

(Genesis) 29 - the Ratification of the Abrahamic Covenant

by S. Lewis Johnson

The sermon explores the ratification of the Abrahamic covenant, emphasizing faith, justification, and God's unwavering promises to His people.

Duration: 50:46

Scripture: Genesis 15:6-7, Genesis 15:10, Genesis 15:17, Matthew 6:33, Romans 4:5

Topics: "Covenant"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the covenant between God and Abram. He highlights the significance of the covenant and how it relates to the experiences of both Israel and Jesus Christ. The preacher emphasizes that the judgment of God is not arbitrary, but rather a result of God's long-suffering and holiness. He also mentions the importance of understanding the context and purpose behind God's command to exterminate the Canaanites. The sermon concludes with a description of the smoking oven and flaming torch that appeared during the covenant ceremony.

Transcript

The scripture reading for this morning is in Genesis chapter 15 and we are picking it up where we stopped last Sunday with verse 6 and reading from verse 7 through verse 21. Remember the context. The battle between the four and the five kings has taken place and Abram has rescued Lot after the defeat of the kings of the land and he has refused to take anything from the king of Sodom because he did not want him saying, I have made Abram rich.

And then right after that the Lord said to Abram that he would be a shield to him and his reward would be exceedingly great. He took him outside, showed him the stars of the heavens and said, so shall thy seed be. And Abram, the author adds, addressing it to the readers, believed in the Lord and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.

In the seventh verse we continue, and he, that is God, he said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess it. And he said, O Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it? So he said to him, bring me a three-year-old heifer and a three-year-old female goat and a three-year-old ram and a turtle dove and a young pigeon. Then he brought all these to him and cut them in two and laid each half opposite the other, but he did not cut the birds.

Evidently he set one bird over against the other bird, one in each of the lines of the pieces of the animals. And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses and Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, that's a rather important little clause and I want you to reflect for just a moment upon the fact that when God asked Abram to go out and look at the stars it was nighttime.

In the meantime, Abram brought the animals for the sacrifice, but now it is the next afternoon and so Abram has been waiting a very long time, at least twelve hours, probably even more. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. And God said to Abram, know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.

But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve and afterward they will come out with many possessions. And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace. You shall be buried at a good old age.

Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete. I may not have time to say anything about that in the message, but you can see from this that those who criticize Joshua for going in and exterminating the Canaanites do not really understand what was back of that command of the Lord to exterminate the inhabitants of the land. They were very wicked.

They carried upon an exceedingly idolatrous kind of religion in the land, and consequently it was a necessity bound up in the holiness of God. And furthermore, as you can see from this, there is at least four hundred years of long suffering on the part of God. And finally, the time comes when the iniquity of the Amorite is full, and then God, a holy God, must execute his judgment.

This is something our modern society does not understand at all, that there is a time when the judgment of God must be exercised. So God was not an arbitrary God, but he was very long suffering in his dealing with the inhabitants of the land. But he is a God of holiness, and consequently judgment is part of his being.

Now in verse 17 we conclude, And it came about, when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and, behold, there appeared a smoking oven, and a flaming torch, which passed between those pieces. Notice that last relative clause, it's very important, which passed between those pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, the Kenite, and the Kenizite, and the Kadmonite, and the Hittite, and the Perizite, and the Rephaim, and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Girgashite, and the Jebusite.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. The subject for this morning in the ministry of the word is the ratification of the Abrahamic covenant. We have been saying, at least in the last message and this one, that Genesis fifteen is one of the truly momentous chapters in the word.

One of the Lutheran commentators, H. C. Leupold, has called the chapter monumental. The reason that this chapter is so important is it has tremendous testimony to the saving truth of God. It is the first, and no doubt one of the greatest, that deals with the fundamental truth of justification.

This great text, Genesis chapter fifteen and verse six, is one that plays a large part in the theology of the Apostle Paul. And Abram believed in the Lord, and he reckoned it to him for righteousness. Job's great problem, I know it is so of a truth, but how should a man be just with God, is solved by that.

The Apostle Paul uses it, and in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, summarizes by saying, in chapter four and verse five, But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted toward the obtaining of righteousness. Now we stressed several features of justification in our last study. We stressed the fact that the ground of justification lies in three great imputations.

