

“Those of Works Are Cursed”  
(Galatians 3:10-14)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. We saw this morning that the blessings of God through Jesus Christ in salvation come through faith.
  - a. God works through the message of faith in Jesus Christ to give His Holy Spirit.
    - (i) The Holy Spirit not only begins the life of faith, He also continues it and brings it to completion.
    - (ii) He is the One:
      - (a) Who comforts us with the promises of the Gospel,
      - (b) Who assures us that we are the Lord's,
      - (c) Who gives us the power to live a godly life,
      - (d) Who gives us the confidence to call God our Father.
  - b. The Lord has never granted these blessings through a message of works.
    - (i) Works can't save us.
    - (ii) Works have never saved anyone.
    - (iii) To believe that we can start by faith and then complete that work through our works is foolish.
    - (v) The Galatians knew this and the fact they stopped believing this and began to look to their works showed that they were very deceived.
      - (a) That shouldn't surprise us.
      - (b) We are often deceived by our own hearts.
      - (c) Which is why we need to be careful to judge all things by Scripture.
2. To further prove his argument, he pointed to Abraham.
  - a. Abraham was the father of the Jews: both physically and spiritually.
  - b. Abraham wasn't save by the Law:
    - (i) He actually lived before it was given on Mount Sinai.
    - (ii) Though he still understood the moral requirements of God.
  - c. He was saved by believing God.
    - (i) The Lord told him that He would make him the father of many nations and that through his offspring, all the nations would be blessed.
    - (ii) Abraham believed God. He looked forward and saw the Christ, and he was saved (John 8:56).
    - (iii) The father of the Jews was saved by believing, not by works.
    - (iv) And so if the Galatians are to be true Jews, they must look to Christ as well and to Christ alone.
3. Finally, the Lord also said that this is how He would save Gentiles.
  - a. When He gave Abraham the promise that all the nations would be blessed through him, He was telling Abraham that one day the Gentiles would be brought into His kingdom in the same way: faith.

- b. And so he submits to the Galatian Gentiles: if you would be blessed with Abraham, you must believe.

## B. Preview.

1. This evening, we're going to consider the other part of the picture: what happens to those who try to justify themselves through their works?
  - a. The answer isn't pretty:
    - (i) Far from receiving the blessings of salvation, you actually fall under the curse.
    - (ii) God pronounced a curse in the Old Testament upon anyone and everyone who would not obey every single command He has given.
    - (iii) Paul tells us the same thing applies in the New: if we fail at just one point we are condemned – we won't survive God's judgment.
    - (iv) The fact is, we have failed at all points – even when we came into the world (through Adam).
  - b. Further, Paul points to the fact that the Old Testament teaches that no one is justified by Law:
    - (i) The righteous man shall live by faith.
    - (ii) And the Law is not of faith.
  - c. And so finally, since the Law can't save us, but only condemn us, someone else had to deliver us: that someone is Christ.
    - (i) He took on Himself our curse.
    - (ii) So that the promised blessing of Abraham might be ours through faith.
2. We'll look at three things:
  - a. What will happen to those who try to work their way to heaven.
  - b. What the Lord said in the Old Testament about how a person can make it to heaven.
  - c. And finally, how this way of salvation is possible.

## II. Sermon.

- A. First, what does the Bible say will happen to those who try to work their way to heaven? It says they will fall under the curse.
  1. Again, we need to realize how many do this.
    - a. Every false religion has some form of works at its foundation.
      - (i) JWs believe you must join their organization and promote their gospel.
      - (ii) Mormons believe you must join their church, follow their rules, be married in their temple, and you can be a god.
      - (iii) Islam has its five pillars:
        - (a) **The Testimony of Faith (Shahadah)** - the declaration that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad(PBUH)is His messenger.
        - (b) **Prayer (Salat)** - establishing of the five daily Prayers.
        - (c) **The paying of poor-due (Zakat)** - which is generally 2.5% of the total savings for a rich man working in trade or industry, and 10% or 20% of the annual produce for agriculturists. This money or produce is distributed among the poor.

- (d) **Fasting** ([Sawm](#)) - refraining from eating, drinking or engaging in sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month in the Islamic lunar calendar.
  - (e) **The Pilgrimage to Mecca** ([Hajj](#)) - this is done during the month of Zul Hijjah, and is compulsory once in a lifetime for one who has the ability to do it. If the Muslim is in ill health or in debt, he or she is not required to perform Hajj (Wikipedia).
- (iv) Virtually every unbeliever thinks that if his good deeds outweigh his bad, he will eventually make it to heaven.
- b. Even Christians may be guilty of this.
- (i) If we believe we need to keep up a certain level of good works: praying, fasting, Bible reading, attendance at worship services, prayer meetings, tithing, visiting the poor, giving to the poor, we have added works to our salvation.
  - (ii) These things are good and we are commanded to do them. But why do we do them? What is our motive?
    - (a) If thankfulness for mercy received, then this is evangelical obedience.
    - (b) But if to save ourselves or add to our salvation, we're adding works to the finished work of Christ.
  - (iii) We might think this distinction isn't important, but it makes all the difference in the world.
    - (a) Paul took Timothy and had him circumcised.
    - (b) But he told the Galatians that if they receive circumcision, they have cut themselves off from Christ.
    - (c) What was the difference?
      - (1) Paul had Timothy circumcised because he didn't want to offend the Jews in the areas he evangelized.
      - (2) The Galatians were receiving circumcision because the Judaizers said it was necessary for their salvation.
      - (3) Their motive was entirely different.
  - (iv) Some professing Christians even turn faith into a work.
    - (a) If we believe it's something we do to be saved.
    - (b) If we believe it's the one act that God sees in us and counts as our righteousness.
    - (c) If we see it as a work and not for what it is – a looking to and receiving Christ, apart from my works – then we have destroyed grace.
2. So what if we do add works to the Gospel? What difference does it make?
- a. A big difference.
    - (i) Paul told us earlier if anyone brings to us a different Gospel, he is to be considered accursed (1:8-9).
    - (ii) The same thing will happen to those who try to be justified under that kind of gospel.
  - b. If we try to justify ourselves through our works, we are under a curse:

