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**God's Promise
to
Abraham.**

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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The Bible
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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

God's Promise to Abraham.

Topics.

- The blessing of Abraham and the promised Spirit.
- We might receive the promised Spirit through faith.
- God's promises to Abraham.
- God counted Abram as righteous.
- In Abraham's seed all nations shall be blessed.
- Those who are of the faith of Abraham are the heirs of the promise.
- Abraham is the father of all who have faith in Christ.
- Not all who descended from Abraham are Abraham's offspring.
- The law does not make the promise void.
- My righteous one shall live by faith.

THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM AND THE PROMISED SPIRIT

- **Galatians 3:13-14:** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—¹⁴so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

The words, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law) (v13) means that those who belong to Christ are delivered from the struggle of keeping the law by self-effort to be counted righteous by God and justified. The law has no power to judge those who belong to Christ, guilty or condemn them to eternal death. Paul's statement, "Jesus became a curse for us" (v13) means that even though Christ never sinned he was nevertheless killed as a guilty criminal it is in this sense that "God for our sake made Christ to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21) the Lord Jesus Christ became the ultimate sacrificial Lamb without blemish not only for us, but for the entire world.

Paul's entire focus in this letter is to convince the Galatian brothers and sisters that God counts them righteous because of their faith and not because of their self-effort in keeping the Law of Moses and the Jewish laws of purification.

NOTE: throughout history there have been sceptics who have used the following words, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" to undermine the Bible because traditional Christianity accepts that Christ was crucified on a cross. Their argument is futile since what is important to God's eternal foreordained plan of salvation for all mankind is that Christ laid down his life for the world and that he died and rose again to eternal glory, what he died on is irrelevant to God's plan and makes not the slightest difference to the Christian message of salvation. Nevertheless, the use of the word tree and the cross can be harmonised in the following two ways:

1. Since the word tree as used in this verse comes from the Greek word (xulon) which can refer to a literal tree or any other wooden article, obviously the cross was made from wood so in this sense it was simply a tree cut and chopped into the shape of a cross.

2. The words, "Cursed is everyone who is Hanged on a Tree" (v13) are cited from the book of Deuteronomy in which the civil law of that era stated, "If a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God (Deut. 21:22-23). These words were written in a time when men deserving death were hung on a tree and not crucified on a cross since crucifixion only began during the Roman era. Added to this Paul is not citing a prophecy of Christ, but a civil law that existed under the Old Testament law thus the expression hanged on a tree in reference to Christ is simply a Jewish idiom that in this context simply means, "Put to death as a criminal."

WE MIGHT RECEIVE THE PROMISED SPIRIT THROUGH FAITH

The words of Paul, "we might receive the promised Spirit through faith, (v14) show that the promise he now has in focus is the promise of the Spirit. In the context of this chapter it is the Spirit of righteousness that God imputes to all who faithfully follow and trust in Christ so that they can be set free from the imprisonment and captivity of the law and by grace be justified, forgiven and granted eternal life and everlasting glory. Paul's entire focus in this chapter is upon God's gift of righteousness that comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and leads to eternal life. Paul is trying to convince the unbelieving Jews that Gentiles who have faith in the promised seed of Abraham the Lord Jesus Christ are now accepted by God and by faith receive the same Spirit of righteousness as Abraham the father of faith did.

A MAN-MADE COVENANT AND GOD'S PROMISE

- **Galatians 3:15:** To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified (Confirmed in KJV).

To convince the Galatian brothers and sisters that God's covenant promise of, the Spirit (of righteousness) through faith (v4) is guaranteed to all who trust in Christ Paul points out that when people make a promise they swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes their promise is final for confirmation. So, when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his eternal purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath by Himself, so that by two unchangeable things, i.e., God's promise and it is impossible for God to lie. This truth should act as a sure and steadfast anchor to the heart and mind of all who are trusting in Christ for eternal life because God has promised and He cannot lie (Heb. 6:9-19).

GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

- **Galatians 3:16-18:** Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ. ¹⁷And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. ¹⁸For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Paul's statement, "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring" show that there was more than one promise made to Abraham and his seed (the Lord Jesus Christ). Following are the ten promises God made to Abraham:

FIRST PROMISE

The first promise was when Abram was seventy-five and Sarai was sixty-five the LORD said to Abram:

- Get thee out of thy country (Haran), and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ²And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ³And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and *in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed* So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran (Gen 12:1-4).

Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran (Gen. 12:4). Sarai was ten years younger than Abram (Gen. 17:17). The word seed comes from the Hebrew word (zera and zara) and from Strong's Concordance means to conceive a child and be fruitful. All the promises God made to Abraham use the word seed (singular in the KJV) and offspring (singular in the ESV) which immediately refer to Isaac, but through prophecy to the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16).

SECOND PROMISE

The second promise was when Abram was in Canaan, the LORD appeared to him and said:

- *Unto thy seed will I give this land* (Canaan): and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him (Gen. 12:7).

THIRD PROMISE

The third promise was when the LORD said unto Abram, after Lot was separated from him:

- Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: ¹⁵For *all the land* (of Canaan) which thou seest, *to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.* ¹⁶And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered (Gen. 13:14-16).

FOURTH PROMISE

The fourth promise was after Abram rescued Lot and met Melchizedek, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision saying:

- Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. ²And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? ³And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. ⁴And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, *This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.* ⁵And he brought him forth abroad, and said, *Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them:* and he said unto him, *So shall thy seed be.* ⁶And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:1-6). (Notice there is no mention of Sarah being the mother of the promised child).

In this fourth promise God counts Abram as righteous and promises him his very own son from his own bowels. The Lord gave this promise to Abram the same day Abram sacrificed the heifer (Gen. 15:9-10, 18) which was most likely sometime during his first year in Canaan. This would mean Abram was about seventy-six and since Abram was eighty-six when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael (Gen. 16:16) it is almost certain Sari and her husband had been trying to have a child for ten years before Sari offered Hagar to her husband (Gen. 16:3, 16).

FIFTH PROMISE

The fifth promise was when Abram sacrificed a heifer, the LORD said to Abram:

- Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land (Egypt) that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years (Gen. 15:13) (still no mention of Sarah being the mother of the promised child).

SIXTH PROMISE

The sixth promise is also the same day Abram sacrificed the Heifer the LORD said to Abram:

- *Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates (the land of Canaan) (Gen. 15:18) (still no mention of Sarah being the mother of the promised child).*

Abram and Sarah had been living in the land of Canaan for ten years (v3) and Sarah was still barren so she says to Abram:

- Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. ³And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, *after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan*, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. ⁴And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived (Gen. 16:2-4).

Abram was 86 when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael (Gen. 16:16).

SEVENTH PROMISE

The seventh promised was when Abram's name was changed to Abraham when he was ninety-nine years old. The LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him:

- I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. ²And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. ³And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, ⁴As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. ⁵Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. ⁶And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. ⁷And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. ⁸And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (Gen. 17:1-8).

God tells Abraham:

- His everlasting covenant is with Abraham and his seed after him.
- He will multiply Abraham greatly and kings will come from him.
- Abraham will be the father of a multitude of nations.
- He will be a God unto Abraham and to his seed after him.
- He will give Abraham and his seed the land of Canaan for an everlasting covenant.

God said unto Abraham:

- As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. ¹⁶And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. ¹⁷Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? ¹⁸And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! ¹⁹And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him (Genesis 17:15-19).

When Abraham was ninety-nine and Sarai was eighty-nine God changed her name to Sarah and told Abraham that she will become nations and have a son, God tells Abraham He will establish His covenant with Isaac (the promised son born of a miracle birth) and his seed forever. The exclamation of Abraham: "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (v18) shines a light on the idea that Abraham would have been happy for Ishmael to be the heir. This no-doubt is because Ishmael is almost thirteen at this time and it is certain Abraham loved him as his own son (Genesis 17:25-26).