To impute is to reckon. It's one of the great theological words. And these three great imputations lie at the base of the doctrine of justification by faith.

For example, there is first of all the imputation of Adam's sin to the human race. Because Adam sinned as our representative, the result is that in the reckoning of God, every individual is born guilty. We are under divine condemnation.

He was our representative, and he failed as our representative. And consequently, the Apostle writes for this cause, As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, because all sinned. That is, sinned in Adam.

Now that is the doctrine of the Word of God. Adam's sin has made it necessary for sin to be imputed to all of us, and death is the evidence of it. We all die, do we not? And consequently, that is God's way of bringing the penalty of the sin that has been imputed to us.

That's imputation number one. The Bible also speaks of the imputation of believers' sins to their representative, the Lord Jesus, their mediator. So when the Lord Jesus died upon the cross, he died under the judgment of God for the sins of believers.

When he cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? He was our substitute and was dying under the sin that was imputed to him. He had no personal sin himself, but our sin was reckoned to him. The Apostle writes in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21, He hath made him to be sin for us.

He made him to be sin for us. Now he did not have sin, that was our sin reckoned to him. And finally the Bible speaks of the imputation of the righteousness of God to believers.

That very text that we referred to just then goes on to say, He hath made him to be sin for us, him who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him, so that there is reckoned to believers the righteousness of God. Consequently, the ground of our justification lies in the fundamental expiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and these imputations that are so important. He paid our debt for us.

Everyone knows what it is to walk into a building and pay a bill that you owe. The teller behind the counter takes your bill and your money, stamps the bill with a receipt or at least a sign paid, gives you that or something as a receipt, and the result is that the company can never collect that bill from you again because it has been paid. The Lord Jesus Christ walked up to Calvary, which was God's desk for the payment of the bill of sin, and there he paid the debt of believers' sins.

And consequently, heaven has no further claim against those for whom Christ died. Now the ground of justification then lies in the saving work of Christ and the imputations that are taught in Scripture. The fundamental principle, as you can see, is the principle of grace because we do not have any merit that makes us acceptable to God.

The apostle uses that expression that we being justified by grace might become heirs of eternal life. By grace we are what we are in justification, Richard Sibbes said, and work what we work in sanctification. So

the fundamental principle of justification is grace.

We preach justification by grace. We preach justification by grace in believers' chapel. We preach justification by grace to you so that you will not have any desire to trust in your own merits, of which you really have none, before God.

The means of justification is faith. The Bible says being justified by faith we have peace with God. Now faith is not a meritorious work.

It is simply a means by which we receive what God has done for us in grace. Faith saves not because it is meritorious, but faith saves because it is the means by which Jesus Christ is grasped. Have you ever been real sick? Have you ever been so sick that you could hardly lift your head up? Have you ever been so sick when your mother or your wife or your husband came to you with the medicine that you could hardly reach and get for yourself? Have you reached out with a trembling hand and have taken the medicine and swallowed it when you could hardly hold it? Well, almost everyone has had that experience.

Well, a trembling hand can grasp the healing draught to the lip, but the weakness of the hand does not lessen the power of the medicine. It is the medicine of Jesus Christ's death that saves. It is faith that may be very weak and trembling, which is simply the means by which the healing draught of the saving work of Christ is received.

Abraham, we learned in the twelfth chapter, was called. Now justified. And so in a moment he will be taken into a covenantal relationship with tremendous blessings.

I think it's interesting that when the Apostle Paul writes in Romans chapter eight, he describes five great blessings that belong to those who are called according to his purpose. He says they are foreknown. He says they are foreordained.

He says they are called, justified, and glorified. Now Abram has been called and justified, and the order that is found here in this chapter is the order the Apostle uses. So we're not surprised that he should speak about the ultimate blessings that are grounded in a covenant.

Now the ultimate blessings have to do with the land and with the new heavens and the new earth, because according to the New Testament, Abram's faith looked beyond the land promises on to the eternal promises of the new heavens and the new earth. He looked for a city that had foundations, whose builder and maker was God. And he looked for a heavenly city.

