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Sermon Notes

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## **The Guarantee of Grace: Heirs of the World**

### **Romans 4:13-17**

#### I. Is Anything Guaranteed?

#### II. Overview of Romans 4: Abraham Justified by Faith

A. Abraham not justified by works: 4:1-5

**vs. 5** *“However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.”*

1. Abraham did NOT work (no works to offer)
2. Abraham was wicked (idol worshipper from Ur of the Chaldees)
3. Abraham merely trusted God’s promise

B. David’s testimony—free forgiveness of sins certainly not by works, 4:6-8

C. Abraham not justified by circumcision: 4:9-12

1. Justification occurred in Genesis 15
2. Circumcision occurred in Genesis 17, many years later
3. Circumcision merely sign and seal, not source of justification

D. Promise to Abraham not by works of Law: 4:13-17

1. Law had nothing to do with promise (vs. 12)
  - Promise merely a free gift from God
  - Nothing Abraham had earned at all!!
2. Promise comes through righteousness of faith
3. Law destroys faith AND promise

- Law brings wrath not promise
- Law reveals transgression

4. Promise comes by faith... why?

- So that it may be by grace... why?
- So that it may be guaranteed to ALL Abraham's offspring
- So that God may be glorified

E. How Abraham's Faith Glorified God: 4:18-22

F. Summary: Abraham is a model for US too! 4:23-25

### III. What is the Promise?

#### A. What is a promise

1. Verbal covenant
2. Statement about the future... usually something GOOD in the future
3. Like a check: only as good as the account that stands behind it
  - Worth of a promise only as good as the character of the one who makes it
  - Human promises diluted / nullified by wickedness of hearts... we may have lied
  - Human promises also diluted by our changefulness... we may change our minds
  - Human promises also diluted by our weakness... we may not be able to bring it about through our own frailty or mortality
4. Thus: God's faithfulness to His promises is reflection of His glorious character... in direct contrast to OUR defiled character

***Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?***

- God never lies
- God never changes His character or His mind... no new information comes to Him
- God has absolute power to bring about everything that He has promised

5. Thus: trust in God's promises glorifies Him

B. God's Promise to Abraham: Genesis 15... "So shall your offspring be!!"

**Genesis 15:1-7** *After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." <sup>2</sup> But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." <sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." <sup>5</sup> He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." <sup>6</sup> Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. <sup>7</sup> He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."*

Two aspects to the promise:

1. Many descendants: "So shall your offspring be..."
  - a. as numerous as the stars... more than could be counted
  - b. extended promise... "Father of many nations"

**Genesis 17:3-5** *God said to him, <sup>4</sup> "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. <sup>5</sup> No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you."*

Paul picks up on this in vs. 17 of Romans 4:

**vs. 17** *"As it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations.'"*

2. Possession of the land: Canaan, where he was dwelling in a tent... "PROMISED LAND"

C. The Greater Promise: "Heir of the World"

**vs. 13** *"It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be 'heir of the world,' but through the righteousness that comes by faith."*

1. Abraham an example in Romans 4
2. Abraham's promise a pattern and a shadow

- a. Old Testament acted out in shadow form realities of New Testament
  - b. Old Testament shadows less than New Testament realities
  - c. Old Testament promises less than New Testament promises
3. Greater promises in the New Covenant
- a. Abraham's physical seed represent Abraham's spiritual seed... nations upon nations of people who will believe and have eternal life
  - b. Abraham's inheritance, the Promised Land, represents a permanent dwelling in the New Heaven and the New Earth

### ***Hebrews 11:9-16***

By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. <sup>11</sup> By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. <sup>12</sup> And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. <sup>13</sup> **All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.** <sup>14</sup> People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> Instead, **they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one.** Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

D. "Heirs of the world"

- 1. Inheritance of immeasurable wealth
- 2. Promise stated and restated

***Matthew 5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."***

***1 Corinthians 3:21-23 So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, <sup>22</sup> whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future--all are yours, <sup>23</sup> and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.***

- 3. Not just the present world, either!
  - a. present world bound over to futility (Romans 8:18-22)
  - b. someday, God will make everything new... our PROMISED LAND!!!

**2 Peter 3: 13** *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

5. AMAZING PROMISE made to ALL Abraham's offspring

Summary: What is the promise? To Abraham, a real though symbolic promise... numerous offspring, a promised land in Canaan; through Abraham to all believers, an eternal inheritance on a new earth... staggering promises made by an infinitely powerful and generous God!

#### IV. How is the Promise Obtained?

A. Negatively: NOT by Law

**vs. 13** *"It was **NOT** through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise..."*

1. "Law" here is command, obedience, good works
2. These are precisely what Paul is ruling out in Romans 4
3. Law of Moses came 430 years later
4. Promise simply given by God apart from Abraham's actions

B. Positively: BUT by Faith

**vs. 13** *"... but through the righteousness that comes by faith."*

1. What's at stake? Becoming an "heir of the world"
2. That world according to Peter is "the home of righteousness"

**2 Peter 3:13** *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

3. Law does NOT produce the righteousness required to live there!
4. Law also does NOT honor the grace of the promise-giver
5. Abraham simply looked up at the stars, considered the character of the promise-giver, and believed!! SIMPLE FAITH... no achievements of law

#### V. Why is the Promise Obtained This Way?

A. The Nature of Law: NO GLORY FOR GOD, NO SECURITY FOR YOU!!!!

1. Law is no platform to obtain righteousness

2. Law invalidates faith

**vs. 14** *“For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless.”*

a. Law looks inwardly at one’s own capabilities and performances

- “Can I do it?”
- “I WILL obey... I will accomplish this!”
- “I DID IT!!! Now give me my inheritance!”
- Focus is totally on self

b. Faith looks upward to God... not inward to self

- “Can God do this?”
- “God CAN do this... He will accomplish this FOR ME!!!”
- “God DID IT!!!... God gave me my eternal inheritance!”
- Focus is totally on God

c. If God made law-keepers heirs, what would we need faith for?

d. What would we need Christ for?

