

## **Redeemed From The Curse Of The Law**

Galatians 3:10-14

This Week's Prayer  
Requests:

**Memory Verse:** Galatians 4:4-5 - "But when the fulness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

**Text:** "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.' 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.' 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'), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

### **Monday**

John Piper uses the following image to illustrate salvation: Imagine for a moment that you are walking along the beach alone one morning, and for whatever reason you decide that you want to get in the water and swim. You think that it will be no big deal, just having some fun in the water. But then you get out a little further than you intended, the waves come back, and before you can even think you get yanked under water by a savage undertow. Fighting against the pull with all your strength you manage to get back up to the surface for a moment. Gasping for air, your eyes blurred by the water, you feel a sudden heaviness and weakness against the downward pull. You manage to cry out one word before the water pulls you under again, "Help!" And as you sink you realize that you do not have the strength to fight against the waves and that you are about to drown. But against all hope, as you are sinking further down and away from the shore, in your final moments you think that you saw a man coming down the shore, who may have seen you.

Now suppose, for a moment, that there was a man that was walking down the shore. Suppose that he saw you in your desperate situation, and suppose that he in the moment of decision took it upon himself to save your life. What would he have to do to accomplish it? There are several things he must do. First he must leave the shore and come to you. Second, he must voluntarily subject himself to the full power and

force of the current as he dives down to find you. Third, he must have the strength, the power not only to bear the current, the sweeping force of the undertow for himself, but he also must have power and ability to bear your share of the force, substituting his strength for yours, for you will be utterly helpless by the time he finds you. Fourth, he must find you and grab a hold of you with a strength that will not let go, because a drowning person in this situation cannot be saved unless he or she is firmly attached to the deliverer. Fifth and finally, he must complete the act and bring you safely back to shore.

I submit to you this day that you are the drowning person, that the current and the waves that you simply cannot fight against and overcome in your own strength, are the demands of God's perfect, holy and righteous law, that this current is pulling you inexorably down to death, that the man on the shore who freely entered the water, subjected himself to the power of the sea and overcame it by his own strength is Jesus Christ, that unless he finds you in the depths, attaches himself to you so that you are bound together and substitutes himself for you, his power, his strength, his life, his ability to withstand the waves for your own inability, then you cannot be saved from the curse of the law, which is death.

From a human perspective, were the Judaizers immoral people? Why or why not?

Now, as we have been studying chapter 3 of Galatians, we have seen Paul arguing with the church. He began the chapter by saying, "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" He is pleading with them not to be bewitched by the Judaizers who want them to supplement a life of faith with the effort of the flesh, who want them to trust in faith in Christ plus human works for their salvation, rather than trusting in Christ alone. This teaching by the Judaizers was so destructive to people and so dishonoring to God that it merited a divine curse.

Now get this, it was a teaching propagated not by secular humanists from Athens but by God-fearing Jewish quote unquote "Christian" church members from Jerusalem. The reason the book of Galatians has such a radical, life-changing message is that it pronounces a curse from God not on atheistic or agnostic outsiders but on professing Christians who try to serve God in a way that diminishes his grace and cultivates their own pride. Galatians is God's reminder to the church that we are in constant danger of false assurances. Satan is continuously at work tempting us to think and feel that because we use God-talk, and come to church, and pray at meal times and avoid gross sins, we are therefore under God's blessing. But the book of Galatians concerns a group of people who do all those things and are still under God's curse.

How would the Judaizer's have compared to the pagans or atheists of their day?

None of us should sit easily under the scrutiny of this book. Divine blessing and divine curse are the issue. And the continental divide between the two is not between church people and non-church people, nor is it between those who call Jesus "Lord" and those who don't. It is between those, on the one hand, who have been crucified with Christ and now in poverty live in continuing reliance on the living Christ, and those, on the other hand, who have never really died to self-reliance and whose religious activity, though "moral" and perhaps even intense, is all an exercise in self-reformation. The one group glories only in the cross of Christ by which they died to all but God. But the other group extols the powers and potentials of the self and diminishes the grace of God (2:21) and the cross of Christ (5:11). The one group of church members enjoys the blessing of God promised to Abraham and his descendants, that wonderful inheritance; the other group of church members is under a divine curse.

What then is the difference between the Judaizers and Christianity as Paul teaches it?