God says to Abraham:

- My covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year (Gen. 17:21) Abraham was ninety-nine when God said this to him.

EIGHTH PROMISE

The eighth promise was when the LORD visited Sarah.

- The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. ²For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. ³And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. ⁴And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him (Gen. 21:1-5).

Abraham was ninety-nine and Sarah was eighty-nine when the LORD said to Abraham, He will return in one year and Sarah will have a son. Sarah doubted God and the LORD said to her, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Genesis 18:10-14). One year later when Sarah was ninety and Abraham was one-hundred the LORD visits Sarah and Isaac were born.

NINTH PROMISE

The ninth promise was when Sarah told Abraham to cast Hagar and Ishmael out God said to Abraham:

- Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad (Ishmael), and because of thy bondwoman (Hagar); in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called (Gen. 21:12).

NOTE: Abraham is now one-hundred and is devastated at having to cast out Hagar and Ishmael his son (Gen. 17:25-26) who it is certain he loved as his own child and who, is now thirteen. No-doubt this is the reason for God's encouragement to Abraham and one of the reasons God told Abraham twelve princes will come from Ishmael and God will make him a great nation (Genesis 17:20).

TENTH PROMISE

The tenth promise was given when Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac. It was God's last promise to Abraham. The angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven a second time and said:

- Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. ¹²And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me. ¹³And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. ¹⁴And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said *to* this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen. ¹⁵And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, ¹⁶And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: ¹⁷That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; ¹⁸And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice (Gen 22:11-18).

In these verses the LORD confirms the following three promises that He had previously made to Abraham:

1. He will multiply Abraham's seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore.
2. Abraham's seed will possess the gate of their enemies.
3. In Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

Abraham lived one-hundred and seventy-five years then died and was gathered to his people (Gen. 25:7-8).

ABRAHAM'S FAITH

The first promise was when Abram was seventy-five (he left Haran) (Gen. 12:4) and lived in Canaan for ten years (Gen. 16:3) then Hagar conceived and one year later Ishmael was born (Gen. 16:16). When Abraham was ninety-nine, Sarah eighty-nine and Ishmael, was thirteen years (Gen. 17:24-25). God told Abram that in one years-time Sarah will give birth to a son who they are to name Isaac (Gen. 17:1, 15-17, 21) so Isaac was born when Abram was one-hundred and Sarah was ninety (Gen. 21:5) and Ishmael was fourteen. The first promise was when Abram was seventy-five (Gen. 12:4) so if we accept that God gave Abram the promise of his very own son in his first year in Canaan (Gen. 15:4) and that Abraham was one-hundred when Isaac the promised son was born (Gen. 21:5) then Abram believed God for almost twenty-five years before God's promise of his very own son and heir was fulfilled.

GOD COUNTED ABRAM AS RIGHTEOUS

Abram was counted righteous, because he not only believed God's promise that he would be the father of a multitude of nations, have offspring who would be as the stars of heaven and the dust of the earth who kings would come from and who would inherit the land of Canaan forever and be heirs of the world, but also God's promise that the LORD would give him his very own son to be heir. It is interesting to notice that even though the LORD had spoken this promise of a son to Abram many times God never told Abram that Sarah would be the mother until the year prior to her actually conceiving. So, Abram had raised Ishmael as his own son for thirteen years and it is sure that he loved him as his own child prior to Isaac being born and not knowing that God had another son in mind to be the true heir. It is almost certain Abram for those thirteen years believed Ishmael was the promise son and heir since God never told him any different, nor did God tell Abram that Sarah through a miracle birth would be the mother of the promised son until Ishmael was thirteen years old. Yet God even though he knew Abraham did not have a totally clear picture of how God's promises were going to come about still

