

EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Galatians 3:1-14 – Part 4 / Galatians 3:10-14 – The Curse and the Cure

Introduction – Summary

The Gospel begins with the good news of God for reconciliation with God through the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ. The Gospel also includes that our life is governed by grace and not by law, by faith and not by works.

Justification, being right before God, is never by works. Our rightness before God is only through believing in God, that is, believing in Jesus Christ.

We live under grace. This means that God has provided all blessings as a free gift, and we incur no punishment, no curse for violations. The activity of the believer deals with honoring or pleasing the Lord, not being right in His evaluation.

We live by faith. In general, we live our lives with respect to the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Living by faith also gets into specifics, but for this letter, the general concept is what is discussed initially.

Review – Galatians 3:1-9

Galatia is faced with the problem that believers are being persuaded that acts of the flesh, works, and following the Law complete the believer before God.

The question of initial justification is not the question. When a person believes in Jesus Christ (identity, work, promise), they are eternally secure as a born from above, is an adopted child of God. They are justified in God's sight. And that position with God can never be lost, nor can it ever be revoked.

As believers, we still have lives to live. And the most basic question we have is, "How then shall we live?" Before we consider works, activity, and life choices, we first ask, "How do we make sure God continues to view us as being right in His eyes?"

1. We continue to develop our understanding of Jesus Christ (Christology) so that none of us ever doubts the reality of our salvation through Jesus.
2. When we learn the doctrines of God through the reading and study of Scripture, we are to believe it. When we believe God in what He says in the text, God deems us as being right in His eyes.

As believers, if we want to be right in God's eyes (righteous), we need to believe what He has said in Scripture. If we don't, we are wrong in His eyes (unrighteous).

As believers in Jesus, we are sons of Abraham; we are not Jews; rather we inherit the world as heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ.

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Paul moves from living under grace and the fact that, in Christ, all are sons of Abraham to the problem of submitting to law, living under the Law.

To demonstrate that a person must not live under law as a believer in Jesus Christ, Paul begins with the inability of the Law to justify anyone, and that the Law brings a curse.

Verse 10 begins very straightforwardly, “For as many as are of works of law are under curse.”

For ease of reading in English, translators added articles. Notice in the literal Greek to English translation the lack of articles. The Mosaic Law is obviously in view, but it is important to realize that being under any law places that person under a curse.

The failure of every person to satisfy the requirements of the Law is not limited to the Mosaic Law but is true even in the most basic concepts of any law. Hence, law rather than The Law. Man cannot live up to their own standards, let alone the standards of God.

What does “those who are of works of law” mean? Based on the context, this means that a person is trying to be justified before God by works of law. This reaches back to a pre-reconciled state. I know this because of Galatians 5:4; this is the verse that addresses a believer who is resubmitting back to law. As believers, we are not under curse, and we cannot go back to being under curse.

Galatians 3:10-12 establish the premise of the curse of the Law. Without being “those who are of faith” as a status, “those who are of works of law” are under curse.

What is the curse?

The most basic answer to that question is death (Romans 1:32, 5:12, 6:23). The larger answer relates back to the curses under the Law—the negative and punitive results for violating the Mosaic Law. God announces who is cursed and what the results of the curse will be:

Deuteronomy 27:15-26, 28:16-68 – Those who are under the Law risk curses to their prosperity, posterity, safety, and life itself. The Israelites also risk being disposed of the land and being in strife with all those around them until it “drives them mad by the sight of what they see.” Read Deuteronomy 28:58-62

For the person under the Law, once they violated the law, they were subject to curse (James 2:9-11; Galatians 5:3). For the Jews under the Mosaic Law, the Law was never used for righteousness before God, but being under the Law did mean that violations had to be handled so that the curse was not carried out.

To be under the Law, it is not just a matter of giving affirmation to the laws of God; it is a matter of doing them. All of them.

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In the Hebrew Narrative, there are many instances where the curse was handed out, and only by the mercy of God was the curse checked. Other times, the curse was fully enforced.

Again, the main idea of curse is that of death. To violate God's absolute standard was to be under the sentence of death (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Next, in Galatians 3:11-12, Paul reasserts what was already stated – Galatians 2:16. Paul contrasts two verses in the Hebrew text, Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:1-5.

In verse 11, Paul offers the same evaluation of those who are of the works of the Law; no one is justified before God, not a single one of them.

Paul states that this was self-evident, none who is justified before God is one who is of works of law. The quote from Habakkuk clearly proves this point.

Paul brings out that even though Habakkuk does not address works of law and Leviticus does not address righteousness through faith, they must exclude the other. *Works of law* relates to earning or deserving life. *Faith* relates to grace and not deserving life, but God grants it as a gift.

In Leviticus 18:5, God says that if a man performs God's judgments and statutes, he will live. But in Habakkuk, God provides another formula for life, by faith. By Law and by Faith are diametrically opposed to one another. God says if you keep My whole law, you will live, the problem is that no one does, and no one can keep the law (Romans 3:10-18).

The conclusion of all these passages is that only those who are of faith are righteous and thus will receive life. The impossibility of fulfilling the Law means that being ones of works of law only leads to death.

If no one does and no one can keep the Law, then what is the result? Everyone is under curse unless you become "of faith." But how is the curse handled by God? This brings us to the cure.

What is the cure?

Christ 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."

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 21:23. For most, if not all, Bible expositors, the correlation is difficult to see. How does Deuteronomy 21:23 relate to Jesus? In our minds, we try to make every aspect fit. Fortunately, we have an expositor inspired by the Holy Spirit to explain how Jesus fits. Jesus died on the Cross and became cursed on our behalf.

Paul explains that the redemption that God provides is through the substitutionary, sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ. We dealt with this in Lesson 6 (Gal 1:3-5; 4:4-5).

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What are the results of the cure?

Now that Jesus has been crucified and resurrected, there is a progressive understanding of how to become a son of Abraham. Previously, the message to the Gentiles was to come from Israel; Israel was to tell them about the Messianic promises. A Gentile who believed in YHWH became a Son of Abraham, but they were not part of the administration of God.

For the Gentile believers to be part of the administration of God, they had to become “gēr,” proselytes in the Old Testament. Now In Christ, something has changed.

In Christ, not only does a Gentile receive the blessing of Abraham, but also receives the Spirit. The reception of the Spirit indicates a welcoming by God into the administration of God. In the Hebrew Scriptures, no Gentile ever received the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit was provided to specific people who were functioning in Israel (Joseph, Joshua, the skilled workers of the tabernacle, the judges, David, and the prophets).

Now that the Gentiles are receiving the Holy Spirit, God is stating that Gentiles are now part of the administration without following the Law.

Conclusion

In Galatians 3:1-14, Paul fervently and directly proves to the Galatian believers that justification with God and being an heir of Abraham is only by hearing the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ and believing in Jesus Christ (hearing with faith).

Putting yourself under the Law is a heresy because no one is justified by works of law. Furthermore, those who are of works of law are under curse. But Jesus solved the problem by becoming the cure through His substitutionary, sacrificial atonement.

Now, in Christ, not only are believers justified before God and become sons of Abraham, but we also receive the Holy Spirit indicating that we also are welcomed into the Administration of God.