

<b>Series:</b> All Peoples	<b>Reference:</b> <i>Various Passages</i>	<b>Title:</b> Finishing the Sentence	<b>Date:</b> 07.26.2020
<b>Website Writeup:</b> We have to let God finish His sentence to us, to hear, receive & believe all that He has to say about life & His purposes for us.			

Isn't it frustrating when you're speaking with someone & only able to get part of a sentence out before they react & misunderstand?

If they'd let you finish, it would've made sense.

We do the same with God's Word often.

Verse 1 of Psalm 67 is a nice prayer, it says... *May God be gracious to us & bless us & make his face shine on us...*

Nice thought - a healthy desire is to live in God's grace, blessing & light, for sure. But to stop there would create people addicted to blessing & lacking in purpose.

We can't neglect v2, which says... *so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.*

Verse 1 by itself is about me, add verse 2 & it's about God & salvation of others. That connector phrase, 'so that', connotes purpose. We're to understand, blessing is for a reason & comes with responsibility & purpose - Gods glory & mission.

Our thoughts should automatically go to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, His last command, our first concern, where Jesus said...

*"All authority in heaven & on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Same concept, what we receive from Jesus, we take to all the nations of the earth. Nations not of political boundaries, but of cultural linguistic distinction - all the glorious diverse God-authored ethnic groups of the world we see in Revelation 7!

So it's a mistake to read only Psalm 67:1 without adding verse 2.

Our purpose is clear & has to do with all that we've been talking about over past weeks. To act justly, love mercy & walk humbly with God as we live out the calling of the Great Commission.

Both an individual & corporate call which is why unity has been such a central concept in our discussions. The call to obedience which comes from faith as guided by what we learn in the Bible, under the leading of the Holy Spirit & the shared conviction of the church.

Paul speaks of this in Romans 1:1-5...

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle & set apart for the gospel of God - <sup>2</sup>The gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures <sup>3</sup>regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, <sup>4</sup>and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*<sup>5</sup>Through him we received grace & apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake.*

Firstly, notice, in verse 1 Paul sees all he is as having been gloriously hijacked to serve Jesus, regarding himself as consecrated, set apart for that purpose.

Secondly, notice in vv2-4, this gospel call to bless the nations didn't start with Paul's words in Romans, or even Matthew 28, or even back in Psalm 67.

All of these simply reflect what has been preached to God's people from the beginning.

A consistent covenantal relationship & call to go & bless all the nations of the world with the Gospel. Our goal's to live out of the gospel of grace modeling the heart of God to all peoples bringing them into unity under Him. To do so we must understand the complete Story of God as seen in the Scriptures. To know, the Gospel of Grace has been God's intention throughout history.

The problem is, when we think of the Old Testament we think about the Law, and when we think about the New Testament, we think about the Gospel of Grace in Jesus. Our limited understanding sometimes creates a conflicting view of the image of God between these two Testaments.

Is there a consistent message of the Gospel of Grace running throughout both the Old & New Testaments? There is, but most Christians view the Scriptures something like this;

- (1) God created Adam & Eve to live in perfect harmony with Him.
- (2) They chose to turn away.
- (3) God sat back & scratched his head saying, "Well, that didn't work, so I'll give them this Law to live by. If they live right, then I'll accept them, if not, I'll cut them off."
- (4) When He figured out that also wouldn't work, He sent Jesus as a payment for the sin revealed in us by the very law He put into place.

In this thinking God isn't sovereign, nor omnipotent & Jesus is simply an afterthought, or damage control.

We view the Old & New Testaments as separate disjointed stories with no unifying theme. But unity under the Gospel of Grace has always been the central theme, the Gospel can be seen throughout all Scripture.

Jesus said the Scriptures speak of Him, referring to the Old Testament. Paul & others saw the gospel of grace all throughout the Hebrew Scriptures - they didn't have the New Testament at the time & preached the Gospel of Grace via the the Old Testament.

