

THE PROOF OF A BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE GALATIANS 03:01–05

DIVISION OVERVIEW: Justification: Faith vs. Works (Gal 03:01–04:07)

This passage begins the major teaching of the Book of Galatians, that a man is justified by faith alone and not by good works nor by law. Of course, a man should be good and do good, be as good as he can be and do as much good as he can. A man should live a moral and just life like the law says. But this is not the point; this is not what Scripture is saying. Scripture is saying that a person is *not justified* before God by doing good and keeping the law. No man can do enough good nor keep enough laws to become perfect and acceptable before God. God is perfect, and no matter how much good we do and how much law we keep, we do not become perfect. We are still short: we still fail, sin, age and die. Good works and law do not perfect us; they do not make us acceptable to God, nor impart to us eternal life. Only God Himself can perfect us, accept us, and give us eternal life. Any thinking and honest person knows that there is nothing — absolutely nothing — on earth that can keep us from coming short and dying. There is absolutely nothing on earth that can give us eternal life in a perfect world where there is nothing but love, joy and peace. If we are to ever inherit eternal life, then God has to give it to us. (See notes, *Justification*, Gal. 2:15-16; *Faith vs. Works*, Gal. 2:16; note, Gal. 2:19-21.)

The point is this: How do we know that God will justify us? How do we know that God will accept us and give us life with Him forever? The answer to this question is the discussion of the present passage. There are six proofs that God will justify us by faith alone, six proofs that God will not justify us by works and law.

1. The proof of a believer's experience (3:1-5).
2. The proof of Scripture (3:6-14).
3. The proof of God's Covenant or promise (3:15-18).
4. The proof of the law's powerlessness (3:19-22).
5. The proof of what faith does for us (3:23-29).
6. The proof of Christ and the fullness of time (4:1-7).

Introduction (Galatians 03:01–05)

Some influential people had joined the churches of Galatia and the churches took pride in their presence. The new members were so capable and the churches were so glad to have them that they were immediately placed in positions of leadership and teaching.

However, these new members had not been truly converted by Christ or else their understanding of the gospel was all confused. They began to teach that faith alone was not enough to save a person, that a person had to undergo the basic ritual of religion (circumcision) and focus his life upon the law in order to become acceptable to God.

Paul's answer is direct: the *experience* of the Galatian believers disproves that a person becomes acceptable to God by law. The *believer's experience* proves that he is justified by faith alone, and all a believer has to do is to rethink his experience and he will see the truth.

- I. A believer corrects error (false teaching) (v. 1).
- II. A believer receives the Spirit by faith, not by observing the law (v. 2).
- III. A believer grows by faith (v. 3).
- IV. A believer suffers by faith (v. 4).
- V. A believer experiences God's miraculous working by faith and not by observing the law (v. 5).

I. *Galatians 03:01 Deception*

A believer corrects error. There are four reasons why he must do so.

1. Error makes a person "foolish." Note that Paul calls the Galatian believers "foolish Galatians." The word *foolish* (*anoetoi*) means misunderstanding, thoughtless and unthinking. The Galatians were listening to false teaching and passively accepting it. They were not thinking through what was being taught. They were not applying their minds to see if what was being taught was true or not. They were *foolish*, acting like senseless people who were incapable of thinking.
2. Error deceives a person. The word "bewitched" means to fascinate, cast a spell upon, mislead, deceive. The false teachers were, as so many are, very capable, fluent and persuasive speakers with dynamic personalities and charisma. Their teaching sounded reasonable and logical.

=> A man must keep the ritual of religion.

=> A man must do good works to be good.

=> A man must keep the law in order to be acceptable to God

It all sounded reasonable and logical, especially to a person who was not thinking and comparing the teaching to the gospel of Christ. The error was *bewitching*, deceiving the believers.