And so his faith was not simply restricted to the land of Palestine and the earthly city of Jerusalem, though that was a genuine object of his faith. But it went on ultimately to the possession of the eternal blessings of the new heavens and the new earth. In the meantime, there were intermediate blessings that he would enjoy.

He was to have a Messiah who would come and who would accomplish the atoning sacrifice. He was told that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed, and so there was a posterity lying before him of people who had a similar faith with him. One of the great joys of leaving your presence is going to be the experience of the fellowship and communion with the saints who have lived down through the years.

I'm sorry, but I'm looking forward to it, in spite of the fact that I will be probably absent from a lot of you. If you have faith, you'll join me, and if you don't have that joy already, you will ultimately have it too. When

the years pass by, your hope will be centered more and more upon being gathered to your fathers and enjoying fellowship with the great body of believers from Abraham on down.

Now, I love your presence, you understand, but if I had a choice, if I had a choice, I think I would enjoy the presence of Abraham and Isaiah and Paul and Luther and Calvin just a little bit more than you in your present condition. Well, that was one of the blessings that Abram had, and of course the immediate blessing that Abram had was the enjoyment of the fellowship of God right then. For Abram had the great experience of communion with Yahweh while he was still on this earth, and that is our experience as well.

We don't have to wait until the future to have communion with the Lord. When we turn now to the covenant, and it's, I must say again, it is one of the most important sections of the word of God, this unconditional, unilateral covenant that God made with Abram. The occasion of the covenant is described in verses seven and eight, and incidentally in these words God teaches Abram something about his own timetable.

For Abram must be taught that the promises which he has are promises that are not going to be fulfilled in the immediate future. He might have thought when God said, so shall your seed be, that he was speaking about next month or next year, but God in the experience that follows teaches Abram that it is not now, it is to come, but there is a great period of time that is to pass between the giving of the promises and the fulfillment of them. He begins after Abram is said to have been justified by faith by saying to him, I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees to give you this land to possess it.

So he's reminded of who it is with whom he speaks, and of the relationship that he bears to Yahweh. He is in effect to be shown what must yet transpire before the realization of the promises. Well Abram now has believed in the Lord, but still in spite of that he blurts out, oh Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it? In the Hebrew text the word bamah, which is used here as a word that means by what? By what shall I know what, that I shall possess it? So he is looking for some little tangible token by which he may know that he is going to possess these promises.

One looking at the words themselves might surmise that Abram here is guilty of unbelief. But looking at the context more closely, in particular the words in verse six, then he believed in the Lord, that his descendants would be as the stars of the heavens. And in the following context in which he obeys the word of the Lord and goes and gets the materials for sacrifice, we're rather inclined to believe that when he utters, oh Lord God, how may I know? But this is really a sad complaint, and it represents a trembling weak faith, but nevertheless a basic faith, somewhat like the faith that we read of in the New Testament of the man who said, Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief.

Well the ritual of the covenant follows as God's answer. Sometimes we are inclined to center our attention upon the failures of the saints when we ought to center our attention upon the love of God which bears up these failing saints. The Lord does not criticize Abram for his unbelief if there is unbelief there, but rather is faithful to his word and faithful to his weak and trembling servant.

So he said to him, bring me a three-year-old heifer and a three-year-old female goat and a three-year-old ram and a turtle dove and a young pigeon. Now the answer then that God gives to Abram when he asks, how may I know that I shall possess it, is a covenant sacrifice. Now the real answer will come when in this covenantal sacrifice we are taught that it is an unconditional unilateral covenant.

In other words, God is answering Abram and saying, how will you know that you will possess it? Well I'm going to give it to you. That's how you'll know it, and I'm faithful to my word. But he will do this in symbolical fashion, in another object lesson which Abram could understand and anyone else who pays attention to it.

It was the custom, it seems, for sacrifices to be made by the slaying of animals, the dividing of them, putting one on one side, one piece of the animal over here and another piece over here. And then in the case of the birds, evidently since birds were not normally divided in any way in the sacrificial system later on, one bird was placed on one side and another bird on the other. In Jeremiah chapter 34 and verse 18, reference is made to this custom.

So it was something that the early believers knew about. They had had experience of that very thing. I won't turn to that Jeremiah passage.

