

## ***Redeemed from the curse*** (Galatians 3:10–14)

Despite the mistaken beliefs of some that they could contribute to saving themselves, Paul makes clear that it is only by faith that a person can be counted righteous before God, not by relying on doing the law. At the beginning of chapter 3 he addressed their reception of the Spirit by faith, then he reminds them that faith has been God's way even with Abraham. He brings these two themes together in verses 10–14 and answers the question how God can count belief as righteousness. The curse which comes from any disobedience has been paid by Christ for all who simply believe.

### **I. *Law's condemnation (3:10–12)***

1. *Reliance on the law invites a curse (3:10); it gets you what you don't want.*

- a. Those “who rely upon works of the law” or “who are of works of law” are those who belong to any system of law-keeping for being right with God. Though the Mosaic law is the primary reference, the principle is true for all people since they have “the work of the law ... written on their hearts” (Romans 2:15).
- b. Because no one successfully keeps all the law, relying upon works of the law places that person under the curse which the law prescribes for the disobedient (cf. Deuteronomy 27:26 and context). The Law itself tells us what that gets you. It is not something you want. All who rely upon works of law are under a curse.

2. *Reliance on the law is not the way of justification (3:11); it doesn't get you what you do want.*

In Habakkuk 2:4 (cf. Romans 1:17; Hebrews 10:38) God responds to the self-sufficient pride of invaders, declaring in contrast that those who would have a righteous standing before God and have life must trust God. Paul applies this to those who in pride think that their efforts would count with God, whereas it is by faith alone that a person will be declared righteous before God and have eternal life.

3. *Reliance on the law does not mix with faith (3:12); it doesn't mix with the faith you need.*

Quoting from Leviticus 18:5 Paul makes the point that keeping the law to have eternal life means keeping it all completely which excludes faith. Any reliance upon self-effort excludes having complete trust in God. Choosing between faith and works is like choosing between two doors to enter or two paths to take, you can only take one and you must choose which.

### **II. *Christ's triumph (3:13–14)***

Paul gives us the answer to the question on how God can count faith as righteousness and still justly deal with sin and the curse of the law.

1. *Christ took the curse for us and redeemed the believer (3:13).*

- a. To “redeem” is to deliver by means of paying a price. “Deliver” points to the problem of the curse; “price” explains that pardon is not without cost, though it is a free gift to the believer.
- b. To “become a curse” is another way of saying He was the offering for the curse, just as “sin” is sometimes used in place of “sin offering” (cf. Leviticus 4:21–25; 2 Corinthians 5:21). As a sinless person Christ could take the place of the believer and pay the penalty of the curse.
- c. In some technical way Jesus by His crucifixion fulfilled Deuteronomy 21:23, “cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.”

2. *Christ opened the way of justification for us (3:14a).*

“The blessing of Abraham” (cf. vv. 6–9) was and is the good news of justification by faith. Furthermore God did not ignore sin when He counted Abraham's belief as righteousness, but Christ paid the penalty, ransom price, to deliver Abraham and us from the curse.

3. *Christ made possible the gift of the Spirit (3:14b).*

All believers, like the Galatians, receive the Holy Spirit by faith when they believe. Like righteousness this Gift was made possible by the price which Christ paid to redeem us.

The law condemns with a curse even breaking just one command. Relying upon obeying the law is futile and excludes trusting God. Trusting God does not exclude obedience, but puts it in the proper place as a response to being changed (cf. 2:19; Ephesians 2:8–10). The real work was done by Christ, who redeemed believers from the curse.

*Questions for further thought and discussion:*

- What “works of law” might the Judaizers have relied upon? Why was that reliance ineffective in granting righteousness before God?
- What is the difference between someone thinking their faith saves them versus being saved through faith? Why is that difference important?
- How will you respond to the truth that all your blessings were bought for you by Christ through His death?