3. Error shows disobedience. The Galatians simply were not obeying the truth. They were trying to become acceptable to God...
 - by undergoing the ritual of religion (circumcision, baptism, etc.) instead of trusting the death of Jesus Christ.
 - by subjecting themselves and focusing their lives upon the law instead of Christ.
4. Error leads a believer away from Christ. This is tragic, for the true believer is a person who has seen Christ crucified for him. The Galatians had clearly seen the death of Christ through the preaching of Paul. Paul's preaching had plainly pointed out and explained the death of Christ. In fact, the Lord's death had been so clearly explained

that it was as though the Lord Jesus had been crucified in their presence, before their very eyes. There was, therefore, no excuse for their following false teachers. They knew what Christ had done for them, that Christ had died for them and had taken their sins upon Himself and borne their punishment for them.

They knew that God loved them, that God loved the world...

- that He had sent His Son into the world to die *for them*.
- that God expected all men to believe in the death of His Son, Jesus Christ.
- that God took their faith and love in His dear Son and accepted them because they believed and loved His Son.

How then could they be so foolish and bewitched and not obey the truth — especially when they had clearly seen and understood the death of Jesus Christ?

II. *Galatians 03:02 Receiving the Holy Spirit*

A believer receives the Holy Spirit by faith, not by observing the law. Note that this whole passage is a series of questions. Paul is stirring the Galatians to think. The present question strikes at the very heart of the gospel: How did you begin your Christian life? Did you receive the Holy Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?

There is one thing genuine believers know, and the genuine believers in the Galatian churches knew it too: no person earns, wins or merits the Spirit of God. Man is too polluted and too short of God's glory to deserve the Spirit of God. His thoughts and behaviour are too often...

- | | | | |
|------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|
| • ugly | • lustful | • selfish | • undisciplined |
| • greedy | • impure | • unjust | • unrighteous |
| • negative | • imperfect | • immoral | • unholy |

No matter how much good and how much of the law is kept, the believer knows that he did not and cannot eliminate such thoughts and behaviour — not fully, not perfectly. Therefore, he did not become a Christian — he did not receive the Holy Spirit — by good believing what you hear — faith. He became a Christian and received the Spirit of God by hearing about faith in Christ. He heard the glorious news that Christ had died for him and his sins, and he believed the news. Therefore, God took his faith and counted it for righteousness. The believer knows that he is not righteous, but God *counts him righteous* because he *believes and loves* His Son. The believer knows that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in him because of any goodness or work of his own; he knows that he has the Holy Spirit because God counts his *faith in Christ* as reason enough to put His Spirit into his heart. That is how the believer receives the Spirit of God, and that is how the Galatians received the Spirit of God.

Thought 1. Every person must hear the glorious message of faith. “Believing what you hear:” — faith is the only way a person can ever become acceptable to God.

A person must hear and believe the *report of faith*. The *message of faith* is the gospel of salvation — *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His death for our sins*.

Rom 10:14-17 *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

Thought 2. The Holy Spirit is the gift of God. No man can earn, win or merit the Spirit of God. God's Holy Spirit is given by God and by God alone.

John 14:16-17 *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

Rom 8:9 *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

1 Cor 6:19-20 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

1 John 2:27 *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him.*

III. **Galatians 03:03 Growth of a Believer**

A believer grows and will be perfected only by faith and not by his human effort. Again, note the question: “After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?”

A believer does not become spiritually mature by focusing upon his flesh, upon what he can do...

- his efforts • his works • his goodness
- his discipline • his morality • his just behaviour

No matter how strong and disciplined his flesh is — no matter how many good deeds and laws he is able to do on his own — the believer's effort does not make him grow spiritually. Focusing upon his flesh and upon his own strength and work only causes the believer to concentrate upon himself. It emphasizes self, not the Spirit — the human and physical, not the spiritual and heavenly.

Note another fact: no matter how many good works are done and no matter how many laws are kept, they cannot make a man perfect; they cannot impart eternal life to a man. There is no man upon earth that is living eternally because of works. There is no law whatsoever that can keep a man alive forever and ever. No matter how many works of the law a man has done *in his flesh*, he has not achieved perfection — not the holy perfection that makes him acceptable to God. If he is ever to be perfect enough to be acceptable to a Holy God, it will be because God perfects him, not because he has worked and become perfect through his corruptible flesh and human efforts.