It is in the notes in the Believer's Bible Bulletin that some of you have in your hands, and so you can read that text. But Jeremiah knows about the dividing of animals and a sacrifice like this. It's interesting too, by the way, that the expression to make a covenant in Hebrew is literally to cut a covenant.

Karath barith is to cut a covenant. And even the idea of cutting then is perhaps related to the dividing of animals. In the Greek, the same type of thing is found.

The expression is temnein oikia, or to cut oaths or a covenant. So that the idea of dividing and separating in that way is something represented in the language itself. Now before we look on, I want you to notice that in the tenth verse, after God has said, Bring me, we read, Then he brought all these to him.

There is obedience on the part of Abram. The faith that Abram has is a faith that works. Now there are people who suggest that in places where the sovereign grace of God is proclaimed in our salvation, that that kind of doctrine is the kind of doctrine that is contrary to the presentation or the bringing of good works before the Lord.

And then if you preach the grace of God, then you cannot preach the holiness of man in his life. Well now that of course is foolishness, because all that the Bible teaches is that it is the old faith and the sovereign grace of God that promotes holiness of life. And so the idea that, as Mr. Spurgeon used to like to say, that those who believe in the sovereign grace of God cry down good works, is not true at all.

Now if you're thinking about good works as a way to gain salvation, then of course we do cry down good works. We say to you that all your good works are as rags. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, the scriptures say.

And as a matter of fact, the rags have the best of it then, because they are better than our good works before the Lord. We do not cry down good works. But we do cry down good works if they are made the basis for salvation, because salvation is something accomplished apart from works.

Those who truly believe in the sovereign grace of God, like Daniel and the three Hebrew companions, when time will pass by, they'll prove to be healthier and fatter than all those that sit at this world king's table. So we don't cry down good works. We say that the faith that we have in a sovereign God produces good works.

And we have a right to expect that. Abram is a man whose faith does work. Thomas Adams, one of the Puritans, expressed it this way, from the point of justification, works cannot be sufficiently commended.

Into the cause of justification they must not be admitted. Now the ratification of the covenant follows in verses 11 through 21, and what a striking event this is, and what a striking answer it is to Abram's question, O Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it? The circumstances of the ratification of the covenant are interesting, and I want you to notice three features of these circumstances. First of all, in the very way in which this covenant is ratified, there is evidence that there is to be delay and a disciplining of the people of God in the light of the future.

Now remember that Abram was given the promise at night. He was called out of his tent and told to look, and he saw stars in heaven. So it was nighttime.

But now we read in verse 12, now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram. So evidently he had gone out, he had obtained his animals, he had laid, he had slain the animals, he had divided them, he had placed the sacrificial pieces in order, and then he sat down to wait. And he waited, and he waited, and he waited.

He must have waited at least 12 hours, perhaps longer. And God did nothing. Now that was designed to teach Abram patience, and also to teach him that there would be a delay in the fulfillment of these promises.

It was God's object lesson again. Incidentally, we have the same experience that Abram has. The promises of God are given us in the Word of God, but we are not told that we shall have them now.

We are told that we have them. And sometimes the promises of God take many years. I've been saved now over 40 years, I think.

No, not over 40. Almost 40. And the promises of God that I have are promises which I have now still as promises.

Some of them I have already received, but many of them I'll still look forward to. There is delay. And one of the reasons for these long waiting hours is that our own spiritual life may be built up, that we may learn what it is to have patience, that our faith may be purified and become gold, silver, and precious stones, so that it may become a thing of beauty, and not a mixture of dross and precious metal as it is so often in our life here.

Now, we are also told in the words that follow that Israel shall go down into Egypt and they shall serve another people, so they were to be disciplined. In fact, before they received their promises, they were to have some very terrible experiences. This is the experience of every Christian.

If we live godly in Christ Jesus, Paul says, we shall suffer persecution. Now, that doesn't mean we shall suffer persecution from the Arminians, but it includes that. And so, we shall suffer persecution.

We should not be surprised if we preach the grace of God that we have difficulties. Why should we be surprised when the word of God warns us over and over again that through many tribulations we shall enter into the kingdom of God? So Abram is told that by this long delay. The second feature is the terror and great darkness.

