

Abraham and the Promise

by Charles Leiter

Well, let's pray once again. Our Father, what pitiful, frail creatures we are apart from You. We thank You Lord Jesus how you said, "According to your faith, be it unto you." In another place you said, "If you believe, all things are possible to him who believes." But Lord we find that, in ourselves, we can't even believe You. And so we ask You for a spirit of faith - Your Spirit - spirit of faith and power and love and of a sound mind. Father, we ask You that in these days once again, You would bare Your mighty arm. We ask You that You would do the impossible. Do the miraculous. Lord we know in a sense it's commonplace for You to do the miraculous. And this is the New Covenant. You said, "How much more glorious? If that covenant that ministered death and condemnation came with glory, how much more glorious is this New Covenant?" And Lord we know so little of it. We ask You for Your power, Your presence, in our lives not just here this evening (we need Your help right now), but in the days ahead.

Lord, I think of every one of these Christians gathered here. And we ask You Father, as we go out from this place, that You would have Your hand wonderfully upon Your people. You said, "Remember not the former things, nor consider the days of old. Behold, I will do a new thing." Lord, there are many of us here that are nearing the end of the race. Father, we ask that You'd do more in our latter days than what You've done before now. And we know You're well able to do that because it doesn't depend upon man in any sense of the word. So we're asking You for wonderful things. We pray that our eyes would behold wonderful things that You would do, Lord, in our latter days. And these young ones that are here, Lord, we're asking You for mighty things to be done in their lives. Lord, I pray for these young people that they'd find themselves away from the group and out under the stars, crying out to the living God, wanting to know You. You said that if we'd hunger and thirst for You, we'd find You. We ask that that would be the reality, Lord, even this evening. We pray that You'd save Your people, the ones that are still in their sins, that You'd save them from their sins, and justify and regenerate them. The ones, Lord, that know You already, we're asking for salvation for us too. Help us this evening as we look into Your Word. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, if we'd open our Bibles again to Romans 4. And we're going to be spending our time these days in Romans 4 and in Galatians 3 primarily. Maybe a little more in Romans 4 than in Galatians. But I want us to read, beginning at verse 13, we'll read down to verse 17: "For the promise to Abraham or to his seed that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain 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, (as it is written, 'A father of many nations have I made you') in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist."

We began yesterday to consider God's dealings with Abraham. And we saw that contrary to what the Jews have held for centuries, and what the Jews held in the days of Paul; contrary to

their belief, Moses was not the key player in Old Testament history. He was not the most important Jew. That's what the Jews thought, but Paul knew otherwise. We were talking a little while ago, here's the Pharisee of the Pharisees. It's unbelievable, he got converted. What happened? He had a miracle take place. And he saw that Abraham was the key player in Old Testament history, not Moses. We saw last night that the Jews viewed, literally, everything through the lens of the Law. And they even read the Law backwards to Abraham, and said that Abraham kept the Law before the Law was ever given. And in their mindset, Abraham was seen, basically, as Moses. They didn't get it. And they viewed Abraham as the father of Torah-keepers, Law-keepers. They didn't view him as the father of believers.

And so, this is amazing. Paul goes back, all the way through Romans 4, all the way through Galatians 3, he goes back and he says, "You've missed it all. It goes back to Abraham. God's dealings in salvation, God's laying the foundation of His dealings in salvation was to Abraham; through Abraham. Moses, His dealings with Moses, came in from the side as it were. But the big thing that was taking place was in Abraham." And so he goes back there and looks at Abraham – the father of believers. And we saw last night that he actually shows that Abraham was justified as a Gentile. He had not yet being circumcised. And so, this umbrella that you have of Abraham up here, he's justified as a believer before he becomes a Jew, you might say. And so, here down, at least fourteen years later, he becomes circumcised; and then this physical nation begins to come from him. But that's a smaller group, you see, than back up here where he was justified. And Paul goes back to that.

So we saw last night there, we considered Abraham as a pattern of justification, and we saw from verses 1 to 8 that Paul goes back to the book of Genesis to prove justification by faith. And he quotes that verse in Genesis 15, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Now he rests his case heavily on that verse. And it is an incredible verse, because it shows that justification for even father Abraham was by faith. But furthermore, it shows that that justification took place through a reckoning or imputation of righteousness that was not his own. And we saw last night that when he says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," he's not saying Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness, as if God looks at him and He says, "My! What a believing fellow he is." That's not what it was. And Abraham himself, when God came to him and opened up to him those promises, he was not thinking, "What a good boy am I for believing God." He's totally taken up with the God who is speaking to him, and he's overwhelmed with the graciousness of these promises. And he gets a glimpse of the coming Messiah: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad."

