

## Studies in Galatians (8/22)

**Redeemed from the Curse.***Galatians 3:10-14*

The third and fourth chapters of Galatians have to do with Abraham as the typical Christian. That which God gave him and promised him is precisely what He gives and promises to all. We say "gives and promises," instead of promises and gives, since *giving* is the first thing that God does. It is His nature to give. Without respect to persons, He gives to every man. He is not content with simply promising, and then leaving circumstances to determine whether or not anything shall be given. No, He gives, and in His gift is a promise. "Much more" is the description of every gift of God. If those who receive God's gifts receive them joyfully and thankfully, then the very reception of them is the assurance of much more to come. God "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25); if they care for these things, and show appreciation of them, then God will give "more abundantly." So again we say, Every gift of God is a promise of more.

God blessed Abraham, not because of Abraham's goodness, but in order that he might become good. Abraham believed God, and accepted the blessing, and so became good. The Gospel was preached to Abraham in the words, "In thy Seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed;" and this blessing comes to us through Christ, who, having been raised from the dead, has been sent to turn every one of us away from our iniquities. Acts 3:25, 26. This is what is presented in the portion of Galatians that we began to study last week. "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith; but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Gal. 3:10-14.

**Good Works.**—The Bible does not disparage good works. On the contrary, they are exalted. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable." Titus 3:8. The charge against the unbelieving is that they are "unto every good work reprobate." Titus 1:16. Timothy was exhorted to "charge them that are rich in this world. . . . that they do good, that they be rich in good works." 1 Tim. 6:17, 18. And the apostle Paul prayed for us all, that we might "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,

being fruitful in every good work." Col. 1:10. Still further, we are assured that God has created us in Christ Jesus "unto good works," "that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10.

**Good Works Only By Faith.**—"If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Rom. 4:2, 3. Altho good works are required of us, they are not the "works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves" (Titus 3:5, R. V.), but the "good works, which God afore prepared, that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10, R. V.). These good works God has "laid up" for them that fear Him, He Himself having "wrought" them for those who trust in Him before the sons of men. Ps. 31:19. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." John 6:29.

**"The Just Shall Live by Faith."**—This is proof that no one is justified by the law; for if one were righteous by works, then it would not be by faith. There is no exception, no dividing up. It is not said that some of the just shall live by faith, or that they shall live by faith and works, but, "The just shall live by faith." All of the just shall live by faith alone. The law and the works of the law have nothing whatever to do in the work of justifying men, altho the law itself "is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Rom. 7:12.

**Who Are the Just?**—In other versions than the English, as, for instance, the German and Danish, these texts are made much plainer, because they use the word which conveys the idea more perfectly than the word "just" does to us. This is the way it is; "But that no man is made righteous by the law in the sight of God it is evident; for, the righteous shall live by faith." The words "just" and "righteous" really mean the same thing, but in the word "justify" the majority of readers do not readily recognize the phrase "to make righteous." We see, therefore, that righteousness is the end to be attained. Righteousness means right-doing, and the law is the standard of right-doing. The only question before us is how this desired object is to be attained. How is the sinner to be made righteous—to be made a doer of the law?—Not by the law itself, for that does nothing; it simply points out the right way; but we ourselves are "without strength." Righteousness therefore must come from without, from some living thing, and when attained in genuineness will be "witnessed by the law and the prophets." Rom. 3:21.

**Life Is Doing.**—"The man that doeth them shall live in them." The law calls for action, deeds, and nothing else. If good deeds are manifested, the law is satisfied. "The law is not of faith;" it cares nothing for faith; works, and works alone, commend themselves to it. How those works are obtained is of no consequence to it, provided they are present. There is life in the doing of them, for only he who is alive can do them. Notice the word "them." It indicates the fullness of the law. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things* which are written in the book of the law to do them." But "all have sinned;" and since all are "dead in

trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), it is very evident that no one can of himself be in the position described by the words, "The man that does them shall live in them." The man must first be made alive before he can do them. Do not forget, however, that in all this the law is exalted and honored, instead of discredited. There is life in obedience to it, and death in disobedience. The curse is only on those who do not do it. "In keeping of them there is great reward." Ps. 19:11.

**Sin and Death the Curse.**—That death is the curse is evident from the last part of verse 13, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Christ was made a curse for us in that He hung on a tree, that is, was crucified. So we have the substance of verse 10 thus, that those who do not continue in the things written in the law are dead; that is, disobedience is death. And this is what the Scripture says; "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Sin contains death, so that when by one man sin entered into the world, death came by sin. Rom. 5:12.