counted Abraham's faith as righteousness. This shows that Abraham's faith in believing against all odds was more important to God than Abraham having a perfectly clear understanding of every specific detail of how God was going to bring the promises to pass. The fact Abraham had a clouded understanding of who the promised son was did not stop God from counting him as righteous nor did it hinder God from bringing the perfection of the promise to pass. This should teach us all that providing faith has the broad picture of God's promise it will be counted to those who are trusting in Christ as righteous despite the fact it does not have absolute clarity of how God's promises will come to pass. This is because God's grace covers that which is out of focus. To have the faith of Abraham does not mean we have to have perfect understanding, but it does mean we have to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for our righteousness in contrast to trusting in our own self-effort or any religious act or practise we may be faithfully performing. The thing God loved in Abraham was not his intellectual knowledge, but the spiritual muscle of his faith.

Even though Abraham thought the true promised son was Ishmael up until Isaac the true child of promise came God counted his faith as righteousness. There is a fabulous lesson we can learn from this i.e., whoever has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (howbeit clouded) when the Lord does arrive in majestic glory we all like Abraham will accept with overwhelming joy his appearing when we see him face to face and Christ like God did to Abraham will continue to count us as his brothers and sisters clothed in righteous because of our faith in him despite our limited understanding. Those who are of faith of Abraham are not only the sons of Abraham, but also blessed along with Abraham, the father of faith likewise those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ become heirs in all the promises made to Abraham. God's delight in Abraham's faith shows us that even though we may have a clouded view of the Lord and how he will return, but are nevertheless faithful in our devotion, passion and faith toward him and patiently waiting with anticipated joy for him to return then that faith will be counted to us as righteousness.

SUMMARY OF GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

God told Abraham he would establish an everlasting covenant with him and that Abraham would be a father of many nations and God would make from his seed a great nation. Sarah would be called a mother of nations and kings would come from her. Abraham's son and heir Isaac would come from his own bowels and in Isaac Abraham's seed would be called and multiply as the stars of the heaven and as the sand upon the sea shore. They would possess all the land of Canaan and the strongholds of their enemies. God would be a God to Abraham's seed and his seed after him. Abraham's seed will be an everlasting possession for God and he will be their God and in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth will be blessed.

(Gen. 12:1-7) (Gen. 13:14-16) (Gen. 15:1-6, 18) (Gen. 17:1-8)
(Gen. 17: 15-19) (Gen. 17:21) (Gen. 21:12) (Gen. 22:11-18).

IN ABRAHAM'S SEED ALL NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED

- **Acts 3:25:** You are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

In these verses Peter is telling the Jews that they are the children of the Old Testament prophets and the natural descendants of the covenant promise God made with Abraham, and then he shines a spotlight on the truth contained in the following words of the LORD, "In Abraham's seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" that it is not just the natural descendants of Abraham that God's promise to Abraham embraces, but all nations (i.e., Jews and Gentiles).

THOSE WHO ARE OF THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM ARE THE HEIRS OF THE PROMISE

- **Romans 4:13-22:** For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, ¹⁵because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶Therefore 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 ¹⁷(as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; ¹⁸who contrary to hope in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, “So shall your (Abraham) descendants be.” ¹⁹And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith giving glory to God, ²¹and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. ²²And therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

God’s promise that Abraham’s seed would be heir of the world was not to Abraham’s natural descendants, but to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the seed of Abraham who God had in His eternal mind and in focus when He made this covenant promise to Abraham and swore by an oath that Abraham’s seed would be a blessing to all nations. It is Christ who is to be heir of the world and those who are to be heirs with him are not those who trust in Moses Law and adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions, but those who by faith believe in the promised seed of Abraham the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in God’s grace to be counted righteous by faith as was Abraham the father of faith. God has not made our eternal destiny to be dependent upon our fickle nature, but designed it to be based on faith and grace so that it can be guaranteed (made sure) (v16).