We read in verse 12, Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. This was a supernatural kind of thing. It was a sense of gloom that fell upon him.

It must have been something like a nightmare. It was the, when the sun went down, it was like the sun of grace going down. And Abram and the people whom he represent pass into a time of darkness and gloom.

It represents the future of the nation Israel as they go down into Egypt and suffer the service of the Egyptians for four centuries. Furthermore, it seems clear that this deep sleep and the terror and great darkness is designed to represent the impact of holiness upon sin. So it is a figure by which we are reminded of the fact that if there is to be any blessing from God at all, there must be judgment upon our sin.

Now if we do not have a Redeemer, then we must bear the judgment ourselves. But if we have a Redeemer, He bears the judgment. And so isn't it striking that in the great moments of the divine revelation, we often have holy God, terror and darkness and judgment upon the earth, representing the impact of this holy God upon unholy men.

Even in the giving of the law, what characterized it was the terror of great darkness. Darkness and gloom God was having, making a covenant with His people, and it was the impact of holiness upon sin. When the new covenant, which is really simply an expansion of part of the Abrahamic covenant, is consummated by the Lord Jesus, what characterizes the saving work of the Lord Jesus? Darkness.

There came darkness over the land for three hours. That was the impact of holiness upon sin. Furthermore, an earthquake.

So just as at the giving of the law, and so here in the ratification of the covenant and in the new covenant, characteristic is the shaking of the earth, the darkness and gloom, the impact of holiness upon sin. Now this is all typical of Messiah's death, for He is the true servant. He is the true Israel, even called that.

And so His experiences and Israel's experiences are experiences that are similar, for Israel in her experiences is typical of the experience of the Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ. It's also interesting to me that this word for deep sleep is used previously in this book, in chapter 2, verse 21. There it was used of the deep sleep into which Adam was put when God operated upon him and took his rib out and made a woman from the rib.

And we said that many Bible teachers feel that that is illustrative of the death of Christ and the fact that out of our Lord there is created the new creation, which is to be His bride, the church of Jesus Christ. So this deep sleep, this word, *teredema*, is a word that is suggestive of the death of Christ in chapter 2 and suggestive, I think here, also of the death of Christ. We say this of that which is typical and illustrative.

The final of the features of the circumstances is the theophany described in verse 17. And it came about when the sun had set that it was very dark and behold there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between those pieces. Now this follows immediately after the words of the prophecy that came when we read of the terror and great darkness that fell upon him.

God had interpreted something of the darkness by saying, know for a certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. He

says that He will judge that nation. He's referring to the Egyptian sojourn of Israel.

He will judge that nation and afterwards you will come out with many possessions. All of this was fulfilled, we know. And as for you, Abram, you shall go to your fathers in peace.

I say I love those expressions, the older you get. I look forward to going to my fathers in peace. I want to see my own father who was a believer in Christ.

I never got to know my grandfather who was a Presbyterian elder and when they didn't have a preacher in the Somerville Presbyterian Church and then in some of the others where he was an elder, he would preach. I never got to know him and I'm looking forward to getting to know him and the other members of the family who were Christians. Some of their possessions I have in my possession now which I inherited from my father when he died.

I'm looking forward to it. Again, I say I'm sorry I have to leave you but nevertheless I'm looking forward to it. So this particular statement that he was going to go to his fathers is a tremendous spiritual blessing.

Abram, you're going to go to your fathers in peace and you shall be buried at a good old age. Now then, in verse 17, he speaks by the action of the oven and the flaming torch and this I think is the climax of God's answer to Abram's, Oh Lord God how may I know that I shall possess it. There would be total confusion in this passage were it not for these covenantal, this covenantal action and the covenantal promises that follow in verse 18 through verse 21.

You see what is happening here is simply this, Yahweh is ratifying a covenant and the visible features are symbolical of the spiritual significance of this covenant. Now let's stop for just a moment and notice what is taking place. The animals were all set, the pieces of the animals, there is a place between them.