**Christ Made a Curse for Us.**—That "Christ died for the ungodly" is evident to all who read the Bible. He "was delivered for our offenses." Rom. 4:25. The death that was deserved, came on Him. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Isa. 53:5. But death came by sin. Death is the curse that has passed upon all men, simply because "all have sinned." So as Christ was "made a curse for us," it follows that Christ was "made to be sin on our behalf." 2 Cor. 5:21, R.V. He "bore our sins in His own body" up to the tree. 1 Peter 2:24, margin. Note that our sins were "*in His own body*." It was no superficial work that He undertook. The sins were not merely figuratively laid on Him, but they were actually in Him. He was made a curse for us, made to be sin for us, and consequently suffered death for us. To some this truth seems repugnant; to the Greeks it is foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling bloc, but "to us who are saved, it is the power of God." For bear in mind that it was *our sins* that He bore in His own body, not His own sins. The same scripture that tells us that He was made to be sin for us, assures us that He "knew no sin." The same text that tells us that He carried our sins "in His own body," is careful to let us know that he "did no sin." The fact that he could carry our sin about with Him, and in Him, being actually made to be sin for us, and yet not do any sin, is to His everlasting glory and our eternal salvation from sin.

**Redeemed from Sin and Death.**—Christ has redeemed us from that which He suffered; for "with His stripes we are healed." So He has redeemed us—brought us back—from sin and death. He has redeemed us from death in redeeming us from sin, since death is but the result of sin. But sin is wrong-doing—the transgression of the law. 1 John 3:4. So it is from our "vain manner of life" that we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. 1 Peter

1:18, 19, R.V. By becoming sin for us, and carrying our sin up to and on the tree, Christ has redeemed us from the transgression of the law; that is, He has redeemed us from committing sin. This is the glorious reality of the Gospel, present salvation from the commission of "the sin that doth so easily beset us." In this is contained the sum of all things. And this great blessing comes to us through faith.

**The Revelation of the Cross.**—In verse 13 we are brought back to the subject presented in Gal. 2:20 and 3:1,—the ever-present, universal cross. We can not go into the subject in detail, for it is inexhaustible; but note the following facts, which may suggest many more things to your minds:—

1. The redemption from sin and death is accomplished through the cross. Gal. 3:13.
2. The Gospel is all contained in the cross; for the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16); and "unto us which are saved" the cross of Christ "is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).
3. Christ crucified is the only way Christ is revealed to fallen men. There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby salvation may be obtained (Acts 4:12), and therefore it is all that God sets forth before men, since He does not wish to confuse them. "Christ and Him crucified" is all that Paul wished to know; it is all that any man needs to know. Thus the one thing that men need is salvation; if they get that, they get all things; but salvation is found only in the cross of Christ; therefore God puts before the eyes of men nothing else; He gives them just what they need. Jesus Christ is by God set forth openly crucified before the eyes of every man, so that there is no excuse for any to be lost, or to continue in sin.
4. Christ is set forth before men only as the crucified Redeemer, and since that from which men need to be saved is the curse, He is set forth as bearing the curse. Wherever there is any curse, there is Christ bearing it. We have already seen that Christ bore, and still bears, our curse, in that He bears our sin. He also bears the curse of the earth itself, for He bore the crown of thorns, and the curse pronounced on the earth was, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth." Gen. 3:18. So the whole creation, which now groans under the curse, has been redeemed through the cross of Christ. Rom. 8:19-23.
5. It is only on the cross that Christ bears the curse, for His being made a curse for us was indicated by His hanging on the cross. The cross is the symbol of the curse, but also of deliverance from the curse, since it is the cross of Christ the Conqueror and Deliverer. The very curse itself, therefore, presents the cross, and proclaims our deliverance.
6. Where is the curse? Ah, where is it not? The blindest can see it, if he will but acknowledge the evidence of his own senses. Imperfection is a curse, yea, that is the curse; and imperfection is on everything connected with this earth. Man is imperfect, and even the

finest plant that grows from the earth is not as perfect as it might be. There is nothing that meets the eye that does not show the possibility of improvement, even if our untrained eyes can not see the absolute necessity of it. When God made the earth, everything was "very good," or, as the Hebrew idiom has it, "good exceedingly." God Himself could see no chance, no possibility, for improvement. But now it is different. The gardener spends his thought and labor trying to improve the fruits and flowers under his care. And since the best that the earth produces reveals the curse, what need be said of the gnarled, stunted growths, the withered and blasted buds and leaves and fruits, and the noxious, poisonous weeds? Everywhere "hath the curse devoured the earth." Isa. 24:6.

