Arabian Proverb
 5. "Promises are like babies: usually easy to make, but often hard to deliver"
- Read Macbook Pro Migration Assistant story
 - People often make and break promises with ease
 - But not all people make a habit of breaking promises
 - "My Father Never Broke a Promise" ~ Michael Coren article
 - God makes promises too
 - **Deut 15.6** ~ "The Lord your God will bless you just as He promised"
 - The Bible often reminds us of the promises of God ~ about 50 times
 - Our text is about a promise made by God

Promises of God versus Man

- Paul in **v15** compares God's promises to men's promises
 - This is an argument from the lesser to greater...
- God commands us in the Bible to keep our word
 - "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth." ~ **Num 30.2**
- We are to do this even when it works to our disadvantage
 - David asks in **Psalms 15.1** "Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle?"
 - Answer ~ **v4b** ~ "He who swears to his own hurt and does not change."
- Our society enacts laws to protect contracts ~ **v15** "confirmed"
 - **v15** ~ Once deals are made, they're to be honored
 - Contracts are only as good as the people that make them ~ thus penalties
 - III: Online story of early memory ~ sister breaking a promise (Mom no help)
 - No enforcement of contract law leads to chaos and vigilantism
 - III: The Ultimate Gift ~ Businessman and lawyer agreed over the phone

Xition: Verse 15 does not start with promise – but covenant . . .

v15 ~ A Man's Covenant - - -> "last will and testament"

- v15 ~ The word "covenant" would better be read as "testament"
 - "Though it is only a man's testament" as in "last will and testament"
 - Most societies honor men's dying wishes
 - III: Error in my father's will ~ no mention of my mother
 - County judge agreed to "construe will" as agreement was unanimous
 - This last will and testament contains the promises of vss 16-18

v16 ~ The Promises were made to Abraham (and to his "seed")

- "What was promised – and to whom?"
 - Paul, in a loose quote, says this:
 - v16 ~ "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."
 - "But to what verse in Genesis does this refer?"
 - Mapping NT quotes to OT verses can be difficult...
 - Here are the verses:
 - **Gen 12.7** ~ "To your descendants I will give this **land**."
 - **Gen 13.15** ~ "all the **land** which you see I give to you and your descendants forever."
 - **Gen 15.5** ~ "He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'"
 - **Gen 22.18** ~ "In your **seed** all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."
 - **Gen 24.7** ~ "To your descendants I give this **land**"

v16 ~ Seed "descendant" – not seeds (singular – not plural)

- This word can be both singular and plural
- Some words are like this ~ for example
 - "Put the sheep in the barn... Put the sheep in the barn"
 - Seed is even more different ~ plural form can be seed or seeds
- Paul, in this inspired text of Galatians tells us how to interpret "seed"
 - We "know" the promise encompasses his descendants
 - But we also "know" Paul views Christ as the Seed

Xition: Let's explore the use of seed with ref to Abraham

Gen 22.18 ~ “In your Seed all nations of the earth shall be blessed”

- **Review verses above** noting land inheritance as opposed to blessing nations
- Note several facts as we solve this puzzle...
 1. We know the promise to Abraham included the Messiah ~ **Rom 4.13,18**
 2. While seed is plural it cannot refer to every descendant of Abraham
 - God said He chose Isaac and rejected Ishmael
 - God said He chose Jacob and rejected Esau ~ **Rom 9**
 - God also passed over the children of Keturah, Abraham’s 2nd wife
- So even when we consider its plural form ~ it can’t mean all
- There is an earthly and a spiritual sense of fulfillment
 - **Read Rom 4.13** ~ “*Abraham and his offspring would be heirs of the world*”
 - Paul in **Galatians / Romans** appears to merge two promises into one
 - The land promises to Abraham apply to the saved too
 - The saved stretch beyond his ethnic paternal lines

Promise Preceded Law

- From Abraham to Moses is 430 years
 - The Law came long after the Promise
 - God didn’t add the Law to His Promise
 - or should I say subtract...?
 - The Law wasn’t a modification of God’s Last Will and Testament

Promise and Law on Timeline

- The Promise was made to Abraham around 1,900 BC
 - The Law was given to Moses around 1500 BC
 - The Law was corrupted by the Jews by about 600 BC
 - God was silent towards Jews for 400 years before Christ
 - It was not the Law that failed the Jews
 - It was the Jews that failed the Law
- The Promise was fulfilled in Christ around 30 AD

The Promise Envelops the Law

- The Promise precedes the Law by roughly 400 years
 - The Law lasts in strength just over 1,000 years
 - The Promise is fulfilled in Christ around 30 AD

***Xition:** The Law and the Promise that came earlier are unrelated . . .*

The Promise and Law are Unrelated

- The Law doesn't alter or change the Promise ~ even a little bit
 - The two are entirely unrelated to one another
 - The Law wasn't a replacement of God's Last Will and Testament
 - Not was it an update of it
- The Promise was much broader in scope than the Law of Moses
 - The Promise pertained to all peoples ~ the Law to the Jews only
 - The Promise existed before and continued after the Law of Moses ended
 - III: Law was in Garden ~ "Going for Broke" from membership class

Closing

- LAW of Moses
 - Promised life only to those that could perfectly keep it
 - The Law did not bring life ~ it only reminded them of death
- PROMISE of Abraham
 - Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness
 - "*credit*" ~ a credit is a benefit – as compared to a debit
 - This credit was then built into this Promise - Will
 - Abraham was named the heir of a Last Will and Testament of God
 - But the testator (*the one who dies*) did not die before Abraham
 - The Last Will and Testament was passed down through Isaac and Jacob
 - Jesus had been crucified, buried, resurrected and ascended to Heaven
 - The heirs gathered in **Acts 2** and the Will was read at Pentecost
 - III: Garth Brooks once said "*I have more money than my children's - children's - children will need.*"
 - But he also said, "*You aren't wealthy until you have something money can't buy.*"
 - Neither our money nor our good works can purchase salvation
 - It is granted to those who are in the Father's Will
 - Paul said in **Phil 1.29**, "*. . . to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ . . . to believe in Him.*"
 - We are much farther removed from Pentecost than 3 generations
 - Yet we heirs continue to be blessed by God's Will 2,000 years on . . .

Let's Pray