

Sermon Title: **“One in Christ Jesus” or “Belonging to the Promise”**

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Scripture Reference: **Galatians 3:23-29**

Thesis: **Theme: Paul taught the Galatians that we are all one in Jesus;**

Purpose: **We will discover that we are to be united in Jesus not divided.**

Key Word: **“Unity In Christ”**

Key Points: #1 **The Promise Made**
 #2 **The Promise Fulfilled**
 #3 **The Promise Unites**

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **Galatians 3:23-29**

A) The Setting:

1) **I titled this message, “One in Christ Jesus”**

(a) But perhaps a better title would be **“Belonging to the Promise”**

(b) Because we are going to be looking at how God’s promise unites us in Jesus.

2) **In this season of political fervor I want to ask you a question . . .**

(a) **Does anyone here believe with certainty that any of the candidates for president will keep their campaign promises?**

(i) Some of them?

(ii) Any of them?

(iii) Most of them?

(b) **From Donald Trumps’ promise to build a wall and make Mexico pay for it...**

(i) Or Bernie Sanders’ promise to have Medicare for All...

(ii) Or Hillary Clinton’s promises to not promise anything she can’t deliver; the problem being is that her promises are rather vague and hard to track...

(iii) Although she did promise to let you know who wears the pantsuits in her administration.

(c) **What I am saying is that it is hard to trust that any of the campaign promises will be kept by any of the candidates.**

3) **We have all experienced times when we have been promised something that was not delivered.**

(a) And I would be willing to say that we have all made promises that we were unable to keep regardless of our good intentions.

(b) I read that the difference between in-laws and outlaws is that outlaws don’t promise to pay it back.

(c) But we are going to see this morning that there is only one who we can trust to always be a keeper of promises and that is God.

4) **So we have already seen that Paul is establishing his authority to speak as an Apostle.**

(a) How the Judaizers were pretending to be Christians; but promoting a perverted gospel that you still had to keep the laws of God to earn your trip to heaven.

(b) How Paul has established that it is our faith alone that secures our place in eternity.

5) **Paul pointed out that the law has no power to save; only condemn; but through our faith in Jesus we are restored to a right relationship with God.**

(a) Paul continues his argument based on God’s promise.

(b) We will discover this morning that it is through this promise that we are united in Christ.

6) **So, that brings us to our scripture reading for today in Galatians 3:23-29.**

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

- 1) In **Galatians 3:6** Paul uses an illustration of Abraham's faith making him righteous, which if you remember when you see the word righteous it means right before or with God.
- 2) **This is a quote from Genesis 15:6 concerning Abraham as J. Vernon McGee¹ wrote in his commentary of this section;**
 - (a) The illustration comes from the early part of the life of Abraham, his life of faith.
 - (b) Abraham is the great illustration of justification by faith...
 - (c) It cannot be said that Abraham was justified by the Law because the Mosaic Law was not given until 400 years after Abraham.
- 3) **Abraham was having a heart to heart talk with God asking about his son that God promised.**
 - (a) God took Abraham out under the stars and told him to count them if he could.
 - (b) I am told that on a clear night in that part of the world you can see more than 5000 with the naked eye.
 - (c) With a telescope you can see thousands more and we now know that most of those stars are galaxies, clumps of millions of stars impossible to count.
- 4) **What God was saying is that Abraham's descendants would be uncountable.**
 - (a) Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.
 - (b) **Galatians 3:7** says, "*so you see, those who believe (as Abraham did) are the descendants of Abraham.*" (NRSV)
- 5) **God made these promises to Abraham before the Law was given.**
 - (a) God did not make a covenant with Abraham because of his good works; but out of his faith.
 - (b) Again, from J. Vernon McGee², "*God said to Abraham, I will do this for you if you believe Me,*" and Abraham said, "*I believe You.*"
- 6) All of this was part of the promise God made to Abraham and his descendants.

TS: However, in order for us to fully understand what Paul is teaching here we need to understand what the promise is all about; so, let's start with . . .

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **The Promise Made**

- 1) **While Genesis chapter 15 is about the ratifying of God's covenant agreement with Abraham; the original promise is given in Genesis 12:1-3.**
- 2) Let's take a couple minutes and go back to look at this since it is so important to our understanding of today's passage.
- 3) **Genesis 12:1-3**, "*The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you."
²"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*
- 4) **What God was saying to Abraham here was that if you will believe what I am telling you, to leave your land and your family behind; God would take him to a new land.**
 - (a) **From this action God promised to bless Abraham in 3 ways:**
 - (i) First, God will make Abraham and his descendants into a great nation.
 - (ii) Second, God would make the name of Abraham great.
 - (iii) Third, through Abraham God would bless ALL peoples on the earth.
 - (b) **This promise only depended on Abraham's faith.**
 - (i) A faith deep enough to act on by doing as God asked.
 - (ii) This is all that God requires of any of us is that we are willing to place our faith in HIM and be willing to act on that FAITH.

TS: This leads us to . . .

B) Key Point #2: **The Promise Fulfilled**

- 1) **Galatians 3:16** is a reference to **Genesis 22:18**, "*In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.*"
 - (a) This occurred after Abraham had shown that he was willing to have enough faith;
 - (b) That if God wanted him to sacrifice his son of the promise; he showed he was willing to obey.
 - (c) Not sure I could do that to be honest.
- 2) **But following this episode; God restated the promise to Abraham "In your seed" to the promised blessing for all nations of the earth.**
 - (a) This meant that this promise wasn't just for Abraham;
 - (b) But it was for all who would believe by faith just as Abraham did in God's promise.
- 3) **Paul points out to the Galatians that this is a specific seed not seeds;**
 - (a) meaning that God is not talking about all of Abraham's descendants;
 - (b) but to a specific descendant namely . . . Jesus, the Messiah.
- 4) **Jesus was the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham to bless ALL the NATIONS of the World.**
 - (a) In Jesus the whole world has the potential to receive the promise through their faith.
 - (b) And therefore also to receive the blessings promised.
- 5) **Everything that God promised was fulfilled in Jesus;**
 - (a) His birth, death, resurrection, justification, sanctification, and making us right with God
 - (b) So that we would have the opportunity of spending eternity with Him.
- 6) **How ironic that God who tested Abraham with the test of sacrificing his one and only son of Promise**
 - (a) Would later substitute Jesus (God's one and only Son)
 - (b) As that sacrifice to pay the penalties for the sins of all the world.
- 7) Jesus fulfilled the promise God made to Abraham.