- (i) When Israel entered the Land of Promise, half of the tribes were to stand on Mount Gerizim and half on Mount Ebal. Then the Levites were to list the curses to all the men. The last one was, “Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them” (Deu. 27:26), to which the people were to say, “Amen.”
  - (ii) Obedience was to be universal (across the board), perfect (they couldn’t fail at even one point) and continual (they couldn’t lapse for a moment).
  - (iii) If they were to enter into life by means of the Law, they would have had to do this from the moment they came into the world to the moment they left.
  - (iv) Matthew Henry writes, ““The condition of life, by the law, is perfect, personal, and perpetual, obedience; the language of it is, *Do this and live*; or, as #v. 12, *The man that doeth them shall live in them*: and for every failure herein the law denounces a curse. Unless our obedience be universal, continuing in all things that are written in the book of the law, and unless it be perpetual too (if in any instance at any time we fail and come short), we fall under the curse of the law.”
  - (v) We should also note that it must be from the heart: going through the motions is not enough. Our obedience must be out of love for God and a desire to give Him the glory.
  - (vi) If we fail, we are cursed – under God’s curse in this life and in danger of being cursed forever.
- c. The problem is, of course, we have all failed and are under the curse apart from Christ.
- (i) The Bible says we were born dead in sin (Eph. 2:1) and already under the sentence of death (Rom. 3:23).
  - (ii) Since the time we were born, all we’ve done is sin.
  - (iii) According to the Law, we are all under the curse: we are all doomed.
  - (iv) The Law can’t save us, it can only pronounce sentence against us.
- B. Salvation can’t come by the Law then. And so second, Paul points to the Old Testament Scriptures to show that this is in fact what God told the Jews.
1. The Scripture teaches that the Law never could save anyone: “Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith’” (v. 11).
    - a. Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 to demonstrate that righteousness comes through faith.
    - b. He quoted this passage in his letter to the Romans to show them the same thing (Rom. 1:17).
    - c. If faith is the means that God employed to declare a man to be righteous – faith in Christ – then it couldn’t have been by Law – my own righteousness.
  2. Why is that? Because these are two entirely different ways.
    - a. “However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, ‘He who practices them shall live by them’” (v. 12).
    - b. Faith receives what another has done and lives by that righteousness; those who keep the law seek their own righteousness and through that righteousness life (Lev. 18:5).
    - c. Many of the Jews looked to the Law to be saved when it was pointing them to Christ.

- C. The Law can't save us. Only faith can. But finally, why can faith save us? The answer is because of what Jesus Christ has done.
1. We were under the curse, because of our works.
    - a. We sinned in Adam.
    - b. We've sinned every day of our lives since we were born.
    - c. We even sinned every day since our conception – at conception Adam's sin was imputed to us and we became guilty. Because of his sin, the disposition of our soul, which was created at conception, has been against God. That sinful disposition is sin.
    - d. And so we are cursed.
  
  2. But Christ has taken that curse from us and given us the blessing of Abraham, if we're trusting in Him.
    - a. Christ took our curse on Himself when He was crucified.
      - (i) "Christ 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'" (v. 13).
      - (ii) He accepted the guilt of our sins.
      - (iii) He was cursed for them under the law.
      - (iv) He bore the wrath due to us.
      - (v) The fact that He did was evident to everyone when He was hung on the cross, for the Scripture says, "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his 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" (Deu. 21:22-23).
      - (vi) Jesus never committed any sins, but when He took our sins on Himself, He also took our curse – He became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21).
  
    - b. Jesus took our curse on Himself and suffered for it, so that we might be freed from it and inherit the blessing.
      - (i) "In 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" (Gal. 3:14).
      - (ii) These are not the material blessings Abraham possessed (Fred Price).
      - (iii) But they are the spiritual blessings of salvation.
  
  3. And so the message to the Galatians is the same message to us.
    - a. Do you want the blessings of salvation, the blessings God gave to Abraham?
    - b. You won't get them through your works:
      - (i) Adam's works condemned you and brought you under a curse.
      - (ii) Your works have condemned you and brought you under the curse.
      - (iii) Will you turn to works again to save yourself?
      - (iv) No. You must turn to Christ's work:
        - (a) He obeyed God's commandments.
        - (b) He took our curse on Himself.
        - (c) He did this to guarantee the blessings of salvation to us.
        - (d) Don't turn to your works. Believe on Christ alone. Amen.