

# Faith and the Mosaic Covenant

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[ 0 : 00 ] Last week we continued Galatians chapter 3. Despite having four main sections, the chapter! has a unifying theme. That theme is that God's covenant with Moses complements his covenant! with Abraham and both covenants find their fulfillment in Christ and the salvation that! Christ provides to people who are the same.

People who put their faith in him. Let's read tonight's text. We'll cover Galatians chapter 3 verses 15 through 22. In Galatians chapter 3, 15 through 22, Paul wrote, 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. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring.

It does not say, and to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one, and to your offspring, who is Christ. This is what I mean, the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise, but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. Why 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. Now an intermediary applies more than one, but God is one. Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not. For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

The main idea from tonight's text is this. The law exposes sin and demonstrates the need for justification by faith alone. Again, the law exposes sin and demonstrates the need for justification by faith alone. In the passage tonight, Paul anticipated the argument that the law replaced God's covenant with Abraham because the law came later. Paul shows that because of the law, justification by faith alone becomes the only answer for how to be right with God.

As we go through tonight's text, remember that the law and the Mosaic covenant are synonymous. So as we go through the passage tonight and break it into two sections, we'll use those terms interchangeably. The first section of tonight's passage covers verses 15 through 18. In that section, Paul recaps the Lord's promise. So the Lord's promise is your first set of blanks.

[ 3 : 06 ] That promise was the promise that God made to Abraham. Let's look at verses 15 through 18 again.

Paul said, This is what I mean. The law which came 430 years afterward does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise, but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

The key to understanding this section is knowing what Paul meant by the word translated as covenant covenant. The original word translated as covenant is a general term for a binding agreement.

It was often used in that day to refer to wills or testaments. And in some scripture passages, the word is best translated with that meaning. Some translations of the Bible in English, like the New Revised Standard Version, translate the Greek word as will in verse 15. And if you have the New American Standard, you will see a footnote that references will or testament as alternate translations. Paul is talking about an irrevocable covenant in his example. After an irrevocable covenant is made, nobody can annul or change it. What he's saying there is that if two imperfect humans can make irrevocable covenants, an irrevocable covenant made by a perfect and holy God is even more guaranteed.

Last week, we looked at some of the verses in Genesis 15 where God made that covenant with Abraham. Let's go back to Genesis 15 now and see how God demonstrated the genuineness and also the permanence of that covenant with Abraham. We're going to read quite a few verses. Let's

read Genesis 15, 7 through 21. Genesis 15, 7 through 21. These verses took place when Abraham still was known as Abram. In the first few verses, we have a dialogue between God and Abram and God is speaking first in Genesis 15, 7. So here are those verses. Starting with Genesis 15, 7, it says, And he said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess. But he said, O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it? He said to him, bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. And when the birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. [ 6 : 41 ] And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the Lord said to Abram, Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be servants there. And they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve. And afterward, they shall come out with great possessions.

As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace. You shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete. When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

So let's recap just a few highlights from these Genesis verses. God says in verse 7 that he brought Abram out to give Abram this land. He doesn't say that Abram had to earn it. He said he brought him out to give it to him. Then in verses 12 through 16, God tells Abram to know for certain what will happen to his descendants. In those same verses, God previews the Israelites' time in Egypt, also the exodus, and then their eventual return to the promised land. Verse 18 then is where God reiterated his covenant with Abram. God demonstrated his commitment to that covenant with the smoking fire pot and the flaming torch that's documented in verse 17. God passing through those animals while Abram was asleep is an important thing to note. Back in that day, both parties normally would walk between the slain animals whose blood would symbolically ratify the covenant. But in this case,

God alone walked through and that indicated that the covenant, although it involved promises to Abraham and his descendants, that covenant was made by God with God himself. So that covenant was unilateral and entirely unconditional. The only obligation associated with that covenant was on God.

[ 9 : 20 ] God's purpose in this Genesis passage is to show that God's covenant with Abraham is a certainty. It's a done deal that will never be changed. By this point, you might be wondering why we still are talking about the Abrahamic covenant when the lesson title says that this study will be about the Mosaic covenant. The answer goes back to what we said in the introduction. Paul anticipated that the Judaizers would try to say that the Mosaic covenant or the law was more important because that law came after God's covenant with Abraham. Before talking about the law in more detail, Paul needed to remind his readers about the permanence of God's covenant with Abraham. Paul argued that if a man's covenant, when ratified, cannot be set aside or have conditions added to it, how much less can a covenant that God makes with himself be annulled or modified? Even God's own covenant with Moses did not nullify or amend God's covenant with Abraham because God had made the former covenant permanent and unchangeable.