Had God based salvation upon our works and self-effort He could never have promised it or guaranteed it with an oath this is the glory and wisdom of God; since salvation to eternal life is based on grace God can safely promise whoever comes to Christ in faith will be saved. Abraham has become the father of many nations (Jews and Gentiles) through his seed (the Lord Jesus Christ) who God promised him thousands of years ago. Today whoever like Abraham does not doubt God’s word, but believes the promise of God that states; whoever has faith in the promised seed of Abraham and trust in God’s grace will not only be counted righteous and a member of Abraham’s family, but also be saved to eternal life and everlasting glory.

NOTE: the term, “God calls those things which do not exist as though they did” (v17) in this context refers to raising the dead. The things that do not exist are those who have died. It means that whoever has died in faith in the promised seed of Abraham the Lord Jesus Christ will be raised to eternal life and everlasting glory. This is why the Bible refers to those who have died in faith as sleeping in Christ because their death is only temporary.

ABRAHAM IS THE FATHER OF ALL WHO HAVE FAITH IN CHRIST

- **Romans 4:23-25:** Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed and not to that only which is of the law but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all, Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; ²⁴But for us all also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; ²⁵Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Those who are of the law refer to the Jews, while those of who are of faith refer to the Gentiles. These verses show that before the beginning of time God in His eternal mind planned and purposed mankind's salvation and that God's promise to Abraham was to embrace both the Jews and the Gentiles alike. Here is the glory of Christian salvation it is by faith and God's grace and not by adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions that we are saved. God imputed (credited) righteousness to Abraham because of his faith likewise God imputes righteousness to whoever by faith believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the glory of Christian faith.

Every faithful brother and sister in Christ is saved by their faith in the promised seed of Abraham and believing that God raised Jesus from the dead and that he died for our offences and was raised again for our justification and because of this faith all who belong to Christ are saved by his righteousness and not their own.

NOT ALL WHO DESCENDED FROM ABRAHAM ARE ABRAHAM'S OFFSPRING

- **Romans 9:6-16:** But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.⁹ For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return and Sarah shall have a son."¹⁰ And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call—¹² she was told, "The older (Esau) will serve the younger (Jacob)."¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

Election; means a divine selection it can refer to a person making a choice or of one being selected and chosen.

Call: means to call a person forward.

The promise Paul refers to is the following promise God made to Abraham.

- As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" (Gen. 17:15-17).

Abraham and Sarah gave birth to Isaac, he took Rebecca as his wife and they gave birth to Esau and Jacob. Esau was the firstborn, but sold his birthright to Jacob who gave birth to twelve sons who became known as the twelve tribes of Israel and whose descendants are the nation of Israel. Paul is saying not all who descended from Jacob belong to Israel. Abraham's wife Sarah gave birth to Ishmael and Isaac and then later died after her death Abraham took Keturah as a wife and had more children (Gen. 25:1).

Paul is saying only those who came through Isaac are counted as Abrahams descendants (offspring). It is not the children of the flesh, (meaning children born from Abraham naturally contrasted to the miraculous birth of Isaac) who are the children of God, but the children of the promise who are counted as offspring (i.e. those born of Isaac). Sarah was ninety when she gave birth to Isaac and Abraham was one hundred, Isaac was the result of a promise God made to Abraham and he came by a miracle birth that is why those from his bloodline are counted as

Abraham's offspring. Ishmael and his children and the children of Keturah were of the flesh, meaning born of a natural birth and are not counted as children of the promise.

JACOB, I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED

Prior to the birth of Esau and Jacob Rebecca was told that "The older son Esau will serve Jacob the younger son" (v12) and then long after Esau's death Malachi penned the words:

- I have loved you (the Jewish priests) says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his (Esau) hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert" (Mal 1:2-3).

God did not hate Esau before he was even born, but in His eternal foreknowledge God did know the wicked path Esau would take. Esau's history shows that he did not have the same passion for God as Jacob did. Esau placed no value on the inheritance that was due to him being the firstborn, but instead sold it for a plate of food, nor did he value the promise of God, neither did he fear or show God honour (he took two Hittite women for wives contrary to the will of God).

