

Galatians 3:10-14

*Free From The Curse*

In 1966 the US passed a law granting Cuban refugees that make it to our shores immunity from deportation. Since that time thousands have found freedom on American soil.

But not everyone who has tried has made it. In the 4 years from January 2000 to December 2003 the US Coast Guard reported that 200 Cubans had lost their lives trying to get to the US.

The Cuban Communist Party daily paper Granma, is quoted as saying: “Every grave incident of a boat-wreck, kidnapping or death will be known by our people and by the world public opinion as irrefutable proof of the cynicism of the policies of the United States against Cuba.”

The paper goes on to call the law a “killing machine.”

That’s interesting. Regardless of what you might think about American policy toward Cuba, the law isn’t a “killing machine.”

The law is intended to provide a safe haven. The law isn’t taking people’s lives any more than the Cuban government that’s so repressive it makes people want to flee the country is causing their deaths. Ultimately it’s the people’s inability to get here that’s the problem.

Our study of the book of Galatians has brought us to one of the most interesting and important passages in the New Testament.

It deals with God’s Law and God’s character. It shows us a side of God that most people refuse to admit exists. And yet, it gets right to the heart of who God is. It deals with a law that brings death, and yet the law isn’t the problem. In fact, the law is good.

The author of the letter to the Galatians is an apostle named Paul. Under the inspiration of God Paul is writing to new Christians who were being turned away from their new-found faith by false teachers.

As we’ve seen so far, the thing that makes this letter so practical for us today is

the timelessness of the false teaching Paul's dealing with. The names may change down through the centuries but the end result is still the same.

God's message to us is that our sin stands between us and Him. Almost every religion realizes that.

The real point of difference is, what does God require from us? What is it that allows us to enjoy forgiveness and being made part of His family? What allows us to have the confidence that we have peace with God?

The message of the Bible is a message of Grace. Grace is God's undeserved favor that comes through Jesus Christ.

That message stands in opposition to every religious system that's ever existed.

The Christians in Galatia were confronted by a religious system. We're confronted by religious systems and philosophies every day. So if we can understand God's answer for the questions the Galatians had, we can understand any religious question we come up against.

Here's the dividing line between God's truth and man's religion. The dividing line is grace.

You can remember the meaning of grace by the acronym GRACE. God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

Grace is something that we can't earn, we don't deserve, we can't buy. Grace flies in the face of all the rest of our human experience.

All through life we're told to work for what we get. And that's important in all other aspects of life. We work to do well in school. We work to get ahead on the job.

Then we come to God's way of forgiveness and we not only don't work, we can't work for it. In fact the Bible says: *"Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness."* Romans 4:4-5

Jesus Christ died to pay our sin debt. That's a debt we could never pay. Jesus Christ rose from the dead to give us His life. That's a life we can never earn. We can only receive it as a gift from God.

Now here's the point of confusion. Man's religion is like the old anti-pollution devices they first put on smoke stack in factories.

The first generation pollution devices removed visible particles of solid matter. The air looked clean but what really happened was they let gases that are converted to sulfuric and nitric acids into the air.

Before they used these things the solids actually helped neutralize the acids to prevent acid rain.

What looked like it was cleaning up the air was actually producing acid rain!

That's like mankind's religions. Religions can filter out a lot of external bad stuff. The problem comes in what's not so obvious.

So somebody practicing religion thinks they're OK with God because they're life looks better.

In the mean time the real problem is still there. The religion has covered things up so they look better. But there's no payment for sin. Jesus is a side issue, a moral teacher, instead of a suffering Savior. In the end religion causes people to hope in themselves instead of God.

Now there's a lot of different religions in our world. Many of them have nothing to do with the Bible. But the most diabolical form of religion is one that twists God's word and perverts God's grace.

That's what Paul was dealing with here in Galatians. Nothing does more to corrupt the truth of the character of God or to distort the true nature of human beings than a works-based religious system that purports to be based on the Bible.

