

## Salvation is by Faith Alone, Not by Works of the Law

### Galatians 3:10-18

Galatians 3:10-18: *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them.”<sup>11</sup> But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.”<sup>12</sup> Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”<sup>13</sup> Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”,<sup>14</sup> that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.<sup>15</sup> Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.<sup>16</sup> Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ.<sup>17</sup> And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.<sup>18</sup> For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”*

### Background Notes

At this point in our study of Galatians you might be saying to yourself, “This material is redundant and it’s even becoming tedious. Why did the apostle Paul keep hammering away at this same theme: justification is by faith alone?” There are two reasons why Paul kept stressing this theme:

- Justification ***is*** by faith alone.
- People don’t naturally believe it, either then or today.

Ask your average neighbor, or fellow student, or colleague at work: “Do you believe in God?” Most of them will say yes. Now ask them, “Do you believe there’s a Heaven?” Again, most will say yes. But now ask, “How do you get to Heaven?” Most people would probably say, “Nobody’s perfect, so you just do the best you can. Then if your good works outweigh your bad deeds when you die, God accepts you in Heaven.”

That’s what the average person naturally believes - but that’s not what the Bible teaches! The Bible teaches that God’s standard for going to Heaven is ***perfection*** - and no one is perfect, except Jesus Christ. So in order to go to Heaven, we must believe in Christ by faith.

And we don't just believe that He was the greatest man that ever lived and we should follow His teachings. No! We must believe that, as the perfect Son of God, Jesus Christ went to the cross and died for the penalty of our sins. Now all we have to do is believe in what Jesus has done on our behalf - by faith. No good works are required.

That's the gospel that the Bible teaches. That's the gospel of good news that Paul preached. That's the gospel we preach in these Talks from Galatians. Do you believe it - or do you still think you have to add your own good works for salvation?

The false teaching Judaizers of Paul's day said that salvation couldn't be that simple – trusting in Christ by faith alone! They said that it is necessary to add the works of the Law for salvation and sanctification. In Galatians 3:10-18 Paul used two more arguments about the Law to prove that there is no way a person is saved or sanctified by keeping the Law - then or today.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The curse of the Law is removed only through faith in Christ.

Verse 10: *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them."*

What does the first part of verse 10 mean? *"For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse..."* This sentence refers to people who try to obtain favor with God by keeping the Law. The "Book of the Law" is the Ten Commandments plus all the other commandments of the Old Testament. There's nothing wrong with the Ten Commandments and the Law. God gave the Law, and at the end of this chapter we'll see why He gave the Law.

The point here is that trying to keep the Ten Commandments and trying to "do the right thing" is not good enough for salvation. If you don't keep the Law **perfectly**, you fall under its curse. That's what God said in Deuteronomy 27:26 (which is quoted here): *"Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them."*

The Law is like a chain. You break one commandment and the chain is broken - and it can't be mended! And the "curse of the Law" is death, because death is the penalty for sin.

So is all hope gone? No, hope is not gone! *"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (v13).* The "tree" is a reference to the cross. Because Jesus Christ kept the Law perfectly, He was able to redeem us from the curse of the Law by dying on the cross as our Substitute. That's what meant by the phrase, *"He became a curse for us."*

Now, if we trust in Christ by faith, we are free from the curse of the Law. *"The just shall live by faith" (v11).* That verse is a quote from the prophet Habakkuk - clearly showing that even in the Old Testament, justification was based on faith.

The Law says “do and live” - but **no one** can do the commands of the Law perfectly. Faith says “believe and live” and **anyone** may come to Christ by faith!

When you trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior by faith alone, you are saved. In addition, you receive the Holy Spirit, something the Law could not do. *“That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (v14).*

If you try to earn your salvation and your sanctification by good works, you put yourself under the curse of the Law. Faith in Christ alone is the key to salvation and sanctification. The curse of the Law is removed only through faith in Christ.

## 2. The requirements of the Law did not invalidate God’s promise.

Verses 15-18: *“Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”*

Paul’s second argument against the idea that salvation is earned by trying to keep the law is found in verses 16-18. His basic argument is that God made a promise to Abraham, and by faith Abraham believed God. That promise was made 430 years before the Law was given, and God’s promise to Abraham was still valid and still in effect when the Law was given.

The Judaizers taught that the coming of the Law changed God’s way of salvation and sanctification. Once the Law was given, they said, you had to add to the requirements of the Law along with your faith in the promises of God. “No!” said the apostle Paul. That would be like arbitrarily changing, or adding to, or setting aside, a properly executed covenant, like a “Last Will and Testament.” And that’s the argument in verse 15: *“Though [a will] is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.”*

If a will is properly executed, the provisions of that will cannot be changed or added to, or set aside. Suppose a rich uncle died and left property to you in his will - but just before you were about to receive the promised property, some pseudo-authority came along and said you have to prove yourself worthy of getting this property! You have to do certain good works and pass certain tests. Wait a minute! That can’t be done! Whoever heard of adding such arbitrary additions and conditions to a valid will?

That’s the argument that Paul used here. Just as the provisions of a will cannot be changed or added to, so the Law that came after Abraham cannot set aside God’s promise of salvation to Abraham – the promise that Abraham believed **by faith**.

Furthermore, the promises that God made to Abraham are still in effect because they were made to Abraham **and his Seed** (v16) - and **that Seed is Christ**. And Christ did come. He came after the Law. So the promises God made to Abraham find their fulfillment in Christ. Thus they are in effect forever! They can't be changed or annulled or added to by the Law.

God's way of salvation - by faith - has **always** been God's way of salvation. God did not give the Law as a way of salvation - that was never His intention. Salvation comes by faith in the promises of God. Salvation is in Christ, and not in the Law. The requirements of the Law did not invalidate the promise of God.

## Practical Application

### Let's believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture!

2 Timothy 3:16 says, "*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.*" **All** Scripture is inspired by God! Inspiration is the process by which God superintended the writers and writings of Scripture.

Now comes the question: to what level did God superintend the writers and writings of Scripture? Did He just inspire the thoughts of the biblical writers? Or did He inspire the actual words of Scripture? We believe God's control was right down to the very words and letters of the original documents of Scripture!

Now back to Galatians 3:16. Notice that Paul's argument in verse 16 hinged on whether the word "Seed" in the promise of Genesis 2:18 was singular or plural! So clearly Paul definitely believed in the verbal inspiration of Scripture - right down to the very words - and even down to the very **letters!**

And so did our Lord. In Matthew 5:18 Jesus said that "*not one jot or tittle*" of Scripture will pass away. What He meant was that not even the smallest Hebrew letters or even the smallest strokes on the Hebrew letters will pass away, because they are part of Scripture.

Let's not have a view of inspiration that falls short of our Lord's view. Let's believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture!