

GALATIANS: THE ONE TRUE GOSPEL



WEEK 12 THE CURSE & THE CURE (THE CURSE OF THE LAW & CHRIST THE CURE) GALATIANS 3:10-14

Van Nuys Bible Study
Doulos Fellowship Group
Grace Community Church

Prepared by Hans Kaufman
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Galatians 3:10-14 – The Curse & the Cure

The Text

For 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.”

Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for

“The righteous shall live by faith.”

But the law is not of faith, rather

“The one who does them shall live by them.”

Christ 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”

—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Introduction

- Paul is enraged by the Judaizers’ infiltration of the Galatian churches.
- He has reminded them of his apostolic authority and exclusivity of the gospel.
- He has also supported his claim that the gospel he preaches is God’s gospel.
- The third chapter begins with another personal address. (“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?”)
- Now, Paul is arguing for the truthfulness of the gospel itself... that salvation has always been the result of faith and not by works of the law...

Principal Proposition

No one is saved by trying to obey a law they can't keep... rather, our sins should drive us to the cross of Christ where full payment has been made.

Literary Context

- A. Paul's Gospel is God's Gospel (1:11-2:21)
 - B. Paul's Explanation of the Gospel (3:1-4:11)
 - 1. The Experience of the Galatians (3:1-5)
 - 2. The Example of Abraham (3:6-9)
 - 3. **The Curse of the Law (3:10-14)**
 - 4. The Law and the Abrahamic Covenant (3:15-4:11)
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Literary Structure

The Curse and the Cure

Cursed	(v. 10)
Condemned	(v. 11-12)
Cured	(v. 13-14)

Interpretive Comments

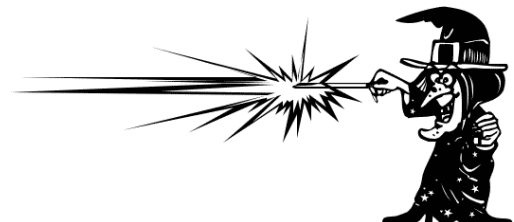
The Curse and the Cure

Cursed

v. 10 For 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."

- "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse"

- The "curse" mentioned here is not a spiritual hex or string of unfortunate circumstances.



- Throughout the Old Testament (and particularly the law), the curse refers to the reception of God’s judgment (Deuteronomy 30:1).
- “for it is written”
- This is a common way for the New Testament to introduce Old Testament quotes (occurs 61 times).
 - In this chapter, Paul has already quoted from the Old Testament twice (Genesis 15:6 in v6 and Genesis 12:3 in v8). He will quote from the Scriptures three more times in v10-12.
- “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law”
- Paul is quoting from the final section of the Book of the Law itself (Deuteronomy 27:26).
 - The Book of the Law is a single unit and not a miscellaneous collection of rules where some statutes can be disregarded. Every part joins together to form a collective whole.
 - Anyone who does not abide by everything in the law receives God’s judgment. Any failure to keep the whole law (no matter how small) deserves a curse. By breaking one part of the law, we break all of it (James 2:10).
- “and do them”
- According to the law, it was not enough to simply live by God’s principles. Every command of the law required active obedience (Deuteronomy 28:15). The law demanded perfection.
 - Does this curse apply to us as Gentiles?
Or only to Jewish law-breakers?



Condemned

v. 11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”

➤ “Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for”

- Paul is making an obvious observation with the support of Scripture. The HCSB translation says, “Now it is clear that...”
- Scripture reveals that no one is righteous (Psalm 130:3, 143:2; 1 Kings 8:46; Job 9:2; 15:14; 25:4; Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23; 1 Corinthians 4:4).
- He has already made it perfectly clear that no one can be justified by obeying the law (Galatians 2:16; Romans 3:20).



➤ “The righteous shall live by faith”

- This Scripture quotation comes from Habakkuk 2:4.
- Paul quotes the same verse in Romans to show that God has always saved sinners on the basis of faith alone (Romans 1:17).
- The writer of Hebrews also uses this verse to demonstrate that saving faith does not quit but endures to the end (Hebrews 10:36-39).
- An alternate interpretation of the text states, “The one who by faith is righteous will live.” That said, we have a few questions worth working through...
 - How does this difference in word order alter the meaning of the verse?
 - Which interpretation is most likely being employed here?
 - Why?
- This is not a “once prayed always saved” message. Saving faith is not a one-time event. It is a way of life.

v. 12 But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”

➤ “But the law is not of faith, rather”

- These two approaches are opposed to each other (justification by obeying the law and justification by faith). It is impossible to obey the law for salvation and live by faith at the same time (Romans 3:21-22).