Incidentally in the Mari tablets, the inscriptions, the expression is found to slay an ass and that was idiomatic of entering into a compact. Evidently even among the heathen, asses were slain and the pieces were of the animal were separated as the animal was cut and individuals then walked down between the pieces of the animals in token of the fact that they would be faithful to the words of their compact or covenant unto death. Now after the message this morning one of my friends who was at the 8.30 service reminded me of another old practice which many of us have experienced in the past.

Probably every one of you in this auditorium if you are anywhere near as old as I am know what a blood covenant is. You used to make these blood covenants with your best friends in which you would cut your own hand and mingle your blood and I have forgotten exactly what you would do besides mingling your blood but you would mingle your blood in token of the fact that you would be faithful to some particular agreement to death. It was the way of expressing total commitment to a covenantal agreement.

Well that is what we have here. We have the animals, it was the custom then for those who were parts of this covenant the two parties to pass down between the pieces of the animals. This ancient testimony or this ancient custom I should say has a testimony to it that is a very interesting example in ancient history.

Immediately after the death of Alexander the Great when troubles arose over how his empire would be divided up the horse guards and the rest of the cavalry under Perdikkas got into a disagreement with Maliga and the infantry. And the result was that this disagreement between them became so great that it appeared as if the two parts of the army would go to war with themselves. But they had an ancient summit conference and as a result of this ancient summit conference they determined that they would settle their

particular agreement and they would go through a ceremony in order to symbolize it.

And so they obtained a dog. Sorry those of you who love canine animals. They took the dog and they cut the dog in half.

And they put one half of the dog over here and another half of the dog over here and then the infantry and the cavalry and the horse guards passed down between the pieces of the animals in token of their agreement. Now almost all of these agreements were reciprocal agreements. That is they were agreements in which both parties had responsibilities.

That was a very common kind of covenant and incidentally in the Bible we do have some covenants like that. The Mosaic covenant was a conditional covenant. There were responsibilities that God says are his responsibilities and certain responsibilities that were supposed to be man's responsibilities which he immediately of course failed in.

But nevertheless there are conditional covenants. Jonathan made a covenant with David and so on. There are conditional covenants in the Bible.

But now in the light of that let's just think about this covenant for a moment. Abram now it's dark and suddenly in this experience that he had that was something like a nightmare. He's been waiting for something to happen for hours.

Suddenly in the midst of the darkness he looks and there is a smoking fire pot. Something very familiar to the Easterners because that was something that they cooked with. And then the smoking fire pot was moving and out of the smoking fire pot there came a flaming torch all suggestive of the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire by which the Lord God directed Israel through the wilderness.

It was a symbolic picture of the presence of God. And so it was God's way of saying to Abram this represents what I do. And so when Abram looks and he sees the smoking oven and the flaming torch passing through the pieces.

In other words as those animals were laid out in sacrificial form here that which is symbolical of the presence of God moves down slowly between those pieces. Now this is the characteristic thing that is this is uncharacteristic thing that is important about this unconditional covenant. Abraham was not invited to follow that fire pot and the flaming torch.

In fact Abram stands off in vision as an astonished spectator at what God and God alone is doing. You see he is speaking about an unconditional covenant. A unilateral covenant in which God promises to do certain things and these things will be done.

Now someone may immediately say oh well Abram must have had some responsibilities. Didn't he have the responsibility of faith? Wasn't faith a condition? Well we know from the teaching of the Bible that it is those who believe who are the sons of Abraham. Those who are Abram's seed of which we are a part are believing seed.

That's true. But you see the responsibility that they have is something the responsibility of faith which they have is something that God has taken upon himself also. In other words he is determined to fulfill his covenant and he will fulfill it and therefore he will fulfill the human responsibility of faith for that too will be given to us as a gift.

That's why salvation the Bible says is of the Lord. The whole thing is of the Lord. It is guaranteed by him.

For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. This whole salvation by grace through faith is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God.

The whole bit is the gift of God inclusive of the faith. It is not of works lest any man should boast and so you won't get to heaven and say Christ did it all but I believed and I have a little bit of merit for that and I believed out of my free will. No you won't be saying anything like that in heaven.

If you were the angels would throw you over the walls but when you get there you'll be sound in your theology and so you'll be ascribing grace and salvation to the Lord God alone. Now you may have a little persecution when you're down here but all they who would live godly shall expect to suffer some persecution but praise the Lord Arminians who get to heaven won't be Arminians there. Now anyway you see the point.

