

GALATIANS 03:10 THE LAW

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Galatians 03:10

Chapter three of Galatians gives an excellent study of the law.

1. The law carries with it a curse (Gal. 3:10). The curse is the *mark of death* and the *mark of condemnation* or guilt: alienation from God both in this life and throughout all eternity (see Deu. 27:1f; 28:15; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 3:7, 9).
2. There is a righteousness which is of the law (Rom. 10:5-10; Gal. 3:12). That righteousness promises life to any man who can obey the law perfectly. If a man can meet every requirement of the law during his lifetime and never once fall below God's holy standard, then that man can escape the penalty of sin which is death.
3. Jesus Christ delivers man from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). What does this mean? Jesus Christ kept the law in every single detail. Therefore, He bore no guilt; and He bore no penalty, no mark of death. He had the right to stand before God and claim eternal life, the right to never experience death. He was perfect; He had secured incorruptible righteousness. The glorious gospel is that instead of claiming this right for Himself, He offered to give His perfection and righteousness to the people of the earth and to take their sins upon Himself. He offered to swap His righteousness for man's unrighteousness, to swap His life for man's life. This glorious expression of substitutionary love was the very purpose for which God had created the earth. God willed to show His great and unsearchable love that gave itself so perfectly (Eph. 1:5f). The great tragedy is that man has so much difficulty accepting so great a love (1 Cor. 1:18).

It also means another thing. Jesus Christ accomplishes the same purpose that God intended for the law, and much more. He not only sets the same ideals and standards before us, but He also relates Himself to us. Whereas the law is a set of cold letters with no power to give life (Gal. 3:21), Jesus Christ is a living person possessing the power to raise the dead to life again. He sets the standards and gives the power to keep the standards. He has replaced the law in showing men the awfulness of their sin (through His death), and He adds the extra dimension of strength to live as He lived (Gal. 5:22f; Eph. 1:19f; 3:20).

4. The law was only meant to be a temporary arrangement between God and man (Gal. 3:16). It was to extend only from Moses to Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ is "the seed" to whom the promise of righteousness was given (see note, Mt. 5:17). God never intended the law to be *the way of salvation*. It was for the temporary

purpose of showing men their sin and its awfulness. Since Jesus Christ has come, He (His perfect life and righteousness) is to be the standard for men.

5. The law was given to show men their sin and to instil within them a personal guilt for disobeying God and His law (Rom. 3:19-20; 7:7; Gal. 3:19). This guilt was to lead men to seek and trust God for salvation. Thus, the law stops every mouth from claiming self-righteousness and makes all the world guilty before God.
6. The law is inferior to God's promise of grace (Gal. 3:19c-20). Three arguments show this.
 - => First, the law was not given directly by God. The law was given by angels to men through Moses. Moses was a mediator. But God and God alone gave the promise of grace and righteousness to Abraham.
 - => Second, the law was between two parties — man and God. If man kept the law, he would receive the reward of righteousness. The gift of righteousness was conditional under the law. But the promise of grace is given by God alone. No one can break that promise. If man simply believes, he receives the promise of righteousness.
 - => Third, the giving of the law came after the promise to Abraham — four hundred and thirty years after. The promise of grace was given first before the law. Therefore, the law cannot void the promise. The promise of God stands.
7. The law has no power to give life (Gal. 3:21). The law demands that each commandment be kept and obeyed. But it is mere words, cold and lifeless. It is entirely external to man. It has no energy whatever to help in keeping the law.
8. The Scripture is conclusive: all men are lawbreakers and under sin (Gal. 3:22).
9. The believer is no longer under the law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14; 7:4; Gal. 3:22). Man is unable to participate in the righteousness of the law, for he is totally incapable of fulfilling the law. But he can experience the grace of God by trusting the righteousness which Jesus Christ has secured. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ judges that man righteous. That man becomes a “participant in the divine nature of God” (2 Pet. 1:4).
10. The law shuts man up under sin (Gal. 3:23). Man is a permanent prisoner under the law. Under the law he is put in bondage and held captive all the days of his life. The only avenue of escape is Jesus Christ, that is, faith in Him. If Christ fails to deliver, then there is no escape, for the law does not free man; it enslaves.
11. The law was man's guardian to lead him to see his need for Christ (Gal. 3:24). The *guardian* or *teacher* (*paidagogos*) was usually a trusted slave who was in charge of a child's moral welfare, but he had one particular duty to which Paul

was referring. Every day the guardian took the child to school and delivered him to the teacher. And then at the end of the day, he returned for the child and brought him safely back home. This was what the law was to do. The law was to lead man to Christ, the true Teacher. The law does this by showing man that he cannot secure righteousness by himself. He must look to Christ, the real Teacher, for righteousness and acceptance by God. And once faith in Christ has come, there is no need for the law nor for any other guardian, for Jesus Christ brings us face to face with God.

12. The law is still in force for the unbeliever (1 Tim. 1:8-14). It remains in force to condemn and to lead the unbeliever to see his need for God.
13. Men were not always transgressors (Rom. 4:15; 5:20). There is no transgression where there is no law, for there is no law to transgress. But men were still sinners before the law was given to Moses. They were just not as aware of their sin nor did they sense as much guilt as was necessary to show their need for God. For that reason the law was given, that men might be more and more aware that they were sinners before God (Rom. 5:19-21). □