

WRITTEN TEACHING · TWO PARTS

Beginning in the Spirit

A two-part teaching on Abraham's call out of Haran, the one seed of promise, and Paul's boldness when Peter and Barnabas wavered at Antioch.

Genesis 12 · 21 · 25 • Romans 5 • Galatians 1-4

God teaches “precept upon precept, line upon line” (Isaiah 28:10) — brick upon brick, never at random. Every teaching that comes builds on what came before it; one door unlocks the next. Spiritual growth follows this order: reaching further truths only becomes safe and fruitful once the foundational ones are firmly in place.

PART ONE · ABRAHAM AND THE GOD OF RESURRECTION

Peace with God: Understanding the God of Resurrection

Romans 5:1 begins, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” This peace isn't circumstantial calm; it's the settled confidence that comes from understanding exactly who God is — specifically, that He is the God of resurrection. God's usual pattern is not to remove darkness but to command light *out of* it. God rarely dismantles the difficult situation itself — He works through it, bringing resurrection out of exactly what looked like an ending.

Abraham's Tribulation, and What It Produced

By the time God's promise to Abraham came due, Abraham's own body was as good as dead, and Sarah's womb had been dead for years. But God is Spirit, and what He speaks is spoken from that spiritual source; no physical circumstance can hinder a promise that originates there. Isaac is described as a child of promise rather than simply a child of nature (Galatians 4:23) — his origin was in what God had spoken, not primarily in ordinary human will.

Called Out of Haran

Genesis 12 records God's call to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house" — out of Haran, where his father Terah had settled and died without ever reaching Canaan. Terah represents the flesh — the natural, inherited direction that stops short of the promise. Abraham's journey with God begins the moment he leaves that inherited path behind and is led, instead, by the Spirit alone.

Foolish Galatians: Began in the Spirit, Finishing in the Flesh

Paul's letter to the Galatians opens with pointed questions (Galatians 3:1–9): Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? The Galatians had started exactly where Abraham started — in the Spirit, led by faith — and were now reversing course. "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). Physical descent was never the qualifying mark.

Two Sons, Two Covenants

The son born of Hagar came "after the flesh" — through human effort. The son born of Sarah came by the Spirit, through a womb that had no natural capacity left to produce anything. Paul frames this as two covenants: one of bondage, one of freedom, because "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

The Seed Through Which a Life Continues

Abraham had many descendants, yet only one, Isaac, carried the promise forward as the appointed line through which the covenant would keep bearing fruit. In this sense, Christ becomes, for Abraham, the singular channel through which his faith is continually reproduced in others across every generation since. It raises a searching question for anyone walking this same road of faith: through what will the faith and life given to you continue being reproduced in others?

PART TWO · THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

A Covenant No One Can Alter

Paul opens this argument with something everyone already understands intuitively: "though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto" (Galatians 3:15). South Africans remember this playing out publicly: when Nelson Mandela's will was read, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela — who had stood beside him through the years of struggle and held his hand high on the day he walked free — was not named among the beneficiaries. She challenged it through every legal avenue available. The courts upheld the will regardless. However unfair it might have felt, a confirmed will simply cannot be altered once the person who made it is gone.

The Seed Is One, Not Many

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made... not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). Since Christ existed before the law was ever given — the covenant with Abraham having already been confirmed 430 years before Moses brought the law down from Sinai — the later law could not add to or subtract from a promise already settled.

Why the Law, Then?

Paul answers plainly: "it was added because of transgression" (Galatians 3:19). The law was never capable of producing the righteousness it pointed toward: "if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21). The law functioned as a "schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Galatians 3:24) — a temporary guardian until the one to whom the promise belonged actually arrived.

Two Women, Two Covenants

Galatians 4 makes this contrast visible through Abraham's own family. Paul calls it "an allegory: for these are the two covenants" (Galatians 4:24): one from Sinai, bearing children into bondage, and one from "Jerusalem which is above... the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:26), bearing children into freedom.

Many Seeds, One Chosen to Carry It Forward

Ishmael was genuinely Abraham's seed — but Scripture distinguishes: "in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 21:12). Later, Abraham had six more sons through Keturah, plus children through his concubines. All received gifts from their father. Only Isaac received everything Abraham had (Genesis 25:5-6).

Paul and the Boldness of a Man Fully Given Over

This principle helps explain something Paul says about himself: that God was "pleased to reveal his Son in me" (Galatians 1:15-16). This is offered not as a demotion of the other apostles, but as an explanation for where Paul's extraordinary boldness came from.

That boldness is on full display in Galatians 2:11-14. Peter, who had been eating freely with Gentile believers at Antioch, withdrew the moment certain men arrived from James — "fearing them which were of the circumcision." Even Barnabas was "carried away" by the same pressure. Paul alone did not bend. "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed" (Galatians 2:11) — because he understood what was at stake: had no one resisted, the church at Antioch risked becoming an extension of Jerusalem's bondage to the law.

Conclusion

A covenant once confirmed cannot be altered — not by the law that came later, not by human pressure, not by fear of what others might think. Abraham's promise was secured in one seed, not scattered across many; and the same steadiness that secured that promise is what steadied Paul at Antioch when even a fellow apostle wavered.

In the name of Jesus.

✦ Branch of Righteousness

"I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." — John 17:23

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