Going back to Galatians 3 now, Paul continues to talk about the covenant with Abraham. Look at verse 16. Galatians 3, 16 says, Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, and to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one, and to your offspring, who is Christ.

You'll notice that Paul includes a quote in Galatians 3, 16. That quotation comes from Genesis 22, 18.

And Genesis 22, 18 takes place after the angel stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac. So I'm going to read Genesis 22, 18.

Now to get the context of Genesis 22, 18. So these verses are Genesis 22, verses 10 through 18. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

[ 11 : 34 ] But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here I am. He said, Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him.

For now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked.

And behold, behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

So Abraham called the name of that place, the Lord will provide, as it is said to this day. On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided. And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord.

Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.

[ 12 : 41 ] And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.

Notice there at the end of verse 17 in Genesis 22, it says, And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies.

So you can see there that offspring is indeed singular in that case. In our Galatians text tonight, Paul adds detail to that promise by God when Paul tells us that the offspring referenced is Christ. That promise made to Abraham will be fulfilled through Christ rather than through Moses. And we know that Moses was the person who received the law. So that is another reason why the Lord's promise to Abraham is superior to the covenant with Moses.

Genesis 22, 18 may remind you of Genesis chapter 3, verse 15. And if it does, you're correct to make that connection and to tie those verses together.

[ 13 : 48 ] Genesis 3, 15 took place shortly after Adam and Eve first sinned. So here are Genesis 3, 14 and 15. Genesis 3, 15.

is the first summary of the gospel. It's the first time that God revealed that he would send a Messiah to deal with the problem of sin. In Galatians 3, 16, Paul builds on the promises that we just looked at in Genesis.

That promise, of course, was that the seed of the woman would destroy the serpent, Satan. And the seed of the woman is the promised Messiah. When God swore to Abraham to bless him and to make him a blessing to the world, God was promising to bring the seed, who we know as Christ, through the descendants of Abraham.

The only way a person can participate in the promised blessings to Abraham is to be a fellow heir with Christ through faith in Christ.

Whether before or after Christ came to earth, salvation always has been provided only through the perfect offering of Christ on the cross. Believers who lived before the cross and who never knew any specifics about Jesus were forgiven and made right with God in anticipation of Christ's sacrifice because of their faith.

[ 15 : 38 ] Believers who live after the cross are saved by looking back to it. When Christ shed his blood, it covered sins on both sides of the cross. The old covenant goes back to the cross.

The new covenant comes from that cross. God's promise was free and unconditional. We might say that there were no strings attached.

There were no works to do, no laws to obey, no merit to establish, and no conditions to fulfill. God simply told Abraham, I will give you a seed.

To your seed I will give the land, and in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed. God's promise was like a will freely given the inheritance to a future generation.

And like a human will, after it's gone through the probate process, this divine promise is unalterable. So that divine promise is still in force today.

[ 16 : 41 ] It has never been rescinded, and it never will be rescinded. So this brings us to Galatians 3.17. Paul wrote in Galatians 3.17, This is what I mean.

The law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. The time reference in the first part of verse 17 is an important detail that verifies the accuracy of God's word.

God gave his promise to Abraham 645 years before God gave the law to Moses. So why then does Paul mention 430 years here in verse 17?

Well, throughout history, God repeated the covenant with Abraham to Abraham's descendants. The last time God repeated the covenant, this time to Abraham's grandson Jacob, was 250 years after God made the covenant with Abraham.

So if you're doing the math, 645 years minus 215 years equals an elapsed time of 430 years, the same number we see here in Galatians.

[ 17 : 58 ] So let that detail sink in. The 430 years refers to the time elapsed between God's last statement of the Abrahamic covenant and his giving of the law to Moses.

The Lord repeated the promise to Abraham's son Isaac, and that was in Genesis 26-24, and then to Abraham's grandson Jacob in Genesis 28-15.

The law came 645 years after Abraham, but 215 years after the initial promise to Abraham, God repeated the covenant to Jacob.

And so the promise to Jacob was exactly 430 years prior to the Mosaic covenant. The remainder of verse 17 is crystal clear.