***Galatians 5:2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.***

3. Therefore, law nullifies promise

- a. if promise conditioned on law-keeping, the promise is worthless
- b. if condition cannot be met, the promise is worthless

**Illus.:** Bill’s story about Ed McMahon drawing, \$1 million guarantee

- c. NONE of us can keep the law

Martyn Lloyd-Jones: "Proof" that none of us can keep the Law: Adam and Eve, perfect in their hearts & characters, no history of sin, no sin nature... one simple command "Do not eat from that tree..." YET THEY FAILED AT ONE TEMPTATION... we have indwelling sin nature, a world of sinners around us, a long history of sin behind us, and many commands to obey... if inheritance depends on law-keeping, the promise is worthless

d. law cannot bring inheritance... only WRATH

**vs. 15** *"... because law brings wrath, and where there is no law, there is no transgression."*

Commandments are holy and good, but our sin nature perverts all commands and uses them as an opportunity to rebel

No inheritance can possibly come from law-keeping

4. Law-keeping also nullifies GRACE

- a. law-keeping can be done yourself
- b. at the end, you get what you've earned... it's a wage not a gift
- c. GRACE IS GONE
- d. Again... you have no need for Christ

**Galatians 2:21** *"I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the Law, Christ died for nothing."*

B. The Nature of Grace: GLORY FOR GOD, SECURITY FOR YOU!!!

1. The Grace-Faith connection

**vs. 16** *"Therefore, the promise comes by faith so that it may be by grace..."*

- a. grace is God's sovereign decision to be generous to sinners despite what they deserve
- b. grace does not depend on ANYTHING God sees in us... like Abraham we too are "wicked"
- c. faith is simply the pipeline which looks away from self up to a gracious God and trusts Him to give what He's promised

d. faith EXALTS grace... faith believes that God will fulfill His promise

2. The Grace-Faith-Guarantee connection

**vs. 16** *“Therefore, the promise comes by faith so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring...”*

- a. LEAP FOR JOY at the word “guarantee...”
- b. NOTHING can make God’s promise invalid
- c. grace means guarantee... since it depends upon God and not you
- d. faith is part of the guarantee, so that the faith pipeline will not fail either

God’s incredible love is strong and want to give total assurance to you of the guarantee that you will inherit the world... only faith-grace guarantees that you will not perish in the end

3. God’s labors to give us confidence: Eternal salvation is guaranteed!!

**John 6:39-40** *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. <sup>40</sup> For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."*

**John 10:27-30** *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."*

**Romans 5:9-10** *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

4. Therefore, our FAITH will NEVER fail!

- a. faith required step by step

**Romans 1:17** *“For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, from faith to faith, just as it is written, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”*



- b. if faith is YOUR OWN WORK ALONE, how do you know you won't give up?
- c. faith is a gift from God, part of the grace gift!!

***Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ' not by works, so that no one can boast.***

- d. Therefore, God will sustain your faith throughout your life

Your faith in Christ was given to you as a gift, and though it may be tested and may weaken, it will never fail for God will sustain it until He takes you home to heaven!

The faith-grace-guarantee connection is a strong chain which cannot break and which will take anyone who trusts in Christ all the way to heaven

## VI. The Central Issue: The Glory of God

The MAIN reason God does it this way is that this alone gives greatest glory to God

- A. The Magnitude of the Promise Glorifies God
- B. The Obstacles to the Promise Glorify God
- C. Faith Glorifies God
- D. The Guarantee Glorifies God
- E. But Confidence in Law Does NOT Glorify God

We will develop all of these more fully next time

## VII. Summary and Application

### A. Summary

- Abraham received an incredible promise from God
- Two aspects to this promise: many offspring, possession of the land
- Abraham received promise simply by faith in God... NOT BY LAW
- Paul calls Abraham "heir of the world"... a promise of the new earth, the home of righteousness

- Receiving promise by simple faith does two things: 1) gives glory to God as the promise-giver and promise-keeper; 2) guarantees the promise for the believer
- GOD GETS THE GLORY, WE GET THE GUARANTEE
- In the same way God has promised us eternal life, and an eternal home in Christ
- We receive it by simple faith, not by works of righteousness

## B. Application

1. Praise God for the magnitude of the promise!
  - All sins forgiven
  - Power over death through Christ's resurrection
  - Eternal friendship with God
  - A rich inheritance: "heir of the world"
  - Perfect unity with other members of this family of faith
2. Trust God that He is faithful to fulfill His promise
  - We break promises all the time
  - God never lies, never changes, never breaks His promises
3. Understand the grace-faith-guarantee connection
  - There was nothing in you that prompted God to give such an amazing promise
  - There was nothing in you which purchased this promise for you through Christ's blood
  - There was nothing in you which caused God to give you the faith to believe
  - It's all by grace alone! Therefore, it's totally guaranteed... if you are justified by faith in Christ, you will inherit all this promise!
4. Cease striving for earthly things
  - You will inherit the world... "All things are yours"
  - Why strive now for a better slice of a world that is temporary

- Spend yourselves—every moment, every dollar, every burst of energy—to please God by advancing His Kingdom