So In Galatians Paul calls the Galatian Christians, and all of us, back to the Bible.

## Turn to Gal 3 pg 1035

As we pick up in verse 10 today I want us to see first of all, *To Try To Work Your Way To God Is, In Reality, To Dig Your Own Grave*

### Read vs 10

That's an amazing verse, isn't it?

The OT law is totally perfect. It's holy, just, and good. The commandments of God contained in the law that He gave to Israel are perfect. The longest Psalm, Psalm 119 with 176 verses is totally dedicated to praising God for His law.

When it comes to the 10 commandments, there's not one too many or one too few. The law of the Lord is the sum of perfection. God's law is the basis for the system of law in this country. that's why you find the 10 commandments on government buildings all over Washington DC.

God's law is glorious. But it's never more misapplied than when anyone attempts to use it as a way of salvation.

Here's something we can't forget. God never intended anyone to find forgiveness through keeping His law.

When God gave His law to Moses on Mt. Sinai it was with thunder and lightening, and clouds and smoke and fire. God was saying, "Hear my law, but you need to keep your distance, and you need to tremble when you hear it."

It was carved in tablets of stone to show that it was hard and unbending.

See, we're being told here that God's law curses everyone who tries to live by it.

Now that really blows some people away. That seems like a hopeless contradiction.

The law of God is good, but it curses everyone who tries to live by it.

Those two things seem like opposites. How could both be true?

Both can be true because the problem doesn't come with God's law. The law is fine. God's law is a perfect representation of His holiness.

The problem isn't with the law. It's with us.

Look at the quote we're given here from Deuteronomy 27: *"Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."*

How does a holy law become our condemnation? Because no one can keep it perfectly. And the law requires perfect obedience.

Look back with me for a moment to the Book of James, chapter 2 and verse 10.

**PG 1073 Read 2:10**

Gal 3:10 and James 2:10 both deal with the same issue.

How many lies does it take for you to become a liar?

How many murders do you have to carry out before you're a murderer?

How many sins do you have to commit before you're a sinner?

If you rob the 7-11, you're a thief. You've broken the law and you're guilty.

Could you imagine being arrested for robbing the 7-11, they got you on the security camera, the whole deal. And you stand there before the judge and you start telling him how all the good things you've done certainly ought to outweigh this little problem of armed robbery.

You could say, "I've obeyed the law hundreds of times before in my life. Why I get a Big Gulp and a Chile Dog almost every day. I've been in hundreds of 7-11's and I've never robbed one before."

That's not going to carry a whole lot of weight with the judge, is it?

If I commit a crime I become a lawbreaker.

If we keep the whole law of God, and yet offend in one point, were still guilty. This is why the Bible says that *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Some of us may be greater sinners than others. Some of us may be lesser sinners than others. But we've all failed to keep God's law perfectly.

### **Back to Galatians**

Remember, these are people who have been told that the way to heaven is by believing in Jesus and then obeying God's law.

So Paul writes them and says, "OK guys, listen carefully. If you want to put yourself under God's law as the way to heaven, go ahead. But let me warn you about something. In the end God's law can't bring you forgiveness because you can't keep it. Instead you'll be under a curse."

"God's law can only show you what's right to do. It can't forgive when you fail. the law is perfect and you're not. Therefore, all the law can do is condemn."

To a lot of people these days the words of Galatians 3:10 sound jarring and harsh and caustic. They don't seem to line up with most people's opinion of God. We like to think of a God who blesses, but we don't like the idea of a God who judges.

On March 20th, on Palm Sunday we're going to host a satellite broadcast of a live debate on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Did it really happen? Are the Gospel accounts reliable?

The debate will be between Dr. William Lane Craig, Research Professor of Philosophy, Talbot Seminary and Bishop John Shelby Spong, Retired Episcopal Bishop and author of a number of books like "Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism" and "Resurrection : Myth or Reality?"