The point is that this is an unconditional unilateral covenant guaranteed by the Lord. Now when we read through the rest of the Old Testament and into the New Testament we find that they still anticipate that this Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled. The Virgin Mary in the first chapter of Luke sings of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Peter preaching in Acts chapter three sings also of the certainty of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises and so on through the New Testament. They regard that covenant as still in force and to be fulfilled. It is a promise that God has never repealed since the day that he made it to Abraham and it has never been perfectly fulfilled in history.

It still remains to be fulfilled. The land is to be given as a permanent possession for them to dwell in. And even those statements in the Old Testament which suggest a kind of partial fulfillment when looked at carefully will be seen to be not permanent nor complete nor fulfilled in the same sense in which Abrams is told of it being here as a place for Israel to dwell in.

What a magnificent thing this is. For you see the New Covenant is the same kind of covenant. When the Lord Jesus Christ consummated the New Covenant and went through the first Lord's Supper, took the bread and said, and wine and said, and the Lord said, and said, this is the New Covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins, he was speaking of an unconditional covenant in which all who are in him, in the mind of God shall ultimately enter into their blessings.

Well our time is up. I must close by saying simply this. Remember that our blessings rest upon the same covenant with its expansions.

And since that is so, notice the extent of the blessings that are now ours. We have the forgiveness of sins. We have a king, a messianic king who has come and is coming again.

We have the communion of the saints. In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. All the great communion of all the saints of God.

What a tremendous blessing that is. And we have justification. That is we have a standing before God which enables us to have the sense of assurance that we are secure because we rest in Christ.

If you are here this morning and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are under divine condemnation. You not only have inherited your guilt from Adam, but you have proven your lost condition by your disobedience to the law of God. You have not kept the law of God.

You have not pleased him by your life. You are guilty. The requirements are that you present God with a one hundred percent righteousness.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and thy neighbor as thyself. Have you done that? Have you done it from the time you drew your first breath to the time that you shall draw your last? No, we have broken God's law and therefore we are guilty. But Jesus Christ has come and has offered the atoning sacrifice in which forgiveness of sins is offered.

And through the imputation of the righteousness of God which comes to us through faith we may stand before God with a righteousness that is acceptable to him. Remember what I said last Sunday, the righteousness of God is that righteousness which God's righteousness requires him to require. And it's that that we have when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a tremendous thing it is to know that we have been justified freely by his grace. Thomas Watson said, God does not justify us because we are worthy, but by justifying us makes us worthy, for we stand in Christ. Do you have him? Is your trust in him who offered the sacrifice by which you may have a righteousness that avails? And what glorious security this covenant affords.

The fulfillment is not dependent upon our wavering, failing faith but upon his unfailing faithful grasp of us. He who foreknew us foreordained us. He has called us and justified us and he shall glorify us.

It is so certain, Paul puts it in the past tense in Romans chapter 8 verse 30. And then as if awed by the blessing of God and the certainty of our blessing he says, what then shall we say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us? Abram must have said that. If God be for us who can be against us? Lord God, if Yahweh, if you are with me, who can be against me? Well the story of the Bible is that through Jesus Christ he is with the saints.

No one can be against us. Come to Christ. Put your trust in him.

Believe in him. By the grace of God if you have been shown your sin, the Savior has offered the sacrifice for sinners. Plead the sacrifice.

Plead his merits. You have none. Come to him.

Receive the gift of everlasting life. Shall we stand for the benediction? We are so grateful to thee Lord for the answer that thou didst give to Abram. Abram who out of weak and perhaps to some extent of failing faith received this magnificent expression of a sovereign faithful God.

How mighty thou art. How loving and gracious thou art. We praise thee for the accomplishment of the work of salvation.

And now O God, save the saints. Through the word of God bring them to Christ. If there are some here in this audience elect in ages past who have not yet come O move in their hearts.

Cause them to see their sin and cause them to see the blood that was shed as the sufficient atonement. Bring them to repentance and faith and trust in Christ. May if it please thee Lord they join the company of

the saints today and rejoice as they make their way toward the presence of God.

Go with us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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