

Galatians 3: Curse of the Law 4-13-14

How Were You Saved? This is the main question to the Galatians. When they considered it, they would reply "by faith". They had left the law of Moses as unable to sustain them. And yet here they were, returning to a portion of it. That which brings you in keeps you in; if faith, then faith. If works of the law of Moses, then works. Yet even then, the salvation by faith had, by the Spirit, been miraculously shown. So how could they be so illogical?

Paul speaks about a Curse of the Law. The idea is that law, when it is not coupled with a blessing, is a curse, because it can only bring condemnation. When a law is coupled with a promise, whether it is the promise to Abraham of his Seed, or to Israel of the land, or in Christ, when it is grace, it is called a Covenant. When a covenant is broken, all that remains is the law. Consider a marriage symbol, a wedding ring. When that ring (a symbol of the law of marriage) is on in a covenant of marriage, it is a blessing. However, if that party cheats on the other, then it is put away, they are now cursed by that same law. That wedding ring is a symbol that they cannot remarry. If someone is to live under a law, they must live under the entire law. Law (alone) provides no justification.

Paul then tells us that Christ Redeemed from the Curse. Christ was the answer to the Law. Imagine that the law had a large hole in it. This hole was the absence of forgiveness for transgression of the law. It could only pass on sin, not remedy it. Jesus said He was sent to "fulfill" this hole in the law; He was the remedy for the curse. Matthew 5:17-19, Colossians 2:13-14, Ephesians 2:15

Now Paul moves to the Faith of Abraham which is found beginning in Genesis 12-17. We see Abraham obeying God because he believes God, and it is counted as righteousness. There is in Scripture a dual Citation of Abraham; one in Galatians 3 for his Faith, and one in James 2:21-24 for his works. Both are in fact the same citation; neither James nor Paul contradict, they speak to the same Abraham and the same actions. Both want us to see that obedience is vital to faith; Paul wants us to see it was not the law of Moses, but the commandment of God. James wants us to see it was not just believing God, but acting on it.

Abraham's promise supersedes the law by existing before the law. His promise of a Seed salvation (which is Christ) was greater than the law, which came later. Thus, whatever promises the law of Moses made (which were the land promise, not salvation) are less than the previous covenant of Abraham, which was the promise of a Savior to all mankind.

Paul then says that the Law served as a tutor to us. Because of sin, we are enslaved. The law acted as a guard to those before Christ, because they needed a jurisdiction that prevented their eternal condemnation. Without law, there is simply judgment and death. With the law, there is a captivity of jurisdiction that could be settled by Christ, thus preventing utter damnation. The Whole World is Slave to Sin (John 8:32-36, Romans 6:16-20); even now, we are held captive by our sins, in a jurisdiction not of Moses but of Christ. Yet those who have appealed to Christ are free.

Are You So Foolish? Would you exchange truth for a lie, the Lie of another Gospel, the Lie of worldly desires? Would you dispose of all that you obtained? Such is the question Galatians 3 charges us to answer. We have departed from the truth, how can we return?