TS: **This leads us to the results that . . .**

C) Key Point #3: **The Promise Unites**

- 1) **Paul is telling the Galatian churches that if they believe as Abraham did, then they too are considered to be part of Abraham's descendants.**
 - (a) He is not talking to the physical descendants of Abraham.
 - (b) But to those adopted into the family of God by their faith in Jesus.
 - (c) Those coming to be reconciled with God in the same way Abraham came to be reconciled; his faith.
- 2) **You see that when we put our faith in Jesus we ALL become the children of God.**
 - (a) God unites us all in Jesus.
 - (b) We are all equal brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.
 - (c) When God looks down He does not see classes or races of people;
 - (d) God sees us all as equal members of the family.
- 3) **I love both of my children and because they are different I may express that love in different ways; but they are both equally loved.**
 - (a) It doesn't matter that one is a girl and the other a boy;
 - (b) They are united as my children, equals in my family.
- 4) **When God looks at those who have come to the family of God through Jesus**
 - (a) He doesn't see slaves, or Greeks, Chinese, or Africans, or Americans, or males, or females, or executives, or custodians.
 - (b) God only sees His children united in the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham.

- 5) **Now there is a theology out there that believes that we are all to unite in our expressions of faith into one universal church.**
 - (a) They believe that when the true church of God unites it will usher in the Kingdom of God.
 - (b) The problem with this theology is that it is based on our efforts to reach God.
 - (c) But the promise that was given to Abraham is not based on our effort to reach God;
 - (d) No, it is based on God's effort to reach us.
- 6) **When God made his covenant agreement with Abraham in Genesis chapter 15, God used an Old Testament practice of sacrificing an animal and splitting it into halves.**
 - (a) Then the two parties making an agreement would pass between the 2 halves as a way of ratifying the agreement.
 - (b) But when Abraham had finished preparing the sacrifice God caused Abraham to go into a deep sleep and in His dream God caused a smoking pot and flaming torch to pass between the halves.
 - (c) The meaning was that this was a covenant that was solely dependant on God to keep.

TS: **So, What should we take away from this for us today?**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

A) **One more promise I want to share with you.**

- 1) That promise is that no matter who the president is . . .
- 2) God is still God and in charge of this old world.

B) **Next, our faith needs to be a faith that acts on our belief.**

- 1) If there are no changes in your behaviors as a result of your belief you only have a belief about Jesus; even Satan has that.
- 2) But when you have a belief in Jesus; then God's Spirit comes to live in you and begins the process of regeneration.
- 3) When something is regenerated it is spiritually renewed; transformed by God's Holy Spirit making us into the likeness of Jesus.
- 4) **I don't know about you;**
 - (a) But I know that God is not finished with me yet;
 - (b) There is still a lot of things that God can improve in my character.
 - (c) But at least I can say this; I can see progress.
- 5) **That is the way it is with most of us;**
 - (a) It is more about the journey than the arrival.
 - (b) It is more about learning to walk with Jesus day by day and moment by moment than about achieving some superior level.

C) **Let me close with this illustration³:**

- 1) 24 year old Danny Simpson was sentenced to 6 years in jail for robbing a bank.
 - (a) Danny got 6 years in the prison for stealing \$6,000.
 - (b) But the gun he used in the robbery ended up in a museum.
- 2) **The .45 caliber Colt semi-automatic turned out to be an antique made in 1918 by the Ross Rifle Company.**
 - (a) His pistol was worth up to \$100,000 on the collectors market.
 - (b) If Danny Simpson had known what he had in his hands, he would not have ended up in jail.
- 3) **Many Christians live like this.**
 - (a) They spend their lives searching for God's power and presence, not realizing it's already in their hands.
 - (b) If we have given our lives over to Jesus; then God's power and presence is in us and we can see and feel the difference.
 - (c) God says if you seek me with all your heart; you will find me.

D) Just remember that the promise is not dependant on what we do; but on what Jesus has already done.

- 1) This is what we celebrate with Communion; this is what Jesus meant when He said that He is the new covenant.
- 2) The old covenant was based on the law and the new covenant is based on Jesus; God's promised fulfilled.
- 3) This work was accomplished by Jesus and all we have to do is put our faith in Him.
- 4) When we do put our faith in Jesus this makes us one in Christ.

E) Have you made your decision for Jesus?

- 1) Have you put your faith in what He has done for you?
- 2) **If so, then Jesus has made you right with God and begun the process of making you into a new creation.**
- 3) Maybe you want to go deeper with Christ, then ask Jesus to be real in your heart and to help you grow in Christ.
- 4) **If you haven't made a commitment to put your faith in Jesus, then this is your opportunity.**
 - (a) If you feel God's Spirit prompting you; then act on it before it is too late.
 - (b) We never know when you will have this opportunity again.

IV) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**

V) Bibliography

¹ Thru the Bible, J. Vernon McGee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, Volume V, Pg. 165

² Thru the Bible, J. Vernon McGee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, Volume V, Pg. 167

³ Wayne Field, sermoncentral.com September 2004