Now that's faith as an instrument, you see, but nothing more than that. All of the power in justification, all the foundation of justification, comes from God. All the righteousness in justification comes from God. And so, faith itself does not justify us. It is ultimately, when we come to the fulfilment of all these, we find out it's the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ that justifies us.

So, verses 1 to 8, Paul deals with that. In verses 9 through 12, we saw that he goes even further, and he brings out the fact of the timing of Abraham's justification. Abraham was justified in Genesis 15, at least by then. And we learn, as we go along from chapter 16 when he gets to be 85 years old, and then you get to the point in chapter 17 where it directly says Abraham was

circumcised when he was 99 years old. So Paul says even in the timing of this thing, God is teaching us something in the timing of Abraham's justification. And particularly, in this matter of circumcision, He's teaching us that religious rites and ceremonies, even God-given religious rites and ceremonies like baptism, and the Lord's supper, and circumcision, and anything else you can name that's God given; in the pattern set in Abraham, God teaches us that those things don't mean anything in the end as far as justification is concerned.

Now baptism is important, don't get me wrong. There's a lot of countries where you can just "believe on Jesus, that's just fine, until you get baptized." Over there in Romania, they have the Greek orthodox church. And if you join in with those baptists – they call them Repenters – you join in with those Repenters, they're one of the cults, you know. They're right in with Satanists and everything else, the Repenters. And we were having some meetings with college students, and several of the young people were coming to me and they were saying, "What is the thing on this thing of baptism? what is it about baptism? what's so important about that?" And I began to catch on they were all Greek orthodox kids. And they knew that when they were baptized, they were likely to be disinherited. And I said, "Well, I'll tell you what baptism is. When you're baptized, part of what's happening is: you're saying to the world, "I belong to that group of people over there that everybody hates." And they'd get this knowing smile on their face, and they'd nod their head. And after I came back, I heard something like, I think it was maybe six or eight of those kids had been baptized.

It's not nothing in that sense. But when we start talking about justification, when we start talking about standing with God, Paul says, "Neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision." And you've got to get that straight. You see, there's all kinds of works in the Christian life, all kinds of doing, all kinds of holiness in the Christian life, but you start from the inside. God works it from the inside out. He gets things done first, and then you start doing. It's not the other way around. And if you come out at the other way around, which the Jews did, everything is wrong from A to Z, and you'll end up in hell. And the worst thing, I mean, throughout this life you'll have all kinds of self-righteousness, division and destruction. And that's what happens, if Christians begin to get into it a little bit, that's what happens to them. And you have this thing where people are excluded; some people are on the outside, because they don't do every I just the way you do, and so on. And Paul talks about that in Galatians. It's a difference in mindset from looking to Moses as the center of everything, and looking to Abraham as the one whom God was dealing with to give us the pattern.

Well, Paul Goes even further tonight in these verses that we've just read, verses 13 to 17, in this whole matter of the promise. So that's what we want to look at tonight – Abraham and the Promise(s). And again, this is something of tremendous importance. Notice in verse 13, "For the promise to Abraham or to his seed was not through the Law." And then again in verse 14, "The promise is nullified (towards the end of the verse); the promise is nullified or made void." And then verse 16, "In order that the promise may be certain to all the seed." You see, all the way down through here, he's talking this matter of promise.

Now what's going on here? What is he talking about, the promise, the promise, the promise? Well, again, Paul is going back to Abraham, and he's saying there's something very significant about the type of covenant that God made with Abraham. The covenant that God made with Abraham was of the nature of a promise, not conditions. It was a promise. God singled out

Abraham, and He took him aside and He promised him. He said, "Abraham, look up there." He takes him out in that cool night air with no traffic lights and no smog. And He says, "Look up there. Can you count those? So shall your seed be." That's just a promise. And later He says, "I swear by Myself that this is going to happen." That's a promise. "I'm going to do this."