You know, we write a will in order that when we die the conditions are carried out. Paul makes this argument in Galatians 3:15-25 and he basically says there that just as with a human contract, like a lease or a will, where nothing can be added or taken away, it's the same with God's promise - but what promise is he referring to?

I want to use Galatians 3:15-25 to give us a glimpse into the unity of Scripture which communicates we've always been blessed by the Gospel of Grace for the purpose of blessing all peoples with it.

Starting with vv15-20...

*<sup>15</sup>Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. <sup>16</sup>The promises were spoken to Abraham & to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.*

*<sup>17</sup>What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God & thus do away with the promise. <sup>18</sup>For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.*

*<sup>19</sup>What, then, was the purpose of the law?*

*It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. <sup>20</sup>A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.*

It's easy to see what he refers to when talking about a human covenant. A will, or contract with a mediator between two parties.

Paul's comparing this to God's Promise to Abraham back in Genesis 12, but he says that promise, or covenant, was made by one party, God alone, Abram made no promises. That from the beginning, salvation & hope have always depended fully on God, and not us having to measure up, attain, or earn status with Him! That's good news!

Later we'll look at Genesis 15, but the promises start in Genesis 12:1-3...

*The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people & your father's household to the land I will show you. <sup>2</sup>"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. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

In Galatians 3, as Paul refers to the Promise in Genesis 12, and also 15, there are some confusing things. For instance, this idea of 'Seed' seen in Genesis 12:7, 13:15 & 24:7.

Paul says there were four parts to the promise God gave to Abram in Gen. 12 & 15.

- (1) Seed or offspring in the singular.
- (2) Land.
- (3) Israel will be blessed/his descendants numerous.
- (4) Israel will be a blessing to all nations. (blessed to be a blessing.)

God promised these 4 things, making it clear to Abraham, the 'Seed' refers to the Messiah who'll come through his lineage.

Abraham, was just a man chosen by God, an Iraqi, called out of the Ur of Chaldeans. A pagan who probably worshipped the local deity & who didn't have the Scriptures, the Temple, the Church & sound doctrine either. He had maybe only a few creation & flood stories to go from, but that's it & God called him.

Which says to us, all anyone has ever needed for salvation is what theologians call *passive righteousness*, receiving God's grace by faith in His promise - as compared to *active righteousness*, we in no way actively earn our relationship with God by how well we live up to expectation!

There's a difference in 'believing in God' & 'believing God'. He reveals Himself in the Scriptures, in Christ & Creation, we accept & believe His promises as Abraham did.

The other confusing thing in these verses is in Gal 3:20 when Paul says: *A mediator doesn't just represent one party, but God is one.*

Confusing, because a contract or covenant's always made between two parties, but Paul says God's promise is by Him alone. So, let's gain some clarity...

R.C. Sproul was often asked, if you had to have just one life verse what would it be?

Strange since he'd want the whole of Scripture, but to pick one it'd be Genesis 15:17, which says...

*<sup>17</sup>When the sun had set & darkness had fallen, a smoking fire-pot with a blazing torch appeared & passed between the pieces.*

Strange verse, why not Psalm 67:1?

To understand Galatians 3 with its one party idea, we have to understand Genesis 15:17 which speaks of the covenant process God was undertaking with Abraham.

In ancient times if a king conquered another, they'd 'cut' a covenant. They'd sacrifice animals, cut them in half & lay them opposite each other, making a bloody aisle. Then the two parties would walk down the middle of this aisle reciting their promise to each other as a covenant.

What they were saying was, “If I break our covenant, may I end up dead like these animals.” Two parties cutting a covenant promise, a contract for future relationship, if either party broke the promise the terms were nullified.

Abraham would’ve been familiar with this ceremony, so God used it to communicate His Gospel of Grace by making a covenant promise to Abraham & his offspring into the future.

So, let’s read around Genesis 15:17 starting with v9...