BIRTHRIGHT AND GOD'S FAVOUR

In Malachi God loved the priests because they were descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but at the time of Malachi the priest like Esau despised God's name and did not fear or show him honour (Mal. 1:6). God is comparing the priests of Israel to Jacob and Esau. Esau was Jacob's older brother (the firstborn) and had the right to the inheritance and the promises, yet God rejected Esau and chose Jacob. God is saying to the priests, just because they are born of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob does not guarantee God's favour. He is warning them that just as God rejected Esau who had the rights to the inheritance, God will also reject them if they do not give God the honour, He is due.

In these verses of Romans Paul is applying the same principle to the unbelieving Jews, he is telling them that being descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, does not guarantee God's favour, if they do not accept Jesus, God will reject them as he did Esau and the priest of Malachi's day. The same principal applies to Gentiles, just because a person is born into a Christian family, a church or religious organisation does not guarantee them salvation. Paul perceiving what his readers might be thinking raises the question:

- What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? (v14).

Referring to God's statement:

- I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion (v15).

Mercy means to show compassion and tender pity by word or deed (especially by divine grace). God is stating that His mercy is not bound by a person's birthright, meaning that just because a person is born a descendant of Abraham does not guaranteed they will be granted God's mercy or delivered from His wrath. God is saying that He will choose who He shows mercy and compassion to, since God would without question be proven unjust if He did show mercy and compassion toward a person regardless of their rebellious behaviour or wicked actions simply because they were lucky enough to be born into the right family.

The Bible states that God shows mercy to thousands who:

- Love Him (Exod. 20:6) (Deut. 5:10).
- Keep His covenant and commandments (Deut. 7:9) (Neh. 1:5).
- Listen to His rules and keeps them (Deut. 7:12).
- Are faithful, in righteousness and in uprightness of heart (1 Kings 3:6).
- Walk before Him with all their heart (1 Kings 8:23 2) (2 Chron. 6:14).
- Fear Him (Luke 1:50).
- Are obedient to Him (Rom. 11:30).

But God does not show mercy to those who:

- Are guilty (i.e., are in deliberate rebellion or sin) (Exod. 34:7) (Numbers 14:18).
- Do not fear the LORD and turn from His way (Isaiah 63:17).
- Do not show mercy to others (James 2:13).

THE LAW DOES NOT MAKE THE PROMISE VOID

- **Galatians 3:17-21:** 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. ¹⁸For if the inheritance is of the law it is no longer of promise but God gave it to Abraham by promise ¹⁹What 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. ²⁰Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. ²¹Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life (Eternal) truly righteousness would have been by the law.

The law primarily refers to the Jewish religious ceremonial rites, the Jewish laws of purification and also includes the Ten Commandments and the inheritance refers to the following two things:

1. The promised seed of Abraham the Lord Jesus Christ the King of kings and Lord of lords and beloved Saviour and elder brother of all who believe.
2. To the land and multitudes of brothers and sisters in Christ belonging to the family of God (also called the Kingdom of God).

Though the Law of Moses and the Jewish laws of purification came four-hundred and thirty years after God made the promises to Abraham it does not cancel the inheritances of God's promises to Israel because a promise is not based on self-effort but on the honour and integrity of the person who made the promise.

THE GUARANTEE OF THE PROMISE

Concerning the guarantee of the promise the author of Hebrews wrote:

- When God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself ¹⁴saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. (Hebrews 6:13-18).

God's promise is guaranteed for the following two reasons:

1. It was made by God who swore by Himself (since there is no-one higher).
2. God cannot lie.

NOTICE: Paul's focus is not upon teaching the history of Abraham to the Hebrews, but using Abraham as an example to prove that salvation is by faith and not by the law. The context of the entire chapter is about the two paths to justification, the law of faith or the law of purification (which is not really a path at all). Paul is shining a floodlight on Abraham's great faith to prove that those who belong to Jesus Christ are blessed by being counted righteous by their faith just as Abraham was.

WHY THE LAW WAS ADDED?

