

# *“It should have been me”*

Galatians 3:10-14

*Pastor Tim Melton*

The small boy had been consistently late for dinner. One particular day his parents had warned him to be on time or there would be consequences, but he arrived later than ever. He found his parents already seated at the table, about to start eating. Quickly he sat at his place, then noticed what was set before him--a slice of bread and a glass of water. There was silence as he sat staring at his plate, crushed. Suddenly he saw his father's hand reach over, pick up the boy's plate and set it before himself. Then his dad put his own full plate in front of his son proceeding to eat nothing more than the bread and water. Now some of you may argue that the boy needed to experience the consequences of his disobedience, but here was the result. When the boy became a man, he said, "All my life I've known what God was like by what my father did that night."<sup>1</sup>

When we look at the cross, the startling reality is the simple fact that it should have been us. Jesus took our place and our consequences. That is one of the central ideas of Galatians 3:10-14.

*<sup>10</sup> 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.”<sup>11</sup> Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”<sup>12</sup> But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”<sup>13</sup> 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 upon a tree”—<sup>14</sup> so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*

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<sup>1</sup> Homemade, May, 1989.

All who rely on their own good deeds to be made right with God are in reality living under a curse. In fact, all of us are living under a curse. Paul says that everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them is under the curse. That would include all of us. We are all guilty of sin. None of us has perfectly obeyed God all of our lives. Because of that we are all living under the curse and its judgment and condemnation.

Every one of us is guilty and living under the curse of the law. No number of good deeds can erase the sins of our past. Trying to be good enough will never be able to remove our guilt and the wages of sin. This is not about having more good deeds than bad deeds. Even if we had only sinned one time, we would not be innocent. We still would be found guilty. We have sinned against a holy God. We are guilty. The price for sin must be paid. That price is death.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

That is the good news of Jesus Christ. We are sinful and condemned to die. Jesus is sinless and holy. Jesus, the Son of God, Immanuel God with us, the holy one, came to earth, became one of us, lived a sinless life and laid down His life on the cross to die in our place. He took our sin upon Himself so that Christ's righteousness may be put upon us. He died, but it should have been us.

Paul had already argued that *"no one is justified by the law"* by the fact that we are all sinful. It is likely that every listener was familiar with their own sin. Now he supports this truth with the authority of scripture. *"The righteous shall live by faith"* (Habakkuk 2:4). Paul does this multiple times in this passage. He is using quotes from the Old Testament with which the Jews would have been familiar.

Living by the law is incompatible with living by faith. One focuses on being made right with God by our works, and the other by faith. You can't live by both. They are mutually exclusive. The one who seeks to obey the laws will live and die by the law. He who lives by faith will experience the salvation of God through Christ.

*<sup>13</sup> 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 upon a tree."*

Christ bought us back by paying the debt that we owed. It should have been us. He took the sin of the world upon His shoulders.

*"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."* (Isaiah 53:5)

*"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."* (1 Peter 2:24)

*“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

In the Old Testament times, one who was put to death for a grave crime often was hung on a tree or a wooden post as a message to others who might consider committing the same crime. The criminal was seen as cursed by God. This same idea was placed upon Christ as He hung on the “tree” of Calvary to take away the sins of the world. He became the curse for us so that we could know the blessing of Abraham.

The blessing of Abraham is the righteousness that comes through faith. It is now offered to the Gentiles who had never heard of, experienced or known of Yahweh. Through faith we receive the promised Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit lives within us. He grants us a new heart, a new love and a new nature. In John 14 He is the Comforter and Helper, who will never leave us and who brings us peace. John 14:26 tells us that the Spirit will help us recall the things we have learned about God. John 16 introduces us to the Holy Spirit as the Counselor and Convicter of sin. Romans 8 tells us that the Spirit will help us keep from sinning and do the things that please God. The Spirit helps us pray (Romans 8:26-27). As we walk in the Spirit the result will be *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control”* (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit is our deposit, our guarantee of an eternity that will be spent with Christ (Ephesians 1:13-14).

We cannot remove our guilt and condemnation, but Christ can. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth. He lived a sinless life. Because of this He alone is innocent and not under curse of the law. He owed nothing, but willingly laid down his life on our behalf to pay for our sin. The just for the unjust. The blessed for the cursed.

We cannot free ourselves from the curse of the law, but Jesus can. As we place our trust in Jesus Christ we put on the righteousness of Christ. Our sin is forgiven and we are counted as righteous before God. We do not earn it. There is nothing that we can do to take credit for it.

*“<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

God grants the faith and we believe. The righteousness of Christ becomes ours and we are made right with God through faith.

Those who refuse to believe these truths and try to be righteousness in their own power will never be made right with God. It is a debt that they will never be able to repay. It is either a response of ignorance or arrogance, but a person seeking to earn the favor of God will NEVER be made right with God.

Just as Abraham *“believed and it was counted unto him as righteousness,”* so must we believe so that we may take hold of the righteousness of Christ.