The one group has recognized that they are drowning and helpless and in desperate need of a deliverer, the other group is fighting with all their might against the waves and the undertow and in their stubborn hearts have refused to admit their radical wickedness, give over self-reliance and self-righteousness and cry out for help, even though they will tell you to your face if asked, "Yes, I'm a Christian." 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are (standing) in faith. Test yourselves. For you should know yourselves -- that Christ Jesus is in you, unless indeed you fail to meet the test."

So Paul is driving the point home now. He argued from the Galatians experience in verses 1-5. Then he argued positively from the example of Abraham in verses 6-9 that salvation is by faith just like our spiritual father Abraham was saved by faith and now he presses it home by arguing from the law itself, and the words of the law that no one will be saved by their own self effort, no one will be saved by simply trying to live a good life and obey the law as best as they can.

## Tuesday

As we begin looking at our text for this week, the first truth that we are confronted with is this:

### 1. **The Law brings a curse (vv. 10-12).**

The law brings condemnation. Verse 10 says, "For as many as are of the works of the law," that is those who are relying on the works of the law

How is it that the law of God brings a curse?

to obtain a right relationship with God, “are under a curse.” And you can hear the Judaizers screaming, “No! where is that written in Scripture? How can we be accursed by trying to keep the law?” And so Paul quotes Moses in Deuteronomy 27 saying, “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’” (emphasis added). In other words, the standard **for everyone** according to the law of God is perfect adherence to the law of God. Paul uses the law itself to show how the Pharisee’s legalistic misuse of the law as a path to God is utterly hopeless.

According to Deut. 27:26, what must one do in order to avoid the curse and be considered a “law-keeper”?

If the standard is perfection, then it should become absolutely obvious to everyone that no one will be justified through the law or any other kind of legalism. God’s righteous requirements are not a collection of stray and miscellaneous parts, some of which may be conveniently ignored. It is a whole, and must be kept in all its parts, if it is to be considered kept at all.

Paul continues with another quote in verse 11, “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’” The first quote proves that justification, which is essential to salvation, cannot be by the law and the second quote from Habakkuk proves that it must be by faith.

Consider also James 2:10. What does this verse teach?

The ways of law and faith are mutually exclusive. To live by law is to live by self-effort and leads inevitably to failure, condemnation and death. To live by faith is to respond to God’s grace and leads to justification and eternal life. Then to cement the argument and demonstrate that no mixture of reliance on faith and law is possible, that it is not faith plus works as the Judaizers claimed, that the two are mutually exclusive, Paul says, “Yet the law is not of faith, but (and he quotes Leviticus), ‘the man who does them (or practices them) **shall live by them.**’”

Is there anyone who has ever met the requirements of Lev. 18:5?

The Scripture tells us of one who satisfied the requirements of the law, Jesus (e.g. Heb. 4:15, 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19). Why was it important that Jesus meet the demands of the law without failing in even a single point.

### Wednesday

Why are law and faith mutually exclusive in this matter of justification and why is Paul expending so much energy on this matter and making the point so forcefully?

We learned yesterday, that unless your obedience is universal, continuing in all things that are written in the book of the law, and unless it be perpetual, you shall not live before God by your obedience. If you are relying on works of the law as your means of salvation, then you have to live by them perfectly. You cannot say, “Oh well, I messed up, but now I can use faith as a supplement to works or works as a supplement to faith.”

You cannot say in your heart, “Well, just in case my faith isn’t true or good enough, I still have by baptism, my church attendance, my offerings. I’ve done pretty good.” And you cannot reason in your heart, “Well in case I haven’t done quite good enough, I still believe in Christ and can depend on His mercy to make up the difference.”

Such thinking is useless and quite simply betrays a complete misconception of the gravity of your own sin and a heart of legalism rather than true dependence on Christ. It betrays pride, self-will, and boasting. Law is not of faith and faith is not of law verse 12 says. They are exclusive. You cannot mix and match the two, come up with your own recipe for justification before God and hope He will honor it. “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling,” the hymn says.

Now, the ancient rabbis absolutely detested this doctrine, this teaching that I’ve just given you. They were so convinced in their pride and self-righteousness that salvation could be earned by keeping the law, that they tried to prove God had somehow revealed His law even to the patriarchs and other saints who lived before Moses and that those people found favor with Him because they kept His law rather than finding His favor by faith. Even though the law didn’t come until five hundred

years after Abraham and thousands of years after the promise of the Messiah given to Adam and Eve in the garden, they reconstructed history and rejected the clear teaching of God's word.

What is the danger of externalizing righteousness?

In the Sermon on the mount, Jesus confronts these teachings head on and teaches the same thing as the book of Galatians. In doing so, he utterly and utterly destroys the legalistic foundation of Judaism. Right from the very start, He says, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit...."