- **Galatians 3:18-20:** Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed in should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary (Mediator in KJV). ¹⁹Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. ²⁰Now an intermediary (mediator in the KJV) implies more than one, but God is one.

NOTE: when Paul is writing a letter, he has no audience before him to ask questions so he often adopts a style of writing that enables him to raise a topic by asking a question himself. This type of writing has the following three benefits:

1. Questions always grab the attention of the reader as they set the mind to seek an answer.
2. It gives the author the opportunity to answer questions that they perceive they might be asked if in front of a live audience.
3. It raises a topic the writer wants to highlight and discuss.

Paul asks the question, "Why was the law added?" (v19) and then answers the question himself by saying that the law was added for two reasons, firstly, because of transgressions and wrongdoing and secondly, to act as a guardian and protector (v24) until the promised seed of Abraham should come to his offspring (the nation Israel) to whom the promise had been made.

THE LAW WAS PUT IN PLACE THROUGH ANGELS

God was the mediator (v20) who gave the law through angels to Moses who then gave it to Israel, while Moses was the mediator between Israel and God at Mount Sinai four-hundred and thirty years after God had given Abram the promises.

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

The law was added to the promises to control and limit sin until the promised seed (Jesus Christ) of Abraham came. Since the majority of mankind does not need to be told, murdering another human, taking another man's wife for sexual pleasure, stealing and kidnapping a person is wrong behaviour much of humanity was already living a lifestyle that was in harmony with many of the laws written in the Ten Commandments. So, one might ask, "Why did God give them to Moses in such a dramatic manner?" The answers to this question, is that God by not only descending from heaven in such a thunderous, dramatic and specular

fashion on Mount Sinai, but also by engraving the Ten Commandments on stone with His own finger shone a brilliant floodlight on these laws clearly showing the entire world the following three things:

1. God's perfect will for mankind.
2. The only way humanity has any hope of living in harmony and peace.
3. That all mankind is under sin.

THE SPIRIT OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Spirit of the Ten Commandments is love, because each law protects innocent humans from physical, financial, sexual, emotional and spiritual harm this is the reason Paul says, "Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. 13:10). The laws of purification and religious ceremonial laws were added to provide a way of redemption for those who did sin and to echo and point the way to Christ. The legalistic Jews believed that justification and salvation to eternal life came by the observance of the Law of Moses. It is certain many Jews loyally preached faith in the promise and in its fulfilment in Christ, but mistakenly made the inheritance of the promise dependent upon the fulfilling of the law. Paul is shining a spotlight on the fact that trusting in the law invalidates the promise because salvation to eternal life must rest either upon the promise or upon the law it cannot be both. The Jews were teaching the Galatian brothers and sisters that salvation was dependent both upon the promise and upon the law whereas Paul is highlighting the fact that if the promised inheritance comes through the law then it is no more of the promise and not only is faith made void, but the promise made becomes of no-effect (Rom 4:14). The promise refers to the promise God made to faithful Abraham which can be summed up in the following three ways:

1. Abraham would be heir of the world not by fulfilling the law, but through the righteousness of faith (Rom. 4:13).
2. Abraham would be the ancestor of the Messiah, the Christ.
3. In Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Since there cannot be two paths to obtaining the same promise it becomes clear to those who have a logical mind that the law was given for another purpose altogether. The covenant God made with Abraham and his seed is still in force today through Christ the promised seed of Abraham. Whoever abides in Christ by faith are the spiritual seed (offspring) of Abraham. The promises of Abraham are first made to Christ and then by him to those who are by faith grafted into Christ, but when the promise is mingled with the law it is made nothing but the law, thus our righteousness must always be in Christ as a sure defence of faith against dependence on self-effort and human righteousness.

Paul wrote:

- There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus and if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:28-29).

DO NOT THROW AWAY YOUR CONFIDENCE

- **Hebrews 10:35-39:** Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised ³⁷For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; ³⁸but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." ³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

At this time the author is addressing Hebrews who had been enlightened to Christ and endured sufferings, reproach, persecution and affliction and had compassion on those in prison, but are still bound by the Levitical priesthood and Jewish religious customs and traditions and because of this the author is encouraging them not to throw away their confidence, meaning their faith by going back under the law and performing religious works to be counted righteous.