Now why is this so important? Well, because the covenant that was made through Moses had to do with conditions. "Do this, and you'll live." And the Judaizers were saying that in order to be justified, you have to not only believe on Christ, but you also have to get involved with conditions. In other words, they're saying faith has to be conditioned by law. Now if that happens, Paul says you've lost everything. Once you start to condition faith by law, promise is nullified. It is made void. It's gone. And you've got something entirely different. You see, there's principles involved here that are totally changed when you start bringing in law on top of promise. And so, what Paul does then is to go back, as I said, to Abraham. And he says, "Now this happened by way of a promise."

Now in order to see this more clearly, I want to leave Romans 4 now and go over to Galatians 3. And I think we'll be spending the remainder of our time in Galatians 3 tonight. Galatians 3, and we'll begin reading at verse 15, "Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. Now the promises – here it is again – the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ. What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise – there's the promise again. 18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. 19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made."

So here he is again, dealing with promise. He is using the concept of promise to show us the true place of the Law of Moses in redemptive history. Now, Lordwilling, tomorrow we're going to go into this thing of Promise, Law, and Faith. That's the three periods that Paul talks about here in Galatians 3. That's for tomorrow. But right now, I just want us to glean a few things here from these verses that we've just read. Paul tells us two things about the Law in verse 19. First of all, he tells us that the Law was "added". And I said last night that the Law is not the main stream, it's a tributary. I'm talking about the Mosaic Covenant now. He says, "The Law was added." So it's not the body, it's an appendage. And then he says, "It was added ... until." In other words, the Mosaic Covenant, Paul said, had a temporary function. It was added – it was attached on, added – until. It had a temporary function to fulfill, as a covenant.

So those are the first two things that he says about it, and those are two things that were extremely difficult for any Jew to stomach. "I mean, the Law was added? The Law is an appendage? It doesn't sound like an appendage to me." Do you realize what God did when He came down on Mount Sinai, 1500 years before Christ came? What happened, the greatest display of divine glory that had ever yet occurred in the world happened on Mount Sinai. Now that doesn't sound like an appendage. I mean, God came down on the mountain; they said the whole mountain was like a furnace. Let me just read this thing to you. It says, "The LORD came down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people." And you remember, the entire mountain

was so consecrated by God's presence – "if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it should be stoned or thrust through with a dart." It'd be put to death for touching the mountain. "There were thunder and lightning flashes, and a thick cloud upon the mountain," all these is from Exodus 19, "and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire, and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace. And the whole mountain quaked violently."

We are told that when Moses spoke, God answered him in thunder. And God's audible voice was so terrifying, the people begged Moses that no further word should be spoken lest they die. And in Hebrews we learn about "a blazing fire, and darkness and gloom and whirlwind. And so terrible was the sight that even Moses was afraid and cried out, and said, 'I exceedingly fear and tremble.'" So that doesn't sound like much of an appendage, does it? And the Jews said to Paul, "Temporary? It's already been around 1500 years, that doesn't sound too temporary to me. This Christianity stuff has been around for, what, 10 years or 20."

And so, how is he going to answer this? what's he going to say? Well, what he is going to say is this: Here's Christ here (Point A); and you go back here 1500 years, that's how long the Law has been around (Point B). What is Paul going to say? He says, "Well, let's go back a few hundred years more (Point C). And we're going to get back to something here where God promised. And that promise goes from here (Point C), all the way past Moses (Point B), down to here (point A)." You see that? Think of the difference in these. Here's one man out here under the stars, and God says, "This is what's going to happen." Here with Moses, you've got the entire mountain on fire, and all these trembling and everything happening; it's temporary. And then you get over here, and here in the little upper room (and nobody even hears it except His disciples), Jesus said, "This is the new covenant in my blood. You know what you Jews have been waiting for for all these hundreds of years? This is the new covenant." It's amazing, isn't it? I don't know what all God was doing there on the mountain. He was getting their attention, that's for sure. But beloved, the power to save was in those quiet places where God just said, "This is what I'm going to do."

So what does Paul say here in verses 15 to 17? He says, "Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations (or according to man): even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it." And then verse 17, "What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise." In other words, the Law cannot change this promise that was given to Abraham, four hundred and thirty years later. Now how does this work? Well, he says even in a man's covenant you don't have that happen. And one example of it is in a Last Will and Testament. When my grandfather died, I think my older brother was the one reading the Will. And he was reading down through there, and he said, "To my grandson, Charles, I give my revolver." He had a little revolver. It was a total shock to me; I didn't know anything about that being in there. All of a sudden, this is mine. And nobody said, "Now wait a minute! I kinda want that revolver myself. Let's put a line through this and change this." You can't do that. Nobody has the authority to do that, that's settled.