And to those who would piously assert they had never committed murder, He says, "whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be guilty", and those who say "You fool," shall be in danger of the fires of hell. In other words, you're a murderer in your heart. Many of us become guilty of murder almost every time we get behind the wheel of a car.

To those who might claim they have never committed adultery, He says, "Everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." It's internal heart righteousness that counts, not external obedience. Then, the Lord says you want to get into the kingdom of heaven by being righteous, 5:20... Here's what the law truly means, vv. 21-47..."Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (v. 48). The picture for humanity only gets worse when you consider the other commandments, especially the very first one. It is an undertow you cannot overcome in your own strength.

The message is the same, whether you quote Deuteronomy, Habakkuk, or Leviticus, Psalms, Matthew, James, Romans, Galatians, 1 Peter, etc. Perfection allows no exceptions, no failure of the smallest sort, and the truth is we fail every single day, and even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Those who try to come to God by their own efforts will be lost forever. The Law brings condemnation. It brings a curse.

What according to Eph. 2:9, is excluded by the way God saves us? Why does God do this and how does that bear on who question of legalism?

## Thursday

A second truth from this text is this:

How does it impact you, when you think about Christ becoming a curse for you personally?

### 2. Jesus bears the curse (vv. 13-14).

Oh beloved, when I started thinking about my own sin, sometimes I am completely overcome by the thought of Christ bearing **my curse**, becoming a curse **for me**. This is a thought we must never get over. This is a thought we must never walk away from. We must remember it. We must rehearse it. We must never let it drift too far from our thinking. We must let it sustain us and carry us through from one day to the next until we see Him.

In the late 80s there was a passenger plane that crashed just outside of Detroit, shortly after take-off. There was a giant fireball, and the firefighters and rescue personnel got there in just a few minutes. Everyone was dead, of course, scattered across the debris field. But then the firefighters saw a small two year old girl wandering dazed in the wreckage.

They were able to get her out safely. She didn't have any scratches on her or any physical trauma, but was just disoriented, and everyone concluded that she must have wandered into the wreckage after the plane crashed. Investigation and trying to discover who she was, though, revealed that she had in fact been on the plane and survived the crash.

Why did Christ become a curse for us, according to verse 14?

Crash investigators immediately began to try and figure out how this could have happened. They examined her seat and the body of her mother, and this revealed everything they needed to know. It was evident, that as the plane was going down, the mother was able to unfasten her seatbelt, cover her little daughter with her body wrapping herself around her with her back to the front of the plane. When the plane crashed, the shrapnel from the plane's hull pierced the mother, killing her instantly and the fireball burned her, but by God's grace they did not penetrate her body, and the little girl lived, shielded by her mother and safe in her arms.

Just as the mother bore in her body all of the wrath and pain of that terrible crash with the hope of shielding her daughter, so Christ bore the judgment and the wrath, the pain that was due us in His body on the cross, shielding us from the curse of the law with Himself. The

difference is that the mother was going to die and the success of her efforts was uncertain at best. Christ, on the other hand, did not have to die. He went to death voluntarily, substituting Himself for us, and there could be no doubt as to the success of His efforts.

He bore the curse for us. As Isaiah prophesied, “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....He bore the sin of many”

Was this something that another could have done for us, an angel perhaps or just a humanly good man? Why did it have to be Jesus?

### **Friday**

Christ did what none of us could do. He dove into the sea and subjected Himself to the great undertow and current of God’s law. He said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” And indeed He did. He came as a man and perfectly satisfied God’s law and lived all of life without a single sinful moment. He was perfect, sinless, without spot or blemish. Therefore, Christ was not subject to the curse of the law. He was not subject to death, being perfectly righteous and holy. Because of that, Christ was able to substitute Himself for us in two ways. First, He could substitute His death for ours, and offer Himself as the one to receive God’s judgment in our place. Second, He could exchange His righteousness, His life for ours and take our unrighteousness upon Himself. So that He is our substitute by both His death and His life Scripture says, taking our punishment on Himself and giving us His righteousness.

You say, “How could His death, the death Jesus satisfy the infinite eternal punishment due my sin which was committed against the infinite eternal God, let alone be sufficient for the sin of all humanity? How

could His one life pay the price for us all to buy us back, that's what the word "redeem" in the text means, to buy us back from the curse? The answer Beloved, is that Christ, in His person is of infinite worth and value. Indeed, He is more valuable than all of creation put together. An ordinary man could not have done it, even if he were sinless, an angel could not pay the penalty that was due for rebellion against the thrice holy God; but Jesus, who was fully man and fully God, He, who is infinitely worthy and wonderful, He could pay the price.