THE WILL OF GOD

The statement, "when you have done the will of God," in the context of this letter the will of God primarily refers to enduring in the faith and trusting in God's grace to be counted righteous and saved in contrast to trusting in the Levitical law and religious works.

YOU MAY RECEIVE WHAT IS PROMISED

The promise and the reward in this context refer to eternal life in everlasting glory. This is the great reward that God has promised to those who belong to the family of Christ and endure in their faith.

YET A LITTLE WHILE, AND THE COMING ONE WILL NOT DELAY

The coming one refers to the one who is about to come and bring ruin to the city of Jerusalem and destroy the temple of God and its services (this happened in 70AD). The author being fully aware that the temple, its services and its priesthood will be brought to nothing is warning his Hebrew readers that these events are drawing near and at the same time encouraging them by telling them not to despair when they see their temple in ruin because the ones God delights in and counts as righteous are not those who trust in temple worship and its services (religious works) to be counted righteous, but those who trust in God's grace and endure in their faith in Christ until they receive the promise and the great reward.

The words:

- My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him (v38).

Shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that those who trust in ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs, and traditions to earn their righteousness and be counted worthy before God and of eternal life instead of pleasing God are bringing His wrath upon themselves. This is because trusting in religious works and self-effort totally denies what Christ achieved for us on the cross and makes his death count for nothing. The ones who God delights in are those who have no trust in their religious deeds (no matter how good) to make them righteous, but instead trust solely in Christ's righteousness and God's grace.

The only way any brother and sister in Christ can please God is to continue to trust in Christ for their righteousness and not religious duties, works and service because God has no pleasure in those who trust in their own self-efforts to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life. It could be argued that sin is not the greatest danger for Christians, since most Christians are very aware of sin, whereas, trusting in ceremonial rites, holy days, works, service, duty and religious customs and traditions to earn righteousness rather than fully trust by faith in Christ and God's grace is far more subtle and deceptive than actual sin. It is not that religious rites, works, service, duty, customs and traditions are necessarily bad in themselves, in fact some are good habits and good behaviour, what make them evil is trusting in them to earn righteousness

that leads to eternal life and trusting in them to be counted worthy before God and worthy of eternal life since this trust in self-effort totally denies God's grace in Christ and makes Christ's death count for nothing. Added to this not one of us can stand before God's perfect Holiness without sin, if anyone of us could attain to this glorious state of sinlessness Christ died for no reason.

WE ARE NOT OF THOSE WHO SHRINK BACK

Shrinking back in this context refers to going back under the law, remember Hebrews had been following Moses Law with all its ceremonial rites and religious customs, for around four-thousand years, because of this it was very difficult for many of them to comprehend the new covenant of grace even though they could accept that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ and Saviour of both Jews and Gentiles. The problem for these Hebrews was not believing in Jesus, but accepting grace.

For further information see:

- Hebrews chapter 10 in, Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The following words of Paul show the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ. Paul in his letters wrote:

- I do not nullify the *GRACE* of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21).

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort, they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value.

Equally as horrific as this Paul states:

- When we forsake *GRACE* we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by *GRACE* that God made us alive in Christ (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5).

Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that:

- It is only by *GRACE* that any brother or sister has been saved (Eph. 2:8).

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life.

This means in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, grace and faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them. This is the reason the author in the book of Hebrews spends so many chapters brilliantly and skilfully explaining to the Hebrews that they must stop their sin of trusting in religious works, the Levitical Law and their priesthood to be counted righteous before God and start trusting in the grace of God that is in Christ and in his righteousness to be saved to eternal life.

By extension this means that Christians must stop trusting in attending a church building every week, strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to be saved. Though the practise of some of these maybe good in themselves they become grossly sinful when believers trust in them for their salvation since not one of them has any power to save to eternal life.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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