

THE LAW AS A CURSE

We are getting close to the halfway point in Galatians and if you haven't noticed it already, this book is very repetitive. Especially here in the middle section. It just keeps saying the same thing over and over again like the movie Groundhog Day.

But this is not a bad thing. It's actually a good thing. When something is enjoyable or True, we don't mind hearing it over again. Think of your favorite song and listening to it over and over or your favorite movie or favorite book.

In 1991 Amy Grant had a hit song Baby Baby. I remember hearing a story about someone calling the police because their neighbor had been blasting that same song over and over for hours.

When Titanic came out in 1997 its success wasn't just that reportedly 85% of Americans saw it, many of them saw it multiple times. Saige Joseph wrote a blog in 2021 that she has seen the movie 19 times.

Some of that might seem obsessive, but there are merits to hearing the same thing many times.

These verses in Galatians are life changing Truth and there's a reason God wants us to hear it so many times.

Philippians 3:1

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

2 Peter 3:1

I told you some of these things before, but this will be a reminder to you.

My first church worker conference.

I was frustrated because they only told me things I was already doing. My pastor told me don't feel like its a waste of time, but rather be encouraged that I'm already doing the things experts are saying I should be doing.

So if you find yourself thinking this, realize that God loves you enough to tell you over and over again. And find yourself reminded and encouraged instead.

Galatians 3:10-14

10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them" **11** Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith" **12** But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them" **13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. **14** so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

The Word of the Lord

PRAY

First observation is that each verse has quotations from the OT. Paul is going to let the Law speak for itself. What does the Law itself say about its ability to save?

When this life is over and you stand before God, what is your defense on why you should be saved? Is it because you obeyed most of the 10 Commandments, is it because you said a prayer at VBS when you were five, or because once a month when you come to church you drop some change in the offering plate? Are these things enough that you can rely on your works to save you? Lets see what verse 10 says:

Galatians 3:10

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse

Not only does the Law not have the ability to save you, but for those who are going to use their performance as means to save themselves, he says this will actually bring a curse on your life.

I'm not sure about you, but I typically try avoid things that bring curses, hexes, poxes, or plagues upon my life or my family.

Simpsons cursed doll

Shopkeeper: [Homer has agreed to purchase a Krusty doll for Bart's birthday] Take this object, but beware it carries a terrible curse!

Homer: Ooh, that's bad.

Shopkeeper: But it comes with a free frogurt!

Homer: That's good.

Shopkeeper: The frogurt is also cursed.

Homer: That's bad.

Shopkeeper: But you get your choice of toppings.

Homer: That's good!

Shopkeeper: The toppings contain potassium benzoate.

[Homer looks puzzled]

Shopkeeper: ...That's bad.

Homer: Can I go now?

Your deeds of morality as a means to salvation will actually one day be used to testify against you in God's court of law.

Galatians 3:10b

for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by ALL the things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."

(ref. Deuteronomy 27:26)

Do you see how this becomes problematic for people who are depending on their works to save them?

We are not playing percentages anymore. How many times have you heard people claim that their defense to God would be that they have been more good than bad?

According to Deuteronomy, that doesn't count - more good than bad. What do you even mean by good? It doesn't matter, the Scripture never says, get most of them right.

Ten Commandments: Has anyone kept all of these, all the time?

We are all guilty of breaking most of these, but for those of us who are still feeling pretty good about ourselves, hang in there it gets worse.

Leviticus gives us 613 commandments: moral, civil, dietary, ceremonial, feasts and festivals we need to observe. If this is what it takes to be saved, there's no way.

But hang on, because it gets even worse.

In Matthew 5 Jesus mentions adultery and murder and says you're just as guilty if you have ever lusted or hated.

That's where the Pharisees had so many issues. They kept the Laws on the outside, but Jesus was exposing their heart. He calls them in Matthew 23 "whitewashed tombs" or "ornate coffins." Pristine on the outside but filled with death on the inside.

Paul is trying to get the people in Galatia to feel the weight of what they are trying to do. If you are going to depend on the Law to save you, you have to do it 100%, every law, always. **When you fail**, God will take your failed track record and use it against you for your own judgement. Cursing you.