How did He do it? He did it by His death on a tree the text says. In ancient Judaism, a criminal, a lawbreaker, was executed by stoning. He or she was then tied to a post, which they called a tree, where the body would hang until sunset as a visible representation of rejection by God, to show that the person was cursed. When Jesus died, he took the place of the criminal, the one cursed by God by being hung on a tree. That truth became a stumbling block to most Jews. It was very hard for them to accept that the Messiah might be cursed by God and have to hang on a tree. But for those who trust Him, those two words in Galatians 3:13, "...having become a curse **for us**" become two of the most beautiful words in all of Scripture.

What is the blessing of Abraham? What is the promise of the Spirit?

Why did he do it? Why did he wrap his arms around us and shield us by His own death from the wrath of God? Why did he voluntarily become a curse for us? This text tells us two reasons. Others are mentioned elsewhere in Scripture, but we will focus on this text. The first is "that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus." We talked about that blessing last week. It is the blessing of justification, being declared not guilty, along with positive righteousness by which a man or woman might stand in the presence of God. The second reason mentioned is "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." That is the person of God Himself, dwelling in our hearts in glorious fellowship, working in us for His glory, making us fit for His kingdom, using us for His marvelous works, loving us, giving us peace, making us His temple, and doing all of this so that Jesus Christ, the one we adore, will be glorified.

How are these two gifts received?

And you will notice the last two words of verse 14, "**through faith.**" The redemption that brings justification before God and the promised Holy Spirit does not come through works, legalism or any sort of human effort. It comes through faith.

So the first truth of the passage is this: "good, moral, religious people," who have not been crucified with Christ and do not have his Spirit

empowering them with humility and joy and love by faith, often come into the church, espouse the doctrines of the church and undertake to work for God in the power of the flesh. These men and women are still living under the curse of the law itself, and doomed to condemnation unless they repent in brokenness and cling to Christ alone. The second truth is that, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.” Paul knew that he stood under a curse for all the years he had devoted to legalism. He excelled beyond all his contemporaries in zeal for the law (Gal. 1:14), but he did not know the first thing about the obedience that comes from faith in reliance on the Holy Spirit.

So I close by putting before you this week the way of blessing (v. 14) and the way of the curse (v. 10). What sets you under the one or under the other is not so much what you do as the heart in which you do it. Attending worship may be a “work of law” or an act of love which flows from faith. Saying your prayers and reading your Bible may be a “work of law” or a free act of love which comes from faith. Sunday School teaching, preaching, fasting, giving tithes and offerings, going on short term mission trips or into full time missions or Christian service, giving to the poor, visiting prisons, caring for your wife and children--all these *may* be “works of law” which we do in our strength, to move God’s favor our way, or they may be done in humble reliance on the strength which God freely supplies that in everything he may get the glory. The decision of curse or blessing hangs on the heart and who is glorified in the unseen depths of the soul.

The Judaizers in their obedience, because of their self-righteous hearts, boasted in the flesh (Gal. 6:13). Paul in his obedience, because of his redeemed heart and faith in Christ alone, said, “God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Gal. 6:14.

Oh beloved, wrap your arms around the deliverer, who dove into the ocean and swam with almighty power against the deadly currents, who gave His life to bear your curse, so that you would not have to. Wrap your arms around Him, let His strength be your strength. Hold fast to Him, love Him. Worship and follow Jesus from the depths of your soul from a heart of faith, hope and love.

## Summary Of This Week's Lesson

**Main Idea:** Do you bear your own curse, or does Christ?

1. The law brings a curse (vv. 10-12).
2. The Lord Jesus bears the curse for those who believe (vv. 13-14).

Hymn: Redeemed

Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;

Redeemed through His infinite mercy, his child, and forever I am.

Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the lamb;

Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever, I am.

Redeemed and so happy in Jesus, No language my rapture can tell;

I know that the light of His presence With me doth continually dwell.

Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the lamb;

Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever, I am.

I think of my blessed Redeemer, I think of Him all the day long;

I sing, for I cannot be silent; His love is the theme of my song.

Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the lamb;

Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever, I am.

I know I shall see in His beauty The King in whose law I delight;

Who lovingly guardeth my footsteps, And giveth me songs in the night.

Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the lamb;

Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever, I am.

Author: Fanny J. Crosby, 1882