

## **Christ Redeems us from the Curse** Galatians 3:10-14

Please turn in your Bible to **Galatians 3:10-14**.

Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for "the just shall live by faith." 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (New King James translation)

Today's passage, Galatians 3, verses 10-14, reminds us that Christ became a curse for us in order to redeem us from the curse of the law. Let us take a closer look at today's passage, as we study it verse-by-verse.

**Verse 10** "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.""

You may recall from our earlier studies in the book of Galatians that Galatians 2:16 may be considered the theme verse for the entire book of Galatians. Galatians 2:16 says, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."

In the book of Galatians, as in Romans, justification is a judicial term, a term used in relation to a courtroom. Justification is an act of God's free grace. When a sinner is justified, God as Judge declares him to be "not guilty." He is freed from the penalty that was rightfully his.

How are we justified? We are justified by faith alone. By faith alone, our sins are transferred to Christ's account, and God imputes Christ's perfect righteousness to us, which covers all our sins. It is not that we are righteous, but God accepts us as if we were righteous. When we are justified, God pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight only because of the righteousness of Christ, which has been imputed to us, transferred to our account.

On what basis does God justify us? It is only on the basis of Christ's works on our behalf. God can declare us to be "not guilty" because we have been *imputed* with the righteousness of another—namely, the righteousness of Christ. Christ's perfect righteousness was earned as He lived a perfect, sinless life, and as He submitted to the will of God the Father in dying on the cross.

Remember that in the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul was confronting the Judaizers, a group of religious people who falsely claimed to be Christians. The Judaizers claimed that to be a Christian, a person had to keep the works of the law. Do you remember what “the works of the law” refers to? “The works of the law” refers to the “works” commanded by the law of Moses in the Old Testament. These “works of the law” include circumcision and the requirements of the ceremonial law, including the Jewish dietary restrictions and the Old Testament holy days and religious festivals. The “works of the law” may also include any attempt we might make to earn God’s favor on our own.

When Paul and Barnabas were in Pisidian Antioch, the apostle Paul proclaimed in the synagogue there: “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39). It is *only* by faith in Christ that we may be justified or “declared righteous” before God.

The Judaizers and their followers may have thought they were pleasing God by attempting to be justified by their own efforts. Yet, they were sorely deceived. The sad truth is that they were under God’s curse and eternal condemnation. The Judaizers were trying to save themselves by their own merits. Yet, Paul warns that “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” (Gal. 3:10). For it is written in the Old Testament Scriptures, “Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” Paul is quoting from Deuteronomy 27:26, which is near the end of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, which were written by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In the verses that follow in Deuteronomy, Moses wrote of the curses that would befall Israel if she disobeyed God and His law. History would prove that God did curse Israel on account of her disobedience, in accordance with the warnings He set down in Deuteronomy.

Both under the old covenant and the new, a person is justified by faith alone in Christ alone. The law could never save someone, for in order to enter heaven by our own good works we would have to be perfect. **James 2:10** warns that “whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” Indeed, everyone who does not continue in “all things” which are written in the book of the law, everyone who does not obey every point of God’s law, is under His curse.

Why is God’s standard so high? Because God is an infinite being; He is infinite in His holiness and justice. To sin, even just one time, against the infinite God demands an infinite penalty. And, we as finite beings could never pay an infinite penalty. Only Christ, who is both God and man, could pay such a penalty.

**So what was the purpose of *the law*?** The purpose of the law was to act as a mirror to reveal our sin and to drive us to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, for salvation. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that the law also serves two other purposes. **A second purpose of God’s law is to act as a restraining influence on**

**society; the law restrains evil** (cf. Deut. 13:6-11; 19:16-21; Rom. 13:3-4). In the absence of God's law, without the Ten Commandments, without moral law, society degenerates into anarchy and lawlessness.

For example, if there were no speed limits, some people might drive 100 or even 200 miles per hour on the interstate; some might drive 60 miles per hour in a residential area. In order to protect life, our government wisely has established speed limits to act as a restraining influence on society. In our day, few people truly obey the speed limits, and there are few police officers to enforce them. The sign means "do not exceed" this speed, yet people say you can go 5, 10, even 15 miles per hour faster. Even if the majority of people do not obey the speed limit, speed limits still have a restraining effect. Without speed limits, there would most likely be far more tragic and deadly car wrecks.

When God's law is removed from a society, morality and law and order are very difficult to maintain. In our nation, by court order, the Ten Commandments and the Bible have largely been removed from the public schools, removed from courthouse walls, and banned from most of the public square. The result? Widespread anarchy and lawlessness. Violent crime in America has skyrocketed since the 1960s. Today's youth have little fear of the government, and most have no fear of God. Idolatry and false religion are widespread. God's name is cursed, and His Word is attacked and rejected. The Sabbath is gone. Few kids obey their parents. Abortion, infanticide, and murder are increasingly commonplace. Mass shootings and school shootings are all too common. Adultery has become normalized. Lying and deceit are no longer shocking. And advertisers appeal to Americans' covetous hearts, while our economy seems largely dependent on our desire to want what we do not yet have.

God gave us His moral law in order to restrain evil. When a society forgets what sin is and loses the knowledge of God and His law, that society will degenerate into lawlessness and anarchy.

