

Galatians 3:10-14

Introduction: Whereas Galatians 3:6-9 focused on being blessed in relationship with Abraham, 3:10-14 focuses on being cursed in relationship to self-help.

The term “law” is used over 30 times in this book. There are several different ways the word is used, including: 1) the whole OT; 2) the Pentateuch; 3) the 10 commandments; and 4) the principle of law in general. The context helps us decide, but even then it is difficult at times to determine which use the author may have in mind.

Those who rely on self-effort are cursed by God—3:10-12

Because the Law must be obeyed perfectly—3:10

- 1) The principle stated—3:10a ¹⁰ *For* [γάρ] (they) *are under* [ὑπό] *a curse* [κατάρα],
 - a) Legally cursed by God, subject to His wrath and destructive judgment for failure to live up to His requirements.
- 2) Just exactly who is cursed?—3:10a *as many as are of* [ἐκ] *the works of the law*
 - a) Any and all who belong to the class of people who expect to be found acceptable to God by their own efforts.
 - b) These are the opposite of those who are of faith—3:9
- 3) Why are they cursed? Because of the authority of God’s revealed Word—3:10b *for* [γάρ] *it stands written* [pf. pass. ind. γράφω],
 - a) Imperfect obedience to the Law brings a curse—“*Cursed* [ἐπικατάρατος] *is everyone who is not continuing* [pres. act. ind. ἐμμένω] *in all things that are written* [pf. pass. ptc. γράφω] *in the book of the law, to do* [aor. act. inf. ποιέω] *them.*” (cf. Deuteronomy 27:26; 28:58-59; James 2:10)
 - i) Even 99% obedience is not acceptable. Cf. Matthew 19:16-22
 - b) Only the doers of the Law are justified (cf. Romans 2:12-13), but none are perpetually perfect doers.
 - i) The Law demands perfect obedience to the entire Law, all of the time and with perfect motives.
- 4) This is what the Law does. The next 2 verses focus on what the Law cannot do.

Because the prophets teach us that the Law cannot make us acceptable to God—3:11

- 1) A timeless truth—¹¹ *Now* [δέ] *that* [ὅτι] *no one is declared righteous/declared acceptable* [pres. pass. ind. δικαιόω] *before* [παρά] *God by* [ἐν] *the law is evident/clear/plain* [δηλος], (cf. Romans 3:20, 24)
 - a) Why? *for* [ὅτι] “*the righteous one* [δικαιος] *will live* (eternally) *by* [ἐκ] *faith.*” (cf. Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17)
 - b) The context of the Habakkuk quote is similar to that of Abraham, when circumstances conspired against such trust.
- 2) To imitate Abraham is to trust the promise and integrity of the God who has spoken.

Because the Law is incompatible with faith—3:12

- 1) Stated—3:12a ¹² *Yet [δέ] the law is not of [ἐκ] faith,*
 - a) Obedience to the Law does not depend upon faith, but one's efforts
- 2) Contrast supported by the Law—3:12b *but [ἀλλά] “the person having done [aor. act. ptc. ποιέω] these things (everything in the Law) will live in [ἐν] them.”* (cf. Leviticus 18:5)
 - a) Cf. Ezekiel 20:11, 13, 21 and the consequences of not obeying them
- 3) The Law demands doing; grace simply demands receiving a gift by faith. One does not become acceptable to God by doing but by trusting.
- 4) Thus it appears that we are left in an entirely hopeless situation, or are we?

Those who rely on Christ alone are blessed—3:13-14

- 1) **WHAT** has Christ done for us?—3:13a ¹³ *Christ has redeemed [aor. act. ind. ἐξαγοράζω] us (out) from (under) [ἐκ] the curse [κατάρα] of the law,* (cf. 3:10)
 - a) Christ successfully and completely paid the price for our freedom to deliver us from slavery to sin and the curse God revealed in His Law. Cf. Matthew 20:28; 1st Peter 1:18-19
 - b) The solution is not in what **we** can do, but in what **Christ** has done.
- 2) **HOW** did Christ accomplish this?—3:13b *having become [aor. dep. ptc. γίνομαι] (the bearer of) a curse [κατάρα] for [ὑπέρ] (as a substitute for and benefit to) us*
 - a) (*because [γάρ] it stands written [pf. pass. ind. γράφω], “cursed [ἐπικατάρατος] is everyone who hangs on a tree”*), (cf. Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; 1st Peter 2:24)
 - i) Being hung on a tree was visual evidence of His rejection by God.
 - b) Christ willingly took the curse of God on Himself that sinners deserved, and absorbed their proper punishment as He hung in our place, and we are set free from this curse if we trust in His completed work. Cf. Matthew 27:46
- 3) **WHY** did Christ do this for us?—3:14 (the conclusion of 3:1-14)
 - a) First purpose (our position in Christ; 3:8-9)—3:14a ¹⁴ *so that [ἵνα] in [ἐν] (the sphere of) Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come [aor. dep. subj. γίνομαι] to [εἰς] the Gentiles [ἔθνος],*
 - i) It is the Gentile's relationship to Christ, and not the Law, that determines if they receive the blessing of Abraham.
 - ii) Remember that Abraham lived about 500 years before the Law.
 - b) Second purpose (the power of the Spirit; 3:2)—3:14b *so that [ἵνα] we (both Jew and Gentile) might receive [aor. act. subj. λαμβάνω] the promise of the Spirit* (cf. John 14:26; 15:26; Acts 2:33; Ephesians 1:13) *through [διὰ] (the efficient cause of) faith (not works).*
 - i) Saving faith involves renouncing any confidence in self to be found acceptable to God. It acknowledges the rightness of its condemnation before a holy God and its total inability to save oneself. It involves total reliance on and submission to Christ. Plus, it involves gratefully receiving the gift of pardon Christ offers, and submitting to His authority.
 - ii) This is part of the blessing of Abraham, but not in its entirety.

- 4) Paul's argument is this: Gentiles do not need to become Jews in order to experience the blessing of Abraham. Since these Gentiles have the Holy Spirit, they enjoy the blessing of Abraham (3:14). And if they enjoy the blessing of Abraham, they are sons of Abraham (3:7). And if they are sons of Abraham by receiving the Spirit, they do not need to be circumcised or obey the Law to become part of the people of God.

Take-home truth: Christ is the only means by which the curse of the law can be removed.