As Paul says, “Are you so foolish?” Is God so low that corruptible and dying man can achieve so much? Is man so exalted that he has so little to achieve in order to be perfected? Any thinking and honest heart knows not.

=> A man *begins* his journey to God when he truly believes in Jesus Christ and is “born again” — a *spiritual thing*.

=> A man *continues* his journey as he is daily renewed by the Holy Spirit — also a *spiritual thing*.

The only way a believer can spiritually grow and mature is to focus his life and mind upon Jesus Christ. The believer must focus his mind upon the things of Christ moment by moment, and as he does, the Spirit of God will draw his mind to spiritual things. Remember: the Spirit of God lives *within* the believer. He is there to work within the believer and to help him grow and mature in Christ.

=> The believer keeps his mind and thoughts upon Christ, casting down arguments and making every thought obedient to Christ.

2 Cor 10:5 *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

Phil 4:8 *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.*

=> The believer focuses and keeps his mind and thoughts upon being conformed more and more to the image of Christ. He keeps his mind and thoughts upon Christ all day long — praising, honouring, worshipping and asking for His help and guidance. He learns to live and move and have his being in Christ.

Rom 8:29 *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brothers.*

2 Cor 3:18 *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

1 Tim 4:15 *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.*

2 Pet 3:18 *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.*

=> The believer who focuses his love, attention and life upon the Lord Jesus Christ is accepted by God. God loves His Son so much that He accepts any person who truly loves and focuses his life upon His Son. And someday — in the glorious day of redemption — God will perfect the believer and conform him perfectly to the image of Christ.

Phil 3:20-21 *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

1 John 3:2 *Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

IV. Galatians 03:04 Suffering for Christ

A believer suffers by faith. When the Galatians accepted Christ, they had suffered ridicule, abuse, isolation and persecution from their neighbours; and apparently the persecution had continued for some time (Acts 14:1-7, 19, 22). The point is this: if the Galatians now turned away from Christ to some false teaching, then the suffering they had borne for Christ would be in vain. They would have suffered for nothing. In fact, they would now appear foolish if they turned away from Christ when they had suffered so much in order to embrace Him.

Thought 1. Every believer who truly turns to Christ has some suffering to bear. It may be mild, but some suffering is borne. There are the sufferings of...

- separating from the world.
- denying self.
- taking up the cross — dying to one's own will and way every day.
- giving everything that one has to Christ and His cause (money, time, energy, effort).

The list could go on and on, but the point is clearly seen. If Christ is worth suffering for, why then forsake Him and turn to some false teaching?

Mat 5:11 *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me."*

Mat 19:29 *"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."*

Mat 10:22 *"All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."*

Luke 9:23-25 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"*

2 Cor 4:11 *For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.*

V. Galatians 03:05 God's Miracles

A believer experiences God's miraculous working by faith and not by observing the law. What were the miracles experienced by the Galatians? They were miraculous works of healing (see Acts 14:8-15). But note: the miracles were not due to the Galatians; they were due to God. The Galatians did not earn, win or merit the miracles. They simply *heard about faith*, the power of faith, and they believed that God would count their faith as the miracle and meet their need. And God did — God worked miracles among them because they believed what they heard. They heard the glorious message of faith in Christ, and they believed in the power of faith in Christ; therefore, God honoured their faith and met their need.

Thought 1. What a lesson for us! To believe "what we hear" — the glorious message of faith in Christ and its power — and then to experience that power.