Law obedience, then, is contrary to faith since it is predicated on obeying instead of believing to obtain salvation, on performing what is required instead of trusting God’s work in Christ. (Schreiner)

➤ “The one who does them shall live by them”

- Once again, Paul quotes from the law (Leviticus 18:5). He will refer to this verse again in Romans 10:5.
- No one “does them” perfectly. Therefore, the law by itself is not able to bring a person to salvation, but death. It condemns the sinner and shows us our desperate need for a Savior (Romans 3:20; 4:15; 5:13, 20; 7:7).
- A person will either live by faith or by obedience to the law. Salvation can only be found in one, not both.
- If these principles are true and support the main idea presented in v10 (all who rely on works of the law are under a curse), then man’s condition under the law is utterly hopeless. If there is any hope at all, it must come from somewhere else entirely...

Cured

v. 13 Christ 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”

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

- This is the first time Christ has been mentioned since the opening of the chapter.



- The word “redeemed” literally means “to secure deliverance of or to liberate.”¹ It was often used in reference to buying a slave’s freedom and harkens back to the Exodus when God freed His people from bondage.
- Christ has ransomed us from God’s curse (judgment) by becoming cursed (judged) in our place.

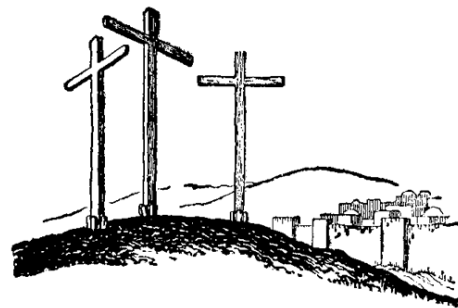
But for those who trust in Him, the two words “for us” become the two most beautiful words in all of Scripture. Because God sent His Son to bear the penalty for man’s sin, every person who puts his trust in the crucified Savior has had the curse borne for him. (MacArthur)

➤ “for it is written”

- Paul does not allow himself to deliver such a gospel-saturated statement without backing himself up with more Scripture.

➤ “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”

- Paul’s final quotation for this argument is from Deuteronomy 21:22-23.
- The Old Testament context of this practice tells us that this was not a method of execution, but a sign of shame that would occur after the death of a criminal (Numbers 25:4; Joshua 10:26-27; 2 Samuel 21:6-9). The corpses of those who broke God’s law would serve as a warning for others.
- To a Jew, the idea that God would allow the Messiah to be crucified is an unbearable contradiction.
- Jesus was not cursed because He was crucified. He was crucified because He was cursed. By taking our sins upon Himself, He endured the judgments of God we deserve (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; Acts 5:30).



¹ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature aka BDAG* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 343.

v. 14 —so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

➤ “so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles“

- The blessing of Abraham affirmed here is the same blessing stated in v9 (salvation through faith).
- The promise of Genesis 12:3 (that all nations will be blessed in Abraham) has now become a reality in Jesus.
- Gentiles are included in this blessing by trusting in Christ (not by obeying the law).

➤ “so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith”

- There is support for the notion that the blessing of Abraham is linked with the promise of the Spirit. Both are referred to as the same reality in Isaiah 44:3.
- Since we Gentiles have the Holy Spirit, we enjoy the blessing of Abraham.
- How is any of this possible? Through faith.

Summary

The curse of the law condemns those would seek salvation through it... but Christ has become the cure by taking the curse upon Himself; therefore, the righteous will live by faith in Him (and Him alone).

Discussion Questions

- Does this curse apply to us as Gentiles? Or only to Jewish law-breakers? (pg. 4)
 - An alternate interpretation of the text states, “The one who by faith is righteous will live.” That said, we have a few questions worth working through... (pg. 5)
 - How does this difference in word order alter the meaning of the verse?
 - Which interpretation is most likely being employed here? Why?
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Concise Prayers

- Lord, we rely on you alone for salvation. (v. 10)
- May our lives be characterized by our faith in you. (v. 11)
- We are crushed by the perfect standard of your law. Our sin condemns us. (v. 12)
- Thank you for becoming our substitute and dying the death we deserve. (v. 13)
- You are the Father of all who trust in your Son. Amen. (v. 14)