Spong has written: "Jesus...was...placed into a common grave, and covered over...in a very short time only some unmarked bones remained. Even the bones were gone before too long. Nature rather efficiently reclaims its own resources. A deceased man did not walk out of his grave physically alive three days after his execution by crucifixion."

That debate's going to be very interesting. But along with not believing in the resurrection, Spong says that Jesus didn't die for our sins. He says: "I don't want a God that would require a blood sacrifice of his son."

Spong says, "Jesus was so connected to God as the Ground of Being that he could love even the unlovable like lepers, tax collectors and prostitutes and not exhaust the love of God that had manifested within him. He calls each of us to go past the barriers of prejudice and hatred and connect with the inexhaustible love found within and through God. With this inexhaustible love, one can imagine a person such as Jesus being a willing sacrifice out of love for all humanity, and not as a sacrifice for our sins."

If God isn't just and His law doesn't make perfect demands then there's no reason for an innocent sacrifice. If God is love but not holy then how could his law expose the fact that we deserve judgment?

Spong certainly isn't alone in his assessment of God. A lot of people today would agree with him wholeheartedly.

The truth is, the Law of God is mirror of the character of God. You can't separate the two. What the law says, God says. What the law curses, God curses.

Disobedience always brings us under the curse of God and exposes us to the awful realities of His judgment.

That's why we need a Savior. That's why we need the cross.

Now remember, the false teachers told the non-Jewish Galatians that they had to basically become followers of Judaism by keeping God's law. So Paul gets right to the heart of the issue.

The common opinion of Jewish scholars was that the *Am Haaretz*, "The people of the earth," the non-Jews who had no knowledge of, or interest in the God of Israel's law, were under God's curse. They made a big thing about the curse of God on the Gentiles.

See the truth here. We're all under the curse. The Jews have God's law written in stone and the Gentiles, the Bible says, have it written on their hearts. In the end,

the Bible says that God's law stops every mouth and that the whole world is guilty before God. To try to be saved by keeping God's law is to just keep digging your grave deeper.

So here's the question. If the law can only bring a curse, how will we ever find God's blessing?

That's the second thing we'll see this morning:

*II. The Only Way to Eternal Life Is Through Jesus Christ*

### **Read vs 11**

How can we find the freedom of forgiveness? How can we have peace with our Creator? Habakkuk 2:4 *The just shall live by faith.*

Gal 2:16 says we're, "Justified by faith in Christ." Gal 3:24 says again we're justified by faith.

That Phrase, "Justification by faith," was a foundational concept of the Protestant Reformation.

The just shall live by faith, **Yet... (read 12)**

Our good works play a very important part in our Christian lives. God has ordained that we walk in good works. Our good works glorify our Father in heaven and point other people to Him.

But works are only "good works" if they're works we do in response to God's forgiveness. When we do works to try to *earn* God's forgiveness, they're not good anymore. Now they condemn us.

The person who wants to find forgiveness by keeping God's law must live by all of it. Not 50% of the time, not 80% of the time, but 100% obedience 24/7. That's like trying to quench your thirst by drinking salt water.

The curse is the real issue. Somehow the curse of the law has to be overcome.

Here's where the life and death of Jesus Christ becomes crucial.

**Read 13a "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law"**



There are three separate Greek words translated by the word “redeemed” in the New Testament. These three words taken together tell the story of redemption.

The first is *agorazo*. It literally means “to purchase in the slave market.” The word *agora* is the word for open market. Agoraphobia is “fear of open, public places.”

The imagery is, we are slaves of sin. We are under the curse of God and in the possession of Satan. Jesus Christ enters the market and buys us off the auction block.

The second word is *exagorazo*. This is the word that Paul uses in verse 13. Ex means “out” and *exagorazo* means “to buy a slave and take him out of the market place.”

Christ has redeemed believers. He has bought us out. We’ll never be put up for sale in any slave market again.

Then the third word is the verb *lutrao*. That verb means “to set free.”

See the beautiful imagery?

Jesus bought us, took us out, and set us free. How did Jesus Christ, the second person of the trinity, God in the flesh, make this purchase?

