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Faith Bible Church
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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Study of the Bible-74
Galatians 3:10-14 –Christ Cursed for us

Read Galatians 3:10-14. After Paul demonstrates that it was through faith, not the Mosaic Law, that Abraham received the perfect righteousness of God (Gal. 3:6-9), he advances his discussion of the Law. In verse 10 Paul argues that it is precisely because a man cannot keep *all* of the Law that he stands cursed (*ἐπικατάρατος, epikataratos*) by God. The Law that Paul has in mind is *not* the civil law. Civil law has its place, but civic righteousness will never deliver a person from the condemnation of God's Law. Just because a person never breaks a civil code, like speeding or running a stop sign, does not mean that he is righteous before God. The Law Paul has in mind is the law between God and man as laid out in the Decalogue and certain Levitical laws. In other words, the Law Paul has in mind is the Law between God and man. This Law of God demands that man live perfectly *before* God. This perfection would not only be in the area of never committing a sin against God, it would necessitate doing all he was supposed to do as well. In other words, for a man to be righteous by works (law principle), he would have to not commit any sins, either sins of commission or omission. No one can do that; no human being has ever done that. The Law was given to drive that point home, to teach man his need for God's grace, as vividly portrayed in the Levitical offerings, which all pointed to a coming Messiah who would be the Perfect Mediator to bridge the gap between the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of man. Paul's makes the point that God's people have always been saved by faith, never by keeping the Law, reread Gal. 3:10-12.

Galatians 3:10-14 constitute one of the clearest expositions of the necessity, meaning, and consequence of the Cross. Although several attempts have been made by politically correct "theologians" to soften some of the language of Christ being cursed, Paul means every word of it. So we have to come to terms with its meaning, namely that *God made Christ a cursed one for our sake*, read 2 Corinthians 5:19-21.

We need to feel the logic of Paul's teaching in this section. He declares, with scriptural authority, that *all who rely on the Law are under a curse*. The reason Paul can declare such to be "under a curse" is that Scripture says: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law" (Deut. 27:26). No human being has ever *continued to do everything the Law requires—except for one, namely Jesus Christ*. Therefore, clearly nobody is "*justified*" by the Law before God (Gal. 3:11). Paul shows that Scripture teaches that "the righteous shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:11) and that living by faith and living by the Law are complete different ways to live (reread Gal. 2:12). The conclusion is unavoidable. Although theoretically those who obey the Law will live, in practice no one ever does. Therefore, no one can obtain salvation that way. On the contrary, far from being saved by the Law, we are cursed by it. The curse or judgment of God, which His Law pronounces on lawbreakers, rests upon all men so that all men stand condemned by their works.

However, God did not leave man in this state of condemnation. In verse 13 Paul tells us that *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us*. This is the plainest statement in the New Testament on substitutionary atonement. The curse of the Law rested on us; Christ redeemed us from that curse by becoming God-cursed in our stead. The curse that lay on us was transferred to Him. He assumed our curse, so that we might be delivered from being cursed of God.

Not only did Christ's work on the cross remove God's curse upon us, it also had the effect of bestowing unfathomable eternal blessings. Paul goes from cursing to blessing in 3:14 (read again). In other words Christ died for us not only to redeem us from the curse of God, but also to secure for us the blessing of God. This includes countless eternal blessings that we have from God and with God, all based on the grace of Christ becoming our curse and bearing all of our sins and attributing all of His righteousness to us. What an exchange! What a deal! What grace! Two of the blessings mentioned in this context are justification (vs. 8) and the ministry of God the Holy Spirit (vs. 14). For other eternal blessings that have been secured by Christ, read John 14:2-3; 2 Cor. 4:17; Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 14:13; 19:1; 21:3-6, 9; 22:3.

To sum up this section, because of disobedience (sins of omission and commission) all men were under the curse of the Law. Christ provided redemption for man by bearing the curse in his stead. As a result, we receive, by faith alone in Christ alone, the promised blessing of salvation with all blessings that that relationship entails. Paul's logic is irresistible. To grasp the grace in this section is to be moved to deeper love and worship of God and respond to such a love that was demonstrated by His willingness to go to such lengths to remove God's curse from us and put us in the position of eternal blessings. Let us never forget that blessings are only possible because He bore our well-deserved curses on the cross. All He asks is that we respond to His love and grace by moving closer to Him. What He wishes for you and me more than anything else is for us to be closer to Him. Such is His love. Such is any love.

*In 'Ehyeh,
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