

CHRIST HAS REDEEMED US, ONCE FOR ALL

Galatians 3:10-14

Introduction:

Well it has been a few weeks since we last looked into this letter of Paul to the churches of Galatia. We are going to return to it for a couple of weeks before we get into the Christmas season. Since it has been a while, I think we would do well to review a bit before we move on to our text this morning.

The churches: probably the churches founded by Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, in the cities of Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

The timing: Appears to have been written within a year or so after they had returned to Antioch in Syria – about AD 48.

The Purpose: Paul was alarmed by the news he was hearing about the error that was coming into the churches of that region. It seemed that men from Jerusalem, claiming to represent the apostles there, were telling these new Gentile believers that they needed to be circumcised and follow the rules and requirements of the Law if they were to really be accepted by God. This letter was Paul's attack on this false teaching and his attempt to shake up these believers to see how they were being led astray.

We obviously don't have time to go through all of the arguments Paul presented in the first 2+ chapters of this epistle, but let me try to summarize a few things.

1:6-10 – the danger of turning to another gospel. Any other gospel is really no gospel at all. There is only one true gospel – the good news of salvation by grace alone through repentance and faith. Anyone trying to proclaim any other message is subject to God's judgment and curse.

1:11-2:10 – Paul's defense of his gospel message. His message did not come from other men, but through a direct revelation from Jesus Christ. Yet he defends his message, pointing out that the gospel he preaches is

indeed the same message proclaimed by the Jerusalem apostles. There is complete unity in the gospel message, and it does not include keeping the Law in order to be saved.

2:11-21 – Living in step with the gospel – Paul points out the hypocrisy that led Peter and the other Jews to get out of step with the message of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. It is so easy to get caught up with legalistic rules which minimize the grace of God and add our own efforts to the Christian life. He concludes this part of his epistle by placing his stake in the ground... read 2:21.

3:1-9 – After defending the authority of his apostleship and his message, Paul turns to confront the Galatian believers about the way they have been led astray into thinking that the salvation they acquired by faith must now be maintained and lived out by their own efforts. He makes it very clear that it is faith from beginning to end.

Now we have come to our text for today. In these verses Paul presents to us two main thoughts: The curse of the Law, and Christ's answer to that curse. The key phrase in these 5 verses is found in v. 13 – "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law."

I am reminded of an old hymn that we used to sing when I was growing up. It says:

Free from the law, O happy condition, Jesus has bled and there is remission,
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Grace hath redeemed us once for all.
*Once for all, O sinner, receive it, Once for all, O brother, believe it;
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall, Christ hath redeemed us once for all.*

What a wonderful truth! But we need to take a few minutes to see how Paul brings us to that magnificent conclusion. In order to see the good news we first need to understand the bad news.

The Curse of the Law

Read v. 10-12 – in those verses there are three OT quotes: v. 10 – from Deut. 27:26; v. 11 – Hab. 2:4; v. 12 – Lev. 18:5

When God gave the Law to his people through Moses, He gave them two options. I want for us to look at that for a few moments.

Turn with me to Deut. 27 – read vv. 9-13. *Describe how they portrayed the blessings that would come for obedience to the Law and all that God commanded them, and all the curses that would come for disobedience and failure to keep the Law.*

In the verses that follow there are curses declared for sins of idolatry, societal sins against neighbors, sexual sins, dishonesty and bribery. At the end of this list of curses we read in v. 26 – read it. This is the verse Paul refers to in the book of Galatians.

Note the emphasis on “...all things written in the Book of the Law...” Anyone attempting to gain righteousness by keeping the Law is responsible to keep all of the Law. James makes this point in James 2:10 where he says, “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.”

No wonder Paul says, “For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse...” The truth is that, as Habakkuk said, “The righteous shall live by faith...” And as Paul goes on to say in v. 12, the law and faith are mutually exclusive. Faith is about trusting depending on someone or something else, other than ourselves, whereas the law is about doing it through our own effort. As Paul quotes from Leviticus, “The one who does them shall live by them.” In other words, the law is about doing it ourselves. If we live by the law, and keep the law perfectly, then we will live.

Unfortunately, we have already seen that it is not possible to keep the law perfectly. Thus we are all under the curse of the law. That is the bad news... So what is the good news?

Christ’s Answer to the Curse

Read vv. 13-14 – here we have Christ’s answer to the curse – he has redeemed us from the curse of the law. The Greek word translated “redeemed” was often used to speak of buying a slave’s or debtor’s freedom. Christ’s death, because it was a death of substitution for sin, satisfied God’s justice and exhausted his wrath toward his elect, so that Christ actually purchased believers from slavery to sin and from the sentence of eternal death.

How did he do this? By becoming a curse for us... By bearing God’s wrath for believers’ sins on the cross, Christ took upon himself the curse pronounced on those who violated the law (see verse 10). When Jesus hung on that cross suspended between heaven and earth, he took upon himself the curse of God. Note... as it is written – look at what it says in Deuteronomy 21:22-23 - “And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.”

The heart of the gospel is that Christ, who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was not guilty of one moment of legalism. He trusted his Father perfectly and lived in the power of the Spirit. He fulfilled the law perfectly because he knew that at the root the law taught faith which worked through love. So when he experienced the curse of the law on the cross it was not his own curse, but ours.

Read v. 14 - Christ hanging on a tree (v. 13) not only brought blessing to Israel but took place **so that ... the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles**. The coming of the Spirit in new power is one of the key benefits of the new age that was brought in by Christ. As believers, we not only have forgiveness of sins, but we also have the living presence of God with us. We have the Holy Spirit who indwells us to empower us to live and enjoy the life He gives.

Conclusion:

Well, we have before us two options, two paths, the way of blessing (v. 14) and the way of the curse (v. 10). The curse comes from depending on the works of the Law to save us—trying to satisfy God by our own efforts. The blessing comes through faith—the realization that Jesus Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, by taking the curse upon himself.

Which path are you on today?