7. What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter? Is it discouragement?—Nay; "for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. 5:9. Altho the curse is visible everywhere—

"Change and decay in all around I see;"

yet things live, and men live. But the curse is death, and no man and no thing in creation can bear death and still live. Death kills. But Christ is He that liveth, and was dead, and is alive forevermore. Rev. 1:18. He alone can bear the curse—death—and still live. Therefore the fact that there is life on the earth and in man, in spite of the curse, is proof that the cross of Christ is everywhere. Every blade of grass, every leaf of the forest, every shrub and tree, every flower and fruit, even the bread that we eat, is stamped with the cross of Christ. In our own bodies is Christ crucified. Everywhere is that cross; and as the preaching of the cross is the power of God, which is the Gospel, so it is that the everlasting power of God is revealed in all things that He has made. Rom. 1:16-20, compared with 1 Cor. 1:17, 18, amounts to a plain declaration that the cross of Christ is seen in all the things that God has made—even in us.

**Courage and Despair.**—"Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me." Ps. 40:12. But not only may we with confidence cry unto God out of the depths, but God in His infinite mercy has so ordered it that the very depths themselves are a source of confidence. The fact that we are in the depths of sin, and yet live, is proof that God Himself, in the person of Christ on the cross, is present with us to deliver us. So everything, even the curse—for everything is under the curse—preaches the Gospel. Our own weakness and sinfulness, instead of being a cause of discouragement, are, if we believe the Lord, a pledge of redemption. Out of weakness we are made strong. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Rom. 8:37. Truly, God has not left Himself without witness. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1 John 5:10.

**The Blessing from the Curse.**—Christ bore the curse in order that the blessing might come to us. He bears the curse now, being crucified before us, and we with Him, that we may continually experience the blessing. Death to Him is life to us. He was made to be sin for us, “that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21. What is the blessing that we receive through the curse that He bears?—It is the blessing of salvation from sin; for as the curse is the transgression of the law (Gal. 3:10), the blessing consists in turning away every one of us from our iniquities (Acts 3:26). Christ suffered the curse, even sin and death, “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.” Gal. 3:14. And what is the blessing of Abraham?—That we have already seen, but we may well read it again. Having stated that Abraham was justified, made righteous by faith, the apostle adds: “Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Rom. 4:6-8. And then he shows that this blessing comes on the Gentiles as well as the Jews who believe, because Abraham received it when he was circumcised, “that he might be the father of all them that believe.” The blessing is freedom from sin, even as the curse is the doing of sin; and as the curse reveals the cross, so we find that the very curse is by the Lord made to proclaim the blessing. The fact that we live, altho we are sinners, is the assurance that deliverance from the sin is ours. “While there’s life there’s hope,” says the adage. Yes, because the Life is our hope. Thank God for the blessed hope.

**“The Promise of the Spirit.”**—Christ hath redeemed us, “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Do not make the mistake of reading this as tho it were “that we might receive the promise of the gift of the Spirit.” It does not say that, and it does not mean that, as a little thought will show. He has redeemed us, and that fact proves the gift of the Spirit, for it was only “through the eternal Spirit” that He “offered Himself without spot to God.” Heb. 9:14. But for the Spirit, we should not know that we were sinners; much less should we know redemption. The Spirit convicts of sin and of righteousness. John 16:8. “It is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.” 1 John 5:6. “He that believeth hath the witness in himself.” Christ is crucified in every man. That, as we have already seen, is shown in the fact that we are all under the curse, and Christ alone, on the cross, bears the curse. But it is through the Spirit that Christ dwells on earth among men. Faith enables us to receive the testimony of this witness, and rejoice in that which the possession of the Spirit assures.

**The Spirit the Pledge of Inheritance.**—Look ahead in our epistle and see what is said of redemption and the Spirit: “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And

because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Gal. 4:4-6. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Rom. 8:16, 17. Thus we see that the gift of the Spirit, which assures us of our redemption through the cross, is itself a promise. As we said at the beginning, all God's gifts are promises of more. Now read how God's purpose in the Gospel is to gather together in one all things in Jesus Christ: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that [or when] ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." Eph. 1:10-14.

Of this inheritance we must speak further later on. Suffice it now to say that it is the inheritance promised to Abraham, whose children we become by faith. The inheritance belongs to all who are children of God through faith in Christ Jesus; and the Spirit that marks our sonship is the promise, the pledge, the first-fruits of that inheritance. Those who accept Christ's glorious deliverance from the curse of the law,—redemption not from obedience to the law, for obedience is not a curse, but from disobedience to the law,—have in the Spirit a taste of the power and blessing of the world to come.

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