Alright, you say, "Yeah, but that's talking about a Last Will and Testament, you know, that's talking about an inheritance." And that's what we're talking about here, too. Paul says down here in verse 18, "If the inheritance is based on Law, it's no longer based on promise. But God

has granted it to Abraham – given it to him – by means of a promise." So we're talking about an inheritance granted. When you start talking about eternal life, you're talking about an inheritance that's been granted. And it was something you didn't even know about when it was granted. And it was locked in and promised, and nobody can change it. That's what we're dealing with in promise. So Paul says the Law cannot condition or change this or affect this thing in any way. We're going to look at that more tomorrow, Lordwilling.

The inheritance was granted (given) to Abraham by means of a promise. Now what exactly did God promise Abraham? Well, I want us to look at four things this evening. First of all, He promised him a seed, and that seed was Isaac. And when you come to Romans 9, Paul talks about how Isaac was a "child of promise". He was a child granted to Abraham through means of a promise. Genesis 17:19, "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. And I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him." So there's the seed – Isaac.

Now what's the nation? Second thing, nation. God promised Abraham a seed, He promised him a nation, He promised him a land, and He promised him a blessing. What's the nation? Well, Israel. Genesis 12:2, "I will make you a great nation." Genesis 15:5, "He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you're able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your seed be.'" So there was a nation there involved – "I will make you a great nation."

There was a land involved. The land of Canaan. Genesis 12:7, "The LORD appeared to Abram and said, 'To your seed I will give this land.'" Alright. Genesis 13:14-15, "The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, 'Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land which you see I will give it to you and your descendants (or your seed) forever.'" Clear, isn't it? He's going to give him this land.

Blessing. Well, whatever was a blessing: riches, protection from enemies, old age, a lot of different blessings that Abraham received, material blessings. Genesis 12:2-3, "And I will bless you and make your name great, so you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Genesis 24:1, "Now Abraham was old, advanced in age. And the LORD had blessed Abraham in every way." It was fulfilled.

Now if all we had was the Old Testament, we might conclude that these promises were primarily physical, and they were all fulfilled physically. God did it, didn't He? He did all those things. He eventually gave him the land. And there was a great nation that came from Abraham. He gave him Isaac. He gave him blessings. All of those things were true. But when you come to the New Testament, you find that the promises to Abraham had a much deeper, more significant, spiritual, wonderful meaning than it first appears. Who was the seed? The Lord Jesus Christ. He says that in Galatians 3:16 that we read, "He saith not, 'To seeds, as unto many; but unto thy seed, which is Christ.'" So Paul says the seed is Christ. Now we're going to talk about this a little later; but just to say that it's the Lord Jesus Christ – "In thy seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed." Alright.

Next, who is the nation? Well, when God took Abraham outside and said, "Look at the sky and see if you can count those stars," or when He said, "Your seed will be like the sand which is by the seashore innumerable," He had something much more wonderful in mind for Abraham than just a bunch of physical descendants. Who are the children of Abraham? Well, we saw that last night, but let me just get it out of Galatians 3 here. Galatians 3:7, "Therefore be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham." And in verse 29, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, – so those are the true children of Abraham – heirs according to promise." Heirs have to do with inheritance, and a promise here again. So the true fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham that his seed would be like the stars of the sky, and like the sand which is by the seashore innumerable, is found in Revelation 7:9, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number; men from every tribe and tongue and kindred and nation, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes; and palm branches were in their hands." That's the true nation, the true children. So the fulfilment of the nation is not talking about Israel, it's talking about the Church.

Now you remember what the Lord Jesus said? He said in one of His parables, He said, "The Kingdom will be taken away from you, and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits thereof." God says, "I'm going to take care of this deal of fruitlessness. I'm going to give this to a nation that will bring forth the fruits." He's talking about the Church, a spiritual nation. And beloved, if what you're looking at is not bringing forth fruit unto God, it's not the Church. The true Church, I'm talking about real Christians, every one of them, everywhere, is bringing forth fruit unto God. Some thirty, some sixty, some hundred. There are differences among Christians, but all of them are bearing fruit. And the true Church is bearing fruit to God. You know, I'm sick of this deal of people talking about "there's just as much divorce in the Church as there is outside the Church. There's just as much pornography in the Church as outside..." They take these polls. That's the result of calling something the Church that is not the Church. It's a spiritual nation that He's talking about: "And God made Abraham into a great nation." A great nation. More than he could ever imagine. More than he could have imagined.

Peter says the same thing, doesn't he? 1 Peter 2:9-10, talking about the Church: "But you are a chosen race (those of a race), a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." Now you remember God told them there in the Old Testament, "You'll be a holy nation; you'll be My peculiar treasure; you'll be separated unto Me"? Israel, at its best, was separated mostly in a physical way from other nations. They had all these ceremonies and different things. They had a priesthood. He said, "I'm going to make you a nation of priests." There were priests that offered sacrifices that were symbolical. They were typical sacrifices. They couldn't even take away sins. When you come to the Church, you've got the real sons of Levi, who have been purified to offer unto the LORD offerings in righteousness! And we offer up spiritual sacrifices unto God. The fulfilment of these things is far more wonderful than the Jews ever imagined.

What about the land? Well, the land is the new heavens and the new earth. We heard today, the brother read from Hebrews 11. It says, "They were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." You see, you're down here in this whole world, there's no land that you can call your own. You're strangers and pilgrims. It says, "If they've been mindful of that country from which they came

out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they were looking for a better country, that is, a heavenly one." Abraham was not just looking for a physical land to live in; he was "looking for a city that had foundations, whose builder and maker is God". Now beloved, this is all through the New Testament. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit – we're talking about an inheritance – they shall inherit the earth." Christians may be kicked around and beaten, and the ground may drink up their blood right now. But the ground that's drinking up their blood will, one day, belong to them. They're going to inherit everything. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Genesis 17:8 says that the seed of Abraham will inherit the land of their sojournings. That's what we're going to do. Romans 4:13, "For the promise that he should be – what? – the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the Law." The heir of the world. Revelation 5:10, "Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests – talking about Christians now – to our God, and they will reign upon the earth." Alright. The heavenly country – the new heavens and the new earth – is the land.

What about the blessing? When God told Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, He had something infinitely greater in mind than a bunch of material blessings. What did he have in mind? Well, look in Galatians 3 here in verse 8, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations shall be blessed – there's the word "blessed" – in you.' So then, those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham the believer. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law to do them.'"

So, what's the opposite of blessing? The curse. What does the curse have to do with? It has to do with condemnation. It has to do with a broken law. What does the blessing have to do with? It has to do with justification – justification and its fruits. So you see, Paul says, "Look, God was preaching the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you all the nations of the earth will be blessed.'" He says, "Foreseeing that God was going to justify the Gentiles by faith." It has to do with justification. When you start talking about blessing in the New Testament, you're talking about a person who has been justified in the sight of God. And all the blessings that relate to justification come upon him. Having been justified, he lives. He has life. This man over here, who's under condemnation, is under a curse.

So God comes to Abraham; the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, preaches the Gospel to Abraham, saying, "In your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed." You see that? The blessing is justification and its fruits. Acts 3:25, Peter quotes that. He says, "It's you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'In your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' For you first, God raised up his Servant, and sent him to bless you by turning every one of you from your sins, from your wicked ways." So, blessing has to do with justification. We read those verses last night in Romans 4, how David talks about the blessing upon the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose sins are forgiven, and whose iniquities are covered. BLESSED is the man whose sin the Lord will not impute or take into account." It has to do with justification.

In other words, when God told Abraham, "In your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed," He was saying, "In the Lord Jesus Christ, men from every tribe and tongue and kindred and nation will be justified and blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." That's what He was saying to him. Now, I want to just say a little bit more on this before I wrap it up. Paul tells us that the promise was ultimately made to Christ. And this is quite an amazing thing. He says that back up in Galatians 3:19. He says, "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come (that's Christ) to whom the promise had been made." Isn't that amazing? So who was the promise made to ultimately? It was made to Christ.