Paul says that the law does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God so as to make the promise void. We already have seen how God went to great lengths to prove that his covenant with Abraham is permanent.

[ 19 : 00 ] In verse 18, Paul reemphasizes the nature of the covenant with Abraham. He said, If the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise, but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

The emphasis in verse 18 is that God gave the promise to Abraham. The Greek word there emphasizes both that the promise to Abraham is a free gift or a gift of grace, and that it also has been given permanently.

And we can tell that by the tense of the word. God has not gone back on his promise. Every sinner who trusts in Christ crucified for salvation, apart from any merit or good works, receives the blessing of eternal life, and thus inherits the promise of God made to Abraham.

So let's also remember the first part of verse 18. Look at what Paul said there. If the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise.

If somebody could gain the inheritance by following the law, that inheritance no longer would be a gift of grace. In effect, God would have changed the terms of his interaction with people.

[ 20 : 21 ] And we've already seen how permanent God's covenant with Abraham is. God has never changed the terms. He promised that inheritance to Abraham and sealed that promise with an oath.

Abraham received the promise by faith. And by promise and oath, God guaranteed to Abraham that he would fulfill all he had said. Therefore, the promise and the means, which was faith, remain in effect.

When we read the Genesis passage earlier, we saw where it referenced the oath by God. The writer to the Hebrews also commented on God's oath.

Listen to Hebrews chapter 6, verses 13 through 18. Hebrews 6, 13 through 18 say, For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, Surely I will bless you and multiply you.

And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.

[ 21 : 36 ] So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise, the unchangeable character of his promise, he guaranteed it with an oath, so 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.

If the Abrahamic covenant came before the Mosaic covenant, and if the Abrahamic covenant is superior to the Mosaic covenant, why then did God give Moses the law?

As we move to the second section of our lesson, we will see that Paul anticipated that question. Paul also answered that question. We already have talked about the Lord's promise.

In verses 19 through 22, we see the law's purpose. So the law's purpose is your second set of blanks. As we read those verses again, you'll see that Paul started those verses with the very question we just asked.

Verse 19 starts with, Why then the law? Then he goes on to say, 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.

[ 23 : 03 ] Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not.

For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

So in verse 19, we've seen how Paul acknowledged the question that many of us probably have been thinking when he asked, Why then the law? And he answered that question with a brief, hard-hitting statement.

Then he elaborated on it a little more when he said the law was added because of transgressions. The purpose of the law was to demonstrate to humans our total sinfulness and our inability to please God by works.

That means we need mercy and grace. So the law was added to show the depth of our transgressions against God. It was given to drive humans desperate guilt and awareness of his need for the deliverer.

[ 24 : 16 ] And the impossible demands of the law were meant to compel men to recognize their violation of God's standards and seek God's grace through faith in God's Son. Unless men realize that they're living in violation of God's law and therefore stand under God's divine judgment, they will see no reason to be saved.

Grace is meaningless to a person who does not feel any inadequacy or sees no need of help. A person sees no purpose in being saved if he does not realize he's lost.

He sees no need for forgiveness by God if he does not know that he's offended God. He sees no need to seek God's mercy if he's unaware that he's under God's wrath.

Verse 19 says that the law was added because of transgressions until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made. We know from verse 18 that Abraham's promised offspring is Christ.

We've touched on this already, but the law did more than convict people of sin. The law also pointed people to the promised Messiah. God's people under the Mosaic Covenant needed a regular reminder that without grace, they were under God's judgment.

[ 25 : 39 ] They needed to be kept under restraint and they had to be taught to anticipate the coming of the Messiah. Verse 19 ends by reminding us how the people received the law.

Paul says that the law was put in place through angels by an intermediary. God gave the promise to Abraham directly, but he gave the law indirectly through the mediation of angels and Moses.

The reference to angels was a reminder of the overwhelming holiness of God revealed at Sinai.

God was the author and giver of the covenant of law and he was present with Moses on Mount Sinai when it was given.

But in a way that's not fully explained, the law was given by God to Moses through angels. Listen to the encounter on Sinai.

Here is Exodus 19, verses 18 through 24. So again, these verses are Exodus 19, 18 through 24.

Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire.

[ 26 : 54 ] The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him in thunder.

The Lord came down on Mount Sinai to the top of the mountain and the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain and Moses went up. And the Lord said to Moses, go down and warn the people lest they break through to the Lord to look and many of them perish.

