

Romans
Message Four
The Gospel Which Had Been Promised
Rom 1:1-7

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)
3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David
according to the flesh;
4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the
resurrection from the dead:
5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all
nations, for his name:
6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:
7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from
God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. KJV

Introduction:

We continue this morning with Paul's introduction of himself to the Christians at Rome. I remind you that he knew some of them and many of them he did not. There were relatives of Paul in the group of believers as well as people he had encountered on his journeys. The letter was written from Corinth, it is believed, around 58 A.D. The book is a masterful explanation of Christianity from the most basic level to advanced maturity in the faith. It has been one of the most valuable books to the Christian Church that has ever been written.

We have spent the first three messages looking at v.1 and the issues contained in it. Today we want to move to v.2 and look at the issue of 'promise.'

The word 'promise' is an interesting word and one that most all of us learned very early in life. People always think it is funny to tell children things that are not so to get a reaction from them but kids learn from the process that one cannot always trust what people tell us (which, by the way, is a terrible thing for a child to learn concerning people he/she should be able to trust), so we learn to add things to conversations in hopes of making sure that doubtful things are actually true. "Promise?" Is one question we learn to ask. The more we have been lied to (Did I say that? I meant 'teased') the more frequently we may ask for assurance of the truthfulness of what we are hearing.

And, we learned to expect that things promised to us would actually happen; birthday presents, vacation trips, and special events. If the thing promised to us was something we actually wanted and the promise was made by someone we trusted our anticipation levels would be very high and the promise was often on our minds.

Later in life we learn that in almost every situation in which we are going to be doing something

important people will ask for our promise. If we apply for a job the employer wants us to promise that certain things are true and that we will abide by the rules of the company. If we apply for a diver's license, there is an expectation that we will provide truthful information and will keep the laws that pertain to vehicle operation. If we join the military they insist that we make promises concerning faithfulness to our country and to the orders of our superiors. On and on we could go; college applications, loan applications, visas, and even (or so it once was) church membership. Promises affirm that we are truthful and that we keep our commitments.

So, it is interesting here that the Gospel is described as being related to a promise. It is beyond question, I hope, in the minds of everyone who is hearing me that if God promises a thing it is as certain as if it had already happened.

Paul will say this later in the letter.

Rom 11:29 ...for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. NASU

There is little that is more unimaginable to the person who knows God than the possibility that God would make a promise and then fail to keep it. A thing promised by God is completely sure.

Paul affirmed here that the ancient prophets of Israel had delivered the promise of God, and they did. But he affirmed in other places that the promise was made long before the prophets appeared.

Gal 3:16

16 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. KJV

So, we know that there was an outstanding promise to Abraham and to Christ in the days of Abraham, long before the prophets of Israel came on the scene and began to write.

But in another place Paul placed an even earlier date on God's promise in the introduction to his letter to Titus.

Titus 1:1-3

- 1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;
- 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;
- 3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; KJV

Here he said that the promise of eternal life (not to Himself nor to the angels, certainly not to Satan or the demons, but necessarily to those who are included in the Work of Christ, was made before even this world was created.

This is an ancient promise! And it existed in the mind of God toward His people in the antiquities of eternity past. Whatever was promised there was certain to never fail. And, since the only discussions of eternal life have always been linked to the Work of Jesus Christ, we know that this was the same promise that was revealed to Abraham.

But before we get to him, let us look at something else. This same promise was mentioned to the serpent and to Eve after the Fall concerning one of her descendants. Even at this early date the 'seed' of Eve was not mentioned as being a seed of Adam.

Gen 3:14-15

- 14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:
- 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. KJV

This 'seed' is mentioned as the enemy of Satan, the One Who would ultimately crush him in defeat and also is mentioned as a single entity... "thou shalt bruise *his* heel." Paul teaches us in his discussion of the seed of Abraham to pay close attention to such details as they relate to this matter of God's Promise. Who would be the seed of a woman and not a man? Only one born to a virgin by the power of God. Who would crush the head of the serpent? No one who lived before the Flood, not Abraham, not Moses, and surely not David nor Solomon. Then Israel was in serious decline until it finally fell forever under the Romans near the end of the First Century. But, before the final destruction of Jerusalem, One came Who is identified as the fulfillment of that Promise of Eternal Life to all who would believe on Him.

Then, of course, there was that confirmation of the Promise to Abraham.

Gen 17:1-7

- 1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.
- 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.
- 3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,
- 4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.
- 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.
- 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.
- 7 And 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. KJV

Of course, that same promise was repeated to Isaac and then to Jacob. But then, many years later, it would be expressed to David in a somewhat different format but with the same intent and

the same commitment of God behind it. We find that promise referenced in God's words to Solomon in answer to his great prayer at the dedication of the temple.