**A third purpose of the law is that God's law reveals God's will for our lives.**

God's moral law is a reflection of His eternal, unchanging character. It is God's revealed will to us, showing us the way in which we should live as Christians. In His Great Commission, Jesus said that His disciples must be taught to observe all that He has commanded us (Matt. 28:20). He also said that obedience to His commands proves the reality of one's love for Him (John 14:15).

In Psalm 19:7-11, David declares, "The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether. More to be desired *are they* than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, *And* in keeping them *there is* great reward."

God will bless us if we keep His law. The very first Psalm assures us that we will be blessed if we delight ourselves in the law of the Lord and meditate on it day and night. God's people are known for their love of God's law. And, of course, the two greatest commandments are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind—this is the great and foremost commandment, and the second is like it—to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37-39). The Great Commandment given by Jesus is a summary of the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Scripture is clear that those who keep His law diligently will be greatly rewarded.

However, as I said at first, the first purpose of the law is to show us, like a mirror, how sinful we are and to drive us to the only sinless One, the Lord Jesus Christ, for salvation.

**Galatians 3:11-12** “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” “Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.””

The prophet Isaiah declares, “But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6).

Later, in Galatians, chapter 3, the apostle Paul explains, “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us to* Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The law was our tutor—the word means “schoolmaster” or the agent of discipline. As such, the law sends us fleeing to Christ for forgiveness and mercy. The law shows us just how sinful we are and how totally unable we are to save ourselves. It shows us how hopeless we are without a Savior.

If a man could perfectly keep the law at every point, then he would live. But the only man who has ever perfectly kept the law is the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to be justified by the law a man would have to be perfect. Only Christ is perfect. Therefore, we can only be justified by faith in Christ and in His merits, not our own.

As a result of the fall, we are all sinners from birth. Paul says that it is evident that “no one is justified by the law in the sight of God.” The only way we can be justified is to live by faith alone in Christ alone.

**Galatians 3:13** says, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree.”)”

If our salvation depended on us, we would be hopeless. Yet, the good news of the gospel is that Christ did what we could not. Romans 8:3 says, “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.”

Deuteronomy 21:23 says that “he who is hanged *is* accursed of God.” The apostle Paul cites this Old Testament teaching, saying, “for it is written, “Cursed is everyone

who hangs on a tree.”” By hanging on the wooden cross, Christ became a curse for us.

Why did God subject His only begotten Son to such a curse, to such unbelievable torture, to such humiliation? It was to redeem us! Isaiah 53:6 explains that “all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

Christ became a curse for us so that He might redeem us, so that He might deliver us, so that He might save us “from the curse of the law.”

“But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5).

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18).

We were all justly deserving of the eternal curse of hell. Without Christ’s once and for all sacrifice for sin, without Christ’s substitutionary atonement, which covers all our sins, we would be hopeless. We would still be destined for God’s wrath on account of our sins. We would be deserving of an infinite penalty, of everlasting punishment. Yet, God acted in Christ to save us. God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-7).

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law.” At the cross, Christ bore the infinite penalty that we all deserve on account of our sins. He died as an atonement for sin, to cover the sins of His chosen people. He died as our substitute, in our place. He took our sins upon Himself. Why?

**Galatians 3:14** tells us why: “that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Christ acted to fulfill the everlasting promise that God made to Abraham. Later, in Galatians, chapter 3, God reveals that Christ is the promised Seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16).

The blessing of Abraham was not merely to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. In Genesis 17:4-5, God said to Abraham, “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.”

In Romans chapter 4, Paul provides a more detailed explanation of how “the blessing of Abraham” came to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus. **Romans 4:13-18:**

“13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world *was* not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, 15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression. 16 Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17 (as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed -- God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; 18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, “So shall your descendants be.””

It was by faith alone that God promised to Abraham that he would be the heir of the world—not merely of the Jews but also the Gentile nations, “the world.” Those who are under the law as a means of salvation are under the curse, for “the law brings about wrath.” Yet, salvation comes by faith alone according to God’s grace alone. God says that Abraham is the father of all true believers. He is our spiritual ancestor, the father of Jewish and Gentile believers. God raises all true believers from spiritual death to life. We are born again by God’s Spirit, who breathes new life into dead bones. By faith in Christ, we become united to Christ in His resurrection from the dead.

In Christ Jesus, who is the promised Seed of Abraham, the blessing of Abraham comes to all true believers, whether Jew or Gentile. In Christ alone, we receive “the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

1 Timothy 2:5 says that “*there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus.” Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). Jesus Christ is the only way that sinful people can be reconciled to God the Father, to the one true God. Christ is the only way to God. He is absolute Truth itself. It is in Christ alone that we can be reconciled to God and receive eternal life. It is in Christ alone that we can receive “the promise of the Spirit through faith.” It is in Christ alone that we are justified. By His Spirit, God effectually calls us, which means that God’s Spirit works in our hearts and minds to convince us of our sin and misery, to enlighten our minds in the knowledge of Christ, to renew our wills, and to persuade us and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, who is freely offered to us in the gospel.

May we stand in the power of Christ, for Christ alone redeems us from the curse.

Trust in Him, and walk as Jesus did.