

Lesson 11 – Galatians 3:10-14

Randy Thompson
Valley Bible Church
www.valleybible.net

Review/Introduction

Paul is writing to the Galatian churches who are in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

“Grace” is God’s sovereign, omnipotent, supernatural, unilateral intervention in the most hopeless and helpless situations with actions that only He can perform and with the results that only He can produce, all for His glory. The true gospel is all about grace “not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”.

Paul first greeted the Galatians, then started right into their correction and his attack on the Judaizers who are disturbing the Galatians with a different, distorted gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6-7).

He then went on to show that the true gospel that he preached was not learned from other people nor found in Scripture-invalidating tradition nor did he invent it. He received it directly from the Lord Jesus. This is the same as us since we have received the gospel from the God through His word. He presented the authentication of the Gospel through the source (God) and its power (persecutor to preacher; slave of sin to slave of Christ).

❖ Does your life authenticate the gospel?

Paul made it clear that the great doctrinal truth of justification leaves no room for law/works because it treats grace disdainfully; it makes Christ sacrifice as needless.

In chapter three, Paul begins the doctrinal section of the letter, looking at the defense of justification by faith. Paul began by asking five questions of the Galatians which drove home the point that they did not receive spiritual baptism through works of the law, but by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The Galatians had a true spiritual experience because they had received the Spirit. They did not receive spiritual baptism through works of the law, but by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. These questions were meant to stir the thoughtless Galatians (and us) to think seriously about the gospel.

¹You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified? ²This is the only thing I want to find out from you: **did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?** ³Are you so foolish? **Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?** ⁴Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵So then, **does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?** (Galatians 3:1-5)

The Galatians’ Spirit baptism experience demonstrated justification by grace through faith alone and not law. Then Paul gave a Scriptural argument from Abraham’s pre-circumcision and pre-Law justification by faith alone. Those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Today we look at the contrast between the blessing of faith with the curse of the law.

Paul's defense of justification by faith – The curse of the law (3:10-14)

1. Curse of the Law (3:10-12)

¹⁰For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.” ¹¹Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” ¹²However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM.”

¹⁰For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹²But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” (ESV)

Paul is meticulously destroying any thought that justification comes through works. He had just showed that Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation and the receiver of circumcision, was justified by faith.

⁶Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. ⁷Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. ⁸The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, “All the nations will be blessed in you.” ⁹So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. (Galatians 3:6-9)

Abraham was justified by faith before being circumcised and before the Law was given. Yet the Judaizers taught that the Law was required for justification. Paul will now show that the law is actually a means of being cursed by God and that it is Christ alone that saves.

“For” connects the previous section about justification by faith alone to the non-means of justification, the law, in this section.

Who are the ones that are under a curse? The NASB says, “as many as are of the works of the Law”, where the ESV say, “all who rely on works of the law”. The NASB is literal, but the ESV gives the sense of “are of the works of the law” as being those who rely on the works of the law for salvation. Essentially, those that rely or trust on the works of the law are putting their faith in the law to save.

All those who rely on works of the law are under a curse. Really this is anyone who relies on something other than Christ: relying on doing good things, abstaining from bad things, having parents or grandparents who are Christians, connection to a religious organization, religious ritual, religious zeal, or even believing that God exists.

❖ What do you rely on for salvation? Do you add anything to Christ?

“Curse” is a divine judgment that brings the sentence of condemnation. Everyone who relies on keeping the OT Law (or any man-made rules and regulations) is cursed or under God’s condemnation. That condemnation is death.

²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

To address this with the Judaizers, Paul goes to the OT Scripture and gives them the book, chapter, and verse so-to-speak of the Law from which his statement is derived quoting Deuteronomy 26:27.

²⁶‘Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’ (Deuteronomy 27:26)

²⁶“‘Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’ (Deuteronomy 27:26 ESV)

The NASB nor the ESV matches Paul’s quote. That is because he is quoting from the Septuagint. The Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Hebrew OT. It was translated into Greek for the dispersed Jews who had lost the Hebrew language. It was translated in Alexandria, Egypt, about 250 BC. Tradition says that seventy Hebrew scholars translated the Hebrew text into Greek. Therefore, it is designated “LXX” or “70” in Roman numerals.

²⁶Cursed is every man that continues not in all the words of this law to do them: and all the people shall say, So be it. (Deuteronomy 27:26 LXX)

This is a theme repeated throughout the OT.

¹The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, ²“Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; ³and say to them, ‘**Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “Cursed is the man who does not heed the words of this covenant ⁴which I commanded your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, ‘Listen to My voice, and do according to all which I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God, (Jeremiah 11:1-4)**

⁵Thus says the Lord, “**Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the Lord.** ⁶“For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes, But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, A land of salt without inhabitant. ⁷“**Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord And whose trust is the Lord.** ⁸“For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit. ⁹“**The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?** ¹⁰“I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds. (Jeremiah 17:5-10)

The Deuteronomy passage makes it clear that a person is cursed if they do “not abide by ALL THINGS written in the book of the law, to perform them.” Almost all is not good enough. James says that same thing.

¹⁰For **whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.** ¹¹For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not commit murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. (James 2:10-11)

❖ **Are you sensitive to small sins or “respectable” sins?**

Paul's point is clear. If you rely on the law, then you must do every single point of the law and never miss anything. You must never sin. The Judaizers should have known this, but they were deceived into thinking that they were righteous.

The Judaizers were self-righteous. They actually believed that by keeping the Law (and throwing Christ in) that they could justify themselves. They “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt”.

⁹And He also told this parable to some people who **trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:** ¹⁰“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²**I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.**’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for **everyone who exalts himself will be humbled**, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14)

Paul was one of these people before he encountered the living Christ. He viewed himself as blameless regarding the Law.

⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; **as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.** (Philippians 3:5-6)

❖ **Is your attitude like that? Are you proud or humble?**

It is plain, clear to the understanding or mind “evident” that no one is justified by the Law before God. This is “evident” because the Scriptures clearly say so that “the righteous man shall live by faith”.

⁴“Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith. (Habakkuk 2:4)

¹⁷For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous *man* shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:17)

❖ **Is God's means of salvation and sanctification evident to you ?**

The Law is not of faith, it is works. And faith does not include works. They are mutually exclusive. Now, faith produces works (James 2), but works do not justify.

⁴You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God. ⁵So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord. (Leviticus 18:4-5)

❖ **What faith-produced works do you see in your life?**

If you are relying on the works of the Law, then you must be perfect, never missing one point, always keeping the Law. Jesus said this in the Sermon on the Mount giving the point that it is impossible.

⁴⁸Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

Works of the Law do not justify. Paul expands on this idea in Romans.

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

²⁰because **by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.** (Romans 3:19-20)

²⁷Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸For **we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.** (Romans 3:27-28)

Paul is clear to the Judaizers – be perfect with your salvation by keeping the law or die eternally. Since you cannot be perfect, then you are lost by adding law to faith.

2. Christ's redemption from the Law (3:13-14)

¹³Christ 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”—¹⁴in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—¹⁴so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (ESV)

The bad news was presented in 3:10-12 – working your way to heaven results in God's divine judgment that brings the sentence of condemnation. The good news is now given. God in His great mercy provided remedy for the curse.

“Redeemed” means literally to buy out of the market place. The idea is not just to redeem but to completely redeem.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse “for us”.

²⁴and **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross**, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

¹⁸For **Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God**, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; (1 Peter 3:18)

²¹He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Paul again quotes from the OT to show that Christ became a curse to take on the death that should have been ours.

²²“If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you **hang him on a tree**,²³his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for **he who is hanged is accursed of God**), so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 21:22-23)

This passage shows that someone who has committed sin deserving death is hung on a tree afterwards. The sinner was executed by stoning was then tied to a post (a tree). The body was hung there until sunset as a visible representation of rejection by God.

The point here is not that Jesus became a curse because He was hung on a tree or crucified. He was hung on a tree or crucified because He chose to be cursed for us by becoming sin on our behalf.

Jews, during the early church, would call Jesus “accursed” because He was hung on a tree.

³Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:3)

Summarizing this section back to 3:1, Paul says that Christ became a curse for us for two reasons. First, “that in Christ Jesus the blessings of Abraham might come to the Gentiles”. This is clearly a reference to salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Second, that the gentiles would receive the indwelling Spirit by faith. Neither the blessings of Abraham the believer nor the indwelling Spirit happen by works of the Law, only by faith.

❖ **How does Christ becoming a curse for you move you to gratitude?**

Conclusion

The Galatians were in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Paul began this doctrinal section of the letter by asking five questions of the Galatians driving home the point that they did not receive spiritual baptism through works of the law, but by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He then gave a Scriptural argument from Abraham’s pre-circumcision and Law justification by faith alone. Here he gave the argument from the Law’s failure to justify.

Additional Study

1. Read Galatians once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for six days).
2. Today’s Questions
 - What do you rely on other than Christ for salvation or sanctification?
 - Who or what do you compare yourself to regarding righteousness?
 - In what ways are you living by faith?
 - Think about all your blessings in Christ?
 - In what ways could you be walking in the Spirit better?