Also let the priest who come near to the Lord consecrate themselves lest the Lord break out against them. And Moses said to the Lord, the people cannot come up to Mount Sinai for you yourself warned us saying, set limits around the mountain and consecrate it.

And the Lord said to him, go down and come up bringing Aaron with you, but do not let the priest and the people break through to come up to the Lord lest he break out against them.

After this, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and other laws. The Exodus verses themselves have no reference to angels, but Acts 7.53 and Hebrews 2.2 reference the angels' role.

[ 28 : 14 ] Here is Acts 7.53. It says, And then here are Hebrews 2.2 and 3.

Hebrews 2.2 and 3 say, For since the message declared by the angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect

such a great salvation?

So the angels' role in giving the law is left largely unexplained. However, we can be certain that Moses was the intermediary referenced in Galatians 3.19, and that's why the law also is called the Mosaic Covenant.

Look at Galatians 3.20 now. Paul wrote, Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. When I first read that, I had no idea what verse 20 means.

You've probably noticed that I've been using a lot of quotes from John MacArthur and John Stott. Both of them said that verse 20 is difficult to interpret.

[ 29 : 33 ] Fortunately, after some qualifications on their part, both of them then gave their interpretation of verse 20. So here is John Stott's take.

He said, The apostle is probably emphasizing the inferiority of the law to the gospel. When God gave the law, he spoke through angels and through Moses.

But when God spoke the gospel to Abraham, he did it direct, and that is probably the meaning of the phrase, God is one. Here's what John MacArthur said about verse 20.

He said, Paul seems to be pointing out that a mediator, literally one who stands between two parties, is needed only when more than one party is involved.

God gave the covenant directly to Abraham without a mediator because he was the only one involved in making the covenant. Abraham was a witness to the covenant and was a beneficiary, but he was not a party to it.

[ 30 : 35 ] Abraham had no part in establishing or keeping the covenant. That responsibility was God's alone. Then Joseph Pippa offered this commentary as an alternative take on that same verse.

He said, And then here's one last version.

Charles Spurgeon's view was similar to Pippa's. Spurgeon wrote, If there is a mediator, it is for two persons between whom there is some ground of difference.

This proves that God and men were opposed or a mediator would not have been needed. Thus, the giving of the law showed man's state of alienation. After looking at the different commentaries, I lean more towards Spurgeon's summary.

Spurgeon's summary fits with what Paul would later write to Timothy when Paul used similar terms.

Listen to what Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 2, verses 5 and 6.

[ 31 : 59 ] For there is one God, so there is the one God term, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

Fortunately, we can understand the meaning of this Galatians section without being completely certain about the meaning of verse 20. The meaning of verses 21 and 22 is very clear, as was the meaning of verse 19.

Listen to Galatians chapter 3, verses 21 and 22 again. Paul starts verse 21 with another question.

The question Paul asks seems to have been addressed to the Judaizers, but Paul immediately answers that question himself.

He says, Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not, for if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Paul first answers this question with his trademark short, forceful answer.

[ 33 : 22 ] When considering if the law is contrary to the promises, he simply says, Certainly not. Then, before we look at his more detailed explanation, remember what the Judaizers taught.

They were only taught that to be saved, people had to follow the law. Paul is accusing the Judaizers of making the law contradict the gospel, the promises of God.

The Judaizers' teaching was, Keep the law and you will gain life. And they thought they were being practical. Paul denies that, because their position was purely hypothetical.

Verse 21 says that, For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. Remember, though, that no such law has been given.

So Paul turns from hypothesis to reality, and the fact is that nobody has ever kept the law of God.

Instead, we sinners break it every day. You could probably argue we break it almost every minute.

[ 34 : 27 ] Therefore, the law cannot justify us. In Romans, Paul expanded on this same teaching. Here are Romans chapter 3, verses 19 and 20.

In Romans 3, 19 and 20, Paul said, Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in God's sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. Listen to this quote by F.F. Bruce.

He said, The law, despite its purpose of producing transgressions, is not contrary to the promises. Because it is God's law, it serves as God's instrument to accomplish His purpose.

It cannot of itself impart life, but by showing the bankruptcy of human effort, it shuts men and women up to the grace of God as their only hope.

[ 35 : 37 ] Even without the complete New Testament, like we have, the Galatians had enough revelation at that time to know that nobody could keep the law perfectly. They obviously had their own lives, but they had Scripture that told them the same thing.