**Rest of vs. 13 having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”)**

Deut 21 gives these instructions: *“If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.”*

It wasn’t the act of hanging the guy on the tree that made him accursed. It was that his hanging on the tree showed that he had committed a capital crime.

The Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to a cross and lifted up publicly for all to see.

No wonder the Jews struggled with his claims that he was Messiah. No wonder the Jewish priests pushed for the Romans to carry out the crucifixion.

How could Jesus, the Anointed of God, hang on a tree?

Often times in the first century when the Christians preached Christ crucified, Jews in the audience would yell back "Jesus is accursed! He hung on a cross. We know He's accursed!"

The sad thing was, they were right about the "accursed" part but they didn't understand.

It was only by Jesus becoming accursed by the Father that the way of life could be opened.

With all due respect to Bishop Spong, Jesus Christ died for our sins. He didn't die for some nebulous demonstration of undefined love. In II Corinthians 5:21 says "He became sin for us."

In those three dark hours on the cross the Son of God bore Divine wrath. He became a curse for us. *"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."*

CH Spurgeon, the famous British preacher, in a sermon entitled "The Curse Removed," June 15, 1911, said this:

"Should there be one here who does not understand substitution, let me repeat what I have said. Sinner, the only way thou canst be saved is this. God must punish sin; if he did not, he would undeify himself; but if he has punished sin in the person of Christ for thee, thou art fully absolved, thou art quite clear; Christ hath suffered what thou oughtest to have suffered, and thou mayest rejoice in that. "

"Well," sayest thou, "I ought to have died." Christ hath died! "I ought to have been sent to hell." Christ did not go there to endure that torment forever; but he suffered an equivalent for it, something which satisfied God. The whole of hell was distilled into his cup of sorrows; he drank it. The cup which his father gave him, he drank to its dregs."

“All the punishment, all the curse, on him was laid. Vengeance now was satisfied; all was gone, and gone for ever; but not gone without having been taken away by the Savior. The thunders have not been reserved, they have been launched at him, and vengeance is satisfied, because Christ has endured the full penalty of all his people's guilt.”

What was the result of Christ bearing that curse? **Read vs 14**

Christ died to redeem the Jews from the curse of the law and to bring the blessings of Abraham to the Gentiles by faith.

20 Centuries before Galatians was written, God made a promise to Abraham. He said, “In you all nations of the earth shall be blessed.”

For 2000 years it was as if the Gentile nations were passed by. They didn't know anything about the blessings of Abraham. They were strangers from the covenant.

Then Jesus came. Then the cross and the resurrection happened. Now the whole world is in on the promise. Whosoever will may come.

This is quite a passage of Scripture.

Church Swidoll, pastor of Stonebriar Community Church north of Dallas, points out that this passage in Galatians provides a couple of principles that need to be weighed very carefully.

#1. Salvation is an either/or proposition He writes: “Either we accept God's salvation gift by faith alone, or we don't accept it at all.”

“We can be saved without knowing about or even understanding many of the other facets of Christianity. But we can't become righteous before God without believing that Jesus christ died in our place and rose again. Faith has to understand and trust the death of Christ in our place.”

“Anything less is to still be on death row waiting for the condemnation of an eternal hell.”

#2. The second principle is this: Deliverance from God's judgment depends on Jesus Christ and not us.

“Faith is merely receiving, with empty hands, what Christ supplies completely.”

“If you have trusted Christ by faith, you are in Him, free from the curse of the law. God is completely satisfied with His Son and since you’re in Him, God’s completely satisfied with you.”

“He may not always approve of what you do with your freedom. He’ll be sure to disapprove if you choose to sin. But He’ll never cast you out. You’re secure in Him for all eternity.

The challenge for us now is to praise Him for His mercy, and to use your freedom to honor Him.”

Can you personally praise God for His mercy this morning? Can you say beyond a shadow of a doubt, “I know that Jesus Christ became a curse for me, and that in Him I’m forgiven and free?”