2 Chron 7:17-18

- 17 And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments;
- 18 Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel.
KJV

And it seemed by the time we come to the New Testament era, that this part of the promise must surely have been forgotten or else revoked because of the behavior the descendants of David and Solomon. But we learn before the New Testament ends that this promise, too, is fulfilled in Jesus.

Rev 22:16 “...I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” KJV

Although various elements of the promise of God are revealed at different moments and seemingly concerning different matters they all find fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

But then we come to the promises to which Paul was actually referring in our text.

“Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures”

There are promises made in the OT which cannot be understood in any other way with integrity than as prophecies of Christ Himself.

Isa 40:3-5

- 3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
- 4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:
- 5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. KJV

John, the Precursor of Christ, was even prophesied. He said himself that he was “the voice of one crying in the wilderness.”

Isa 42:1-7

- 1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.
- 2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.
- 3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

- 4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.
- 5 Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:
- 6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;
- 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. KJV

Isa 49:1-6

- 1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.
- 2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;
- 3 And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.
- 4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.
- 5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.
- 6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. KJV

And then there is that wonderful passage that begins at 52:13 and goes through 53:12 describing exactly the sufferings of Christ and the incredible benefit of them for His people.

Isa 52:13-53:12

- 13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.
- 14 **As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:**
- 15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

Isaiah 53

- 1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?
- 2 **For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.**
- 3 **He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.**

- 4 **Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.**
- 5 **But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.**
- 6 **All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.**
- 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.
- 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.
- 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.
- 10 **Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.**
- 11 **He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.**
- 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. KJV

First of all, we must ask ourselves, “Who, in all of time and space, fits these words but Jesus Christ?” And how perfectly does He fit them.

But notice some of the things that are said. (RE: marked passages)

This is the essence of the Promise. No eternal life can exist apart from the Absolute Satisfaction of the Justice of God that the sin had been judged to the Perfect Requirements of Divine Law. The soul that sinned has died and eternal death and yes has been raised again in the Person of the Son of God.

And these are only examples of what may be found in the OT. Remember this was the only Bible that Paul had to preach from and it was this Bible which had prophesied of Christ Who came and fulfilled it all.

His birthplace was prophesied, even the murder of the innocents as Herod tried to find Him and kill Him.

Mic 5:2

- 2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. KJV

Jer 31:15

15 Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Ra(c)hel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. KJV

Paul had been personally shown by the Lord that these and other prophecies of the Scriptures contained the Promise which God had made to Himself concerning the granting of eternal life to His people before the world began and which had been proclaimed by Moses as well as the prophets.

It is important to know this because the world would have us believe that 12 guys got together after the death of Jesus and just made this story up. Later, they say, the church persuaded the Roman government to take their side and enforce the Christian religion by the sword, stamping out all of the competition. This is why, they say, Christianity exists in our world.

But this is a lie. They are the ones fabricating a story. Christ had been promised by God to men and those men had written it down, then Jesus had come to fulfill not just the story, that was the smallest part, He came to make possible what God had promised, eternal life with Him, in Communion with Him while keeping spotlessly intact the Infinite Holiness of God.

We do ourselves and our children a great disservice, I think, in the way that we handle the OT. Our children grow up knowing the stories of the Bible: Creation, the Flood, the Deliverance of Israel from Egypt, Joshua and the Conquest of Canaan, David and the Giant, the Captivity and Deliverance, etc. But do they know the Gospel through the promises given to the fathers by the prophets?

Some might want to argue that this was really for the Jews and not for the Gentiles but why, then, pray tell, does Paul make so much of it to this church composed of many Gentiles and to the churches of Galatia that we almost exclusively Gentile? The Promise is important because it is a crucial part of the story of our salvation and we are only partially informed if we do not know it.

We do not pay any attention to the canvass and the background of a great painting, we just look at the finished product. But those who know and love art do notice how the thing was put together, the techniques and the materials used. They love art but we should love the Gospel, the great portrait of the Love and Mercy of God which was painted upon the backdrop of the words of the OT prophets. One cannot truly love the gospel without loving the scriptures that Paul used to preach it to the first Gentiles ever converted.

The OT lays the foundations for how and why God ever brought salvation to a Gentile and you, if I am not badly mistaken, are a Gentile. This is the story of how you have hope of an eternity beyond this life than is not misery and endless suffering.

The scriptures.... the Old Testament.... the words of the prophets... are Holy like God is Holy and they contain critical information how that you can be Holy and enjoy Communion with the Holy

God for ever and ever. Don't like Holy? Then there is no good news for you. All of the news is about how you will deal with the consequences of that choice eternally.

Truly the church at Rome as well as the rest of the world has been fortunate to have such a book with such a foundation as this.