Listen to Psalm 14, verses 2 and 3. This is a Scripture that the Galatians would have had. Psalm 14, 2 and 3 say, The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.

They have all turned aside. Together they have become corrupt. There is none who does good, not even one. That's pretty clear. And then at the end of Psalm 14, 3, there is none who does good, not even one.

Philip Ryken wrote, The law is like chemotherapy. When chemotherapy is used to treat cancer, it does not give life. Actually, it is an instrument of death.

The chemicals that are poured into the body destroy healthy tissue as well as cancer cells. During the course of treatment, chemotherapy actually makes the patient feel much worse.

[ 36 : 53 ] But it is all necessary for the patient's long-term health. In much the same way, the law makes us worse so that Christ can make us better.

Let's move on to verse 22 now. Verse 22 says, But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

By the Scripture, Paul means especially the law. As we've seen, one purpose of the law is to reveal sin and in fact to increase our awareness of it so that the whole world becomes imprisoned by it.

This is true for the Jews who have the law of Moses and also for Gentiles who have God's law written on their hearts. If you want to see evidence of that, you can go over to Romans 2, verses 14 and 15.

So regardless of whether a person is Jew or Gentile, the whole world is under the law, convicted of sin and captive to sin's guilt. By making this declaration of depravity, the law performs a valuable public service and proves that it still has a valuable place in God's plan of salvation.

[ 38 : 12 ] The law is powerless to make anyone right with God. It cannot justify. It can only condemn. It cannot make us righteous. It can only lock us up in the prison of sin.

But by showing that it cannot save, the law makes us look for a savior. And when the world starts looking for a way out of sin, it discovers that God's mercy is the only escape.

Verse 22 closes by reminding us one more time about how we receive God's mercy. We receive God's mercy by faith in Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther explained it like this. Luther said, The law with its function does contribute to justification because it impels one to the promise of grace and makes this grace sweet and desirable.

Therefore, we do not abolish the law, but we show its true function and use, namely that it is most useful servant impelling us to Christ. For its function and use is not only to disclose the sin and wrath of God, but also to drive us to Christ.

[ 39 : 26 ] Therefore, the principal purpose of the law in theology is to make men not better, but worse. That is, it shows them their sin so that by the recognition of sin, they may be humbled, frightened, and worn down, and so may long for grace and for the blessed offspring.

The Judaizers held falsely that the law annuls the promise to Abraham and supersedes it. Paul teaches the true function of the law, which is to confirm the promise to Abraham and make that promise indispensable.

Justification, or becoming right with God, comes by faith alone in Christ alone. So remember the main idea. The law exposes sin and demonstrates the need for justification by faith alone. Every promise given in the covenant with Abraham was fulfilled in Jesus Christ and only Jesus Christ. Therefore, the only way a person can participate in the promised blessings to Abraham is to be a fellow heir with Christ through faith in him.

There has never been, nor can there ever be, salvation apart from the finished work of Christ. The covenant with Abraham was fulfilled in the covenant of Jesus Christ and therefore the covenant of law, whatever its character and purpose, did not cancel or modify these two covenants, which really merged into one.

[ 40 : 58 ] When God gave the law, we saw from Exodus 19 that the setting was awesome and forbidding. God warned the people not to come near the fiery mountain lest he break out against them.

But God gave the covenant to Abraham as friend to friend. The promise of salvation by faith was so precious to the heart of God that he gave it to Abraham in person.

That is the way God desires to come to every person who will have his son as Lord and Savior. And of course, his son is the seed of Abraham who was to come and to whom the promise had been made.

Every true believer in Christ is guaranteed the blessing of Abraham, which is justification by faith alone in Christ alone. We should trust in that hope as a sure and steadfast anchor.

Earlier in the lesson, we read Hebrews 6, verses 13 through 18. Listen to Hebrews 6, 17 and 18 again, but this time with verse 19 added.

[ 42 : 04 ] So we'll read Hebrews 6, 17 through 19. The writer to the Hebrews said, So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his promise, he guaranteed it with an oath, so 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.

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the reminder that nothing we can do can earn salvation with you.

But especially at this time of year, we thank you for the reminder of why you sent your son. Let us remember that the story that starts at Christmas with Christ becoming a human doesn't end there. It really is only the beginning. That story really finishes with his death and resurrection. Let us trust in his work as our only means for salvation and let us be more willing to share that message with other people.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.