*<sup>9</sup>So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat & a ram, each three years old, along with a dove & a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup>Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two & arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. <sup>11</sup>Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. <sup>12</sup>As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick & dreadful darkness came over him...*

*Then in v17...When the sun had set & darkness had fallen, a smoking fire-pot with a blazing torch appeared & passed between the pieces. <sup>18</sup>On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram & said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates".*

God cut a covenant with Abraham here. But the interesting thing is, when it came time to walk the aisle, Abraham was in a deep sleep. God, *by himself*, represented by the smoking fire-pot & a burning torch, walked the aisle cutting the covenant as one party with Abraham.

What God was saying is, *‘I make this covenant with you as one party. The whole covenant is therefore based on my Word, my Promise, by Grace & not your ability to hold up your end of the bargain.’* Not based on two party’s behavior.

God’s saying, *‘If I fail at this, I’m placing all my deity on the line, you do nothing but receive & believe this promise.’* The gospel of grace revealed right here from the very beginning!

So, to summarize what Paul’s saying, God chooses us, not based on merit, just like He chose Abraham, an old Iraqi pagan. Abraham simply believed God’s promise.

That’s why it says in Romans 4:3, <sup>3</sup> *What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

And in v13, <sup>13</sup> *It was not through the law that Abraham & his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.*

When we hear, Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross, taking our sin away & becoming cursed, placing his righteousness on us, we believe & receive it as a blessing! Grace happened on the cross & it has nothing to do with what I do to be right with God, even now. Just like it didn’t with Abraham.

Paul adds very adeptly in Galatians 3:17-18, *The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God & thus do away with the promise. <sup>18</sup>For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.*

To view our relationship with God through the Old Testament based only on the Law, as I outlined in those four points earlier, it takes two parties, one party sets the standard as sovereign king & the other keeps it as vassal king.

But the Law came 430 years after the Promise! The Law can’t nullify the Promise because God’s Word can’t be broken. God promised, He cut & kept the covenant of grace with his people, not based on anything we do.

Think of it this way. Paul used the word *inheritance* in 3:18. If I’m promised an inheritance by my father in his will, I do nothing but believe he promised it - I simply receive it as his child.

But if someone comes to me saying, *“I have no descendants & will die soon, IF you take care of me well enough, THEN I will give you an inheritance.”* That’s based on *performance*, it’s a conditional statement.

God promised to Abraham & likewise to us, we’re His children by grace through faith alone even back then. All that’s His is ours, by grace through faith. The Promise came first & can’t be broken. He never said if you obey my Law, then you’ll have the inheritance.

The promise depends on God, therefore, it’s based on the parent/child relationship, not performance. Grace precedes the Law.

Paul then says in Galatians 3:19...*What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.*

And also vv22-25, <sup>22</sup>*But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.* <sup>23</sup>*Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.*

<sup>24</sup>*So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.* <sup>25</sup>*Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*

Kim & I take in immigrant foster kids. In doing so, for a short time we become guide & teacher - Kim especially fulfills the role of *pedagogue* in a more complete way with them.

Paul refers to the Law as our Pedagogue in the original language, one charged with the education, discipline, protection & leading of a child in life. A pedagogue inputs moral values which guide a child into adulthood.

The Law’s like this, leading us into adult life of faith, revealing God’s moral standard to His children, convicting us of sin along the way. But at some point the child grows & is released from the hand of the Pedagogue, but the lessons learned carry on into adulthood.

Scripture tells us, the Law of God’s written on our hearts, we naturally know right from wrong in many cases. However, the Law, more clearly laid out in Scripture acts as a pedagogue leading us to Christ & convicting us on God’s standard.

The Law, reveals sin in us, taking us by the hand, leading us to understand our need of grace. The Law is like Dad’s moral directives which are healthy & good for us while we live under His care, reminding us of our need of Him. They’re there for our protection & to give us full life.

We can’t just choose not to sin, that’s a superficial view of sin, leaving us in the position of being God ourselves - sin’s not only a one time thought or action, it’s a condition of humanity. Paul’s clear, we’re prisoners, locked away in our sin nature awaiting release which comes through faith in Christ. We’re justified by faith in Christ & transformed by grace daily.