Paul's conclusion is not only does the Law not save you, but it curses you the more you try to use it to save you.

The Law was never meant to be a checklist of moral code, but a comprehensive picture of the character of God. It showcases for us the absolute holiness of God.

God given laws emulate their maker. They are not things God has to do, but they describe who He is.

The other thing we need to remember is that the Law was never given as a means to be saved. It was given for you to realize your need for a savior. You were meant to fail at this, so you would realize you need help!

VIDEO: Devil Wears Prada

Martin Luther: *I conclude, therefore, that it is up to Christ to overcome my sins, and not up to the Law, or my own efforts. If He is the price of my redemption, if He was made sin for my justification, I don't give a care if you quote me a thousand Scripture passages for the righteousness of works against the righteousness of faith. I have the Author and Lord of the Scriptures on my side. I would rather believe Him than all that riffraff of "pious" law-workers.*

And yet, for the Judaizers, and the Pharisees before them, and many religions today and many people in our churches today, they see this Law and rather than finding the end of themselves, they push the pedal even harder.

Have you found yourself doing this? It is exhausting. You have been running on this performance treadmill and you keep asking God, "is it enough, have I done enough." STOP! Paul is pleading, STOP! God is telling you to stop and rest in what He has already done.

Galatians 3:11-12

11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith" (**Habakkuk 2:4**) **12** But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them" (**Leviticus 18:5**)

You have to turn away from yourself and turn to someone or something else to save you. Bro, you can't do it.

If you are going to live by them, then you got to do the whole thing. When you practice the Law for your salvation, who are you actually trusting in? Yourself, but Habakkuk just said that the righteous are made righteous by faith. By trusting in someone else not in himself.

Paul is showing these Jews, who love the Scripture that they are competing against the Scriptures.

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—
(ref. Deuteronomy 21:23)

Verse 10 told us that we were under the Law and we were cursed. Verse 13 tells us that Christ became the curse for us.

Why is everyone who hangs on a tree cursed? OT wrote this way before Rome had invented crucifixion. The most vile people against God hung on trees in the Bible:

- Joshua's enemies who were attempting to destroy God's people were hung on wooden posts.
- Absalom tried to assassinate God's anointed king, David and he was pierced and hung in a tree.
- Saul's children, who broke their covenant with the Gibeonites were hung
- Then Rome publicly displayed your sin and shame with crucifixion.

These are the people who died on trees, enemies of God, covenant breakers, traitors. People just like us.

Jesus also died on a tree. A person who kept the Law perfectly. He is the one who took our sins, became our substitute by hanging on the tree and taking our curse which we deserved on Himself.

Our righteousness is dependent on faith in a substitute, not in our own works.

Galatians 3:14

so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Replace Gentiles with your name.

What did Abraham believe? That one day his decedents would outnumber the sand and through His line, one would come who would bring salvation to everyone.

It is through Jesus that we receive this promise. That we can stand righteous before a Holy God even though we are not. And feel His acceptance not on what we have done but what Jesus did for us.

BENEDICTION

Benediction

And all Gods people say...

THE LAW AS A CURSE

GALATIANS 3:10-14 ESV

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Small Group Discussion Questions

What does it mean to be "under the law," and why does that place a person under a curse rather than in God's favor?

In verses 11–12, Paul sets up a sharp contrast between being "justified by the law" and living "by faith." In your own words, what is the difference between these two ways of relating to God? Why can't they coexist as the basis for salvation?

Verse 13 says Christ "became a curse for us." What does it mean that Jesus took on the curse we deserved? How does reflecting on that exchange affect how you personally relate to the cross?

How does this passage connect the Old Testament story (Abraham, the law, the curse) to the New Testament gospel? What does it tell us about God's long-range plan of redemption?

It's easy to intellectually affirm salvation by faith while practically living as if we earn God's approval through performance or rule-keeping. Where in your own life do you find yourself slipping into "works of the law" thinking? What would it look like to live more fully from the freedom described here?

How does the presence of the Holy Spirit serve as evidence that we have been redeemed from the curse? How does that reality shape your day-to-day life and spiritual confidence?