

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

"Unabrogated Promises"

Gal. 3:15-18

Introduction

1. Salvation will ever be by grace through faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing can ever destroy this Scriptural affirmation.

2. For the third time in one chapter, Paul calls upon matters in relation to Abraham to support his thesis. It is now the promises in relation to this man that come up for consideration.

3. These promises, says Paul, have characteristics which undergird the fact that salvation is apart from legalism, ritualism, works, etc. Here are the characteristics:

1. God's promise is INVIOABLE. v. 15.

Note how Paul affirms this truth:

a. His appeal - to brethren. There is that bond between the apostle and his readers which is of a filial sort.

b. His approach - by human analogies. Paul does not disclaim inspiration in writing "I speak after the manner of men." It is what men would do, he writes.

c. His affirmation - once a will has been confirmed or brought into force, it cannot be set aside or modified. To void the will or to add fresh clauses to it would be in effect, to violate the will.

NOTE: The argument of the apostle here is that the Judaizers were in effect accusing God of breach of promise. Any violation of what God had already said would be a change of the original agreement. Such an agreement, Paul resisted altogether.

2. God's promise is MEDIATORIAL. v. 16.

The argument of this verse turns on the use of a singular over a plural. The thought of the apostle is amazing. He argues:

a. Against the natural seed of Abraham. The promise

- moves around them and relates to a special group - Abraham's seed conjoined to Christ.
- b. For the singular seed of Abraham - Christ. The fulfillment of the promise is in Christ alone! The will or covenant made with Abraham came into force when Christ came! Obviously, the law could not have annulled the promise! What a masterful stroke by Paul to show that only those "in Christ" can receive the promise! No room for legalism or ritualism here. Hallelujah.
 3. God's promise is PREFERENTIAL.
Pressing his advantage respecting the law, Paul points out a matter of priority for the promise over the law chronologically. The promise, Paul argues:
 - a. Before the law. This is an historical fact and cannot be controverted. Gen. 12 & 15 are certainly antecedent to Exodus 20ff.
 - b. Beyond the law. The law in no way whatsoever can render inoperative or ineffective the promise God has established. Surely the apostle seeks to note in this verse that God does not contradict Himself. What He does, He does forever!
 4. God's promise is UNCONDITIONAL.
This is shown by:
 - a. A distinction. Law and promise cannot be one and the same. Grace and works are different. Apples and oranges are not the same.
 - b. A quotation. The inheritance has been freely given (perfect tense) by promise. By no means can the law or legalism alter God's eternal arrangement. If it could, then His oath would be meaningless.

CONCLUSION: Paul has come at the problem of ritualism or legal works systems from another angle. The end to which he moves is inevitable: There is only one means of justification and that is in and through the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is sufficient!