Now what does that mean? He's the seed that inherits. He's the One that's going to inherit the land. He's going to inherit the new heavens and the new earth. He is the One to Whom the nation belongs. He is the One that has all the blessings wrapped up in His Person. In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Heir of all things; and the only way that we get in on any of it is by being in Christ. If you're in Christ, if you are Christ's, then you're Abraham's seed and you're heirs according to the promise. So by being in Him, you get everything that He gets because you're in Him. You are joint-heirs with Christ.

Alright, now look what's happened here so far. We have come to the New Testament, and we've discovered much more meaning in these promises than we could have ever gotten ourselves from the Old Testament. Now what I'm saying is this: You don't interpret the Old Testament first and get what you think the New Testament ought to teach, and then come to the New Testament and impose everything that you got from the Old Testament on the New Testament. That isn't the way to go about things. And people are doing it all the time, beloved, and they're not even looking at what the apostles themselves said. They spell out what they ought to have said and didn't say, and try to figure out reasons why they didn't say it. That's what they're doing. And there are some great theologians that spend a lot of energy doing that. The way to interpret the Bible is not to go to the lesser light and try to cast light on the greater light. You come to the greater light and let it shine its way back there into the Old, and figure out what it's saying from that.

Now one last thing I want to say along this line. Have you ever wondered how Paul himself came to understand these promises to Abraham as having a deeper meaning? I mean, when you read for the first time, you know, you're a new Christian and you're reading there in the Old Testament, God says to Abraham, "In your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed," it just popped into your mind, didn't it, "I bet that's talking about Christ." [Laughter]. That didn't happen, did it? How did Paul come to understand these things? Well, we know, and of course, that it's the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But when the Holy Spirit teaches you something, usually it doesn't just pop like that. It's something that He takes you through and shows it to you. There's a process of reasoning involved, in other words.

Now, I don't think we have to search very far at all to understand something of what Paul's line of reasoning was, because before his conversion, Paul was a bitter enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why was he such a bitter enemy? Why were the Jews such [bitter enemies]? Why was Christ such a stumblingblock? Well, because to a Jew the idea of a crucified messiah (he said we preach Christ crucified; to the Jews a stumblingblock), the idea of a crucified messiah is a contradiction in terms. They were looking for this one who would come and subject all their

enemies to them, namely, Rome. And you're going to get up and tell me the Messiah has come, and the Romans crucified Him as a condemned criminal on the lowest, most shameful form of imperial punishment – the cross, a Roman cross. Jews didn't use crosses. That was a Roman instrument of death and torture. And so, you're going to tell me that the Messiah was crucified by the Romans? But worse than that, the Law of Moses said that "he who's hanged on a tree is accursed". But it says it worse than that, didn't it? "He's accursed of God."

So here comes the Christians preaching this. They say, "The Messiah has come. He's been hung on a tree, under the curse of God, by the Romans." You see that? That is utter blasphemy. It's sacrilege. Now what happened? Well, Paul is going down the road to Damascus, and he met the risen Lord. "Who art Thou, Lord?" So now that part is settled. He knows that Jesus is the Messiah. He knows that this One who died on a cross is the Messiah. "Now how in the world am I going to understand the cross? How could the Messiah have died under the curse of God?" And I think, sooner rather than later, it popped into his mind (God brought it to mind): "That's exactly what Isaiah said – 'We esteemed Him smitten of God, and afflicted. He was chastised; our peace, it was all upon Him. All of our sins were laid upon Him.'"

And you go through those different verses in Isaiah, "The LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried. He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; and the chastening for our peace fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. The LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall upon Him." So suddenly it's solved. Suddenly it's solved. The Messiah dies under the curse of God. But it's not His curse, it's our curse. It's due our sins.

Now what's the next thing? What's the opposite of the curse? The blessing. He died under our curse so that we might have His blessing; so that we might be justified. And all of a sudden, he said, "That's what God said to Abraham." He said, "In your seed, ALL the nations of the earth shall be justified, shall be blessed." You see that? Now I don't know if it happened exactly like that, but I think it was something like that. You see, in other words, you've got to get this clear. Paul is not importing some kind of made-up meaning into the promises of the Old Testament, and putting stuff there that God didn't intend to be there. That's not what he's doing. He is viewing those promises in the light of later revelation and realizing that's what God was saying all along He was saying that. And now it becomes clear what He was saying. That's what's happening, you see. Lordwilling, we'll go on tomorrow and look at Promise, Law, and Faith.

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