One way to look at the Law & Promise is, God as our father is promising we have an inheritance & concerning His Law, He says, *“Since you’re my children loved & accepted by me, the Law’s my standard for living, but you can’t live that standard without me, my grace will grow you over time into my likeness by convicting you via this standard.”*

The Law’s good, it originates from God & defines His standard. We attain to it. But we were never meant to get our value by how well we attain to it, value comes through our relationship to God established by His grace through faith alone. Daily it reminds us of our need for Jesus & continually drives us back to grace which has been from the beginning of the whole Story.

So, God from the very beginning established a relationship with us by grace through faith. The Gospel was there well before Jesus & culminates in Him. That covenant promise is our blessing, but we have to let God finish the sentence - I’m blessing you, to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth! To work towards the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 bringing about the fulfillment of that image of all nations worshipping Jesus in Revelation 7:9-10 which we’ve looked at in recent weeks.

This position with Christ, the call & purpose we've received, along with the moral standards as outlined by God's Law are to unify us under Christ. In light of the promises & purpose we've received from God, let's end by hearing from Paul again in Eph 4:1-7 which urges us to live in unity under Jesus...

*I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you've received. <sup>2</sup>Be completely humble & gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup>Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body & one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God & Father of all, who is over all & through all & in all. <sup>7</sup>But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it...*

*Then in vv11-13...<sup>11</sup>So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors & teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith & in the knowledge of the Son of God & become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

That's a wonderful thought, but as we've discussed in recent weeks, we currently battle socio-cultural ideologies which threaten our gospel unity - Paul knew this would happen, so he continues in vv14-16...Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back & forth by the waves, and blown here & there by every wind of teaching & by the cunning & craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup>From him the whole body, joined & held together by every supporting ligament, grows & builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

We have to allow God to finish His sentence, and to live out of the full orb of Gospel grace & call. Staying in the game with our brothers & sisters growing in the unifying knowledge of God from the Scriptures together. Our purpose is clear, the unified call to obedience which comes from faith as guided by what we learn in the Bible concerning what is morally right, just & fair under the leading of the Holy Spirit & the shared conviction of the church.

As a result of all this, let's end with this statement...

We affirm the entire covenantal framework of the Bible; Abraham & the ethnic people of Israel were first blessed by God to be a blessing to all the families & nations of the earth. We deny that ethnicity is unimportant or that our goal is to become colorblind, ignoring race altogether. Rather the distinct cultures, colors & languages of God's multiethnic Church are both redeemed by the blood of Christ & preserved as such into eternity. Since this is God's will, we aim to be a growing multiethnic congregation, representing the future Kingdom to come here on Earth as it is in Heaven. Even so, our ultimate identity as Christians is most deeply rooted, not in race or national identity, but in our union together as one in the global Body of Christ.

## Community Group Questions

1. If there were no Covid restrictions, and you had an extra \$10k to travel, where would you go, with who, and what would you do?
2. Read aloud Galatians 3:15-25 & Romans 1:1-5, then Genesis 15:9-12 & 17-18 - what do you notice about all these, what is the focus, or the major points being communicated? Do you understand the covenant promise (Suzerain Treaty) described in Genesis 15?
3. Have you viewed the Old & New Testaments differently in the past? As a result have you struggled with a differing image of God between the two? Look back at the 4 points made in the beginning of the sermon about how people sometimes view the two, does that resonate with you?
4. Read again aloud Psalm 67:1-2, then read Isaiah 56:1-8 and compare them with what you know of the Covenant Promise given to Abraham & his descendants. What is the great theme of those verses, what does it communicate to us and how does it compare to Matthew 28:18-20? Does understanding the Abrahamic Covenant help your view of God across the two testaments now?
5. Read together Ephesians 4:1-7 & 11-16 - focusing on the idea of unity, what brings us together as God's people. What are we called to (purpose), and how are we to live together and with the world?