Mat 21:22 *"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."*

Luke 11:19 *"Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges."*

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (The miracle of regeneration.)*

John 5:24 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." (The miracle of living eternally.)*

John 15:7 *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*

Eph 3:20 *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

Psa 91:15 *He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.*

Isa 65:24 *Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. ■*

THE PROOF OF SCRIPTURE

GALATIANS 03:06–14

Introduction

Some false teachers had arisen in the churches of Galatia. They were teaching that a man must focus his life upon the rituals and teachings of religion — upon the works of the law — instead of focusing upon Christ. Simply stated, they were saying that a man had to be *ritualized* (circumcised, church membership, baptism) and give his life to keeping the law in order to be acceptable to God. They placed ritual and law — their own works and effort — before Jesus Christ.

=> They focused upon what they had to do instead of Christ.

=> They concentrated upon themselves — upon what they could do to save themselves and make themselves acceptable to God — not upon Christ and His saving power.

=> They stressed the flesh, the physical and the natural, the strength of man instead of God's love given to the world in His Son, Jesus Christ.

The answer of Paul is forceful: Scripture proves that a man is justified by faith and not by observing the law.

- I. Scripture uses Abraham to illustrate the truth (vv. 6-7).
- II. Scripture “announced the gospel in advance to Abraham” (vv. 8-9).
- III. Scripture says “the law puts a man under a curse” (vv. 10-12).
- IV. Scripture says “Christ has redeemed us from the curse” (vv. 13-14).

I. Galatians 03:06–07 Abraham, Justification by Faith

Scripture uses Abraham to illustrate the truth that justification is by faith and faith alone. Abraham held a unique position in the Jewish nation, for he was the founder of the nation. He was the man whom God had challenged to be a witness to the other nations of the world — a witness to the only living and true God. God had appeared to Abraham and challenged him to leave his home, his friends, his employment and his country. God made two great promises if Abraham would follow God unquestionably: Abraham would become the father of a new nation, and all nations of the earth would be blessed by his seed (Gen. 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8, 15-19; 22:15-18; 26:2-5, 24; 28:13-15; 35:9-12). (See *Israel, God's Special People*, Jn. 4:22.)

Note two points.

- 1. Abraham believed God; therefore, he was judged righteous. He went out — left his home and risked all — not knowing where he was going (Heb. 11:8). He completely and unquestionably trusted God and took God at His word.

Now note: it was not Abraham's keeping of the law that pleased God. In fact, the law had not yet been given (Gal. 3:17). What pleased God and what caused God to justify

Abraham was Abraham doing as God had said. Abraham simply *believed* the promise of God that God would give him a new life — *in* a new nation — with a new people. (See *Abraham*, Gal. 3:8, notes, Gal. 3:16; Heb. 11:9-19.)

- a. Abraham and his “seed” were the only ones to whom God gave the promises. This is emphatically stated (Rom. 4:13-25; Gal. 3:6-16, 26, 29).
 - b. Only a promise was given to Abraham (Rom. 4:13-21; Gal. 3:14, 18-21, 29). No other information whatsoever was given. God did not identify the country nor tell Abraham where he was to go. Neither did God tell Abraham when his wife Sarah would bear the seed (the male child) from whom the promised nation would be born. God made a simple promise, and all Abraham had to go on was that simple promise, that is, the sheer Word of God.
 - c. Only one condition was attached to the promise: Abraham had to believe God. No works whatsoever were involved.
 - d. Abraham did believe God (Gen. 12:4-5; Rom. 4:3, 11-22; Gal. 3:6; Heb. 11:8f).
 - e. Abraham was *counted righteous* because he believed God (Rom. 4:3-5, 9-13, 19-22; Gal. 3:6; see Gen. 15:6). God did not count him righteous because of who he was or what he had done. He simply believed God. Therefore, God took his faith and counted his faith as righteousness (see notes, Rom. 4:1-3; *Justification and Faith*, Rom. 4:22; note, Rom. 5:1).
 - f. The proof that Abraham really believed God was that he did what God had said. His faith preceded his obedience. He believed God and then he obeyed God. If he had not believed God, he would not have left his home or his employment. He would not have left his surroundings and friends, his meaningful relationships and personal attachments. The fact that he did as God asked was evidence that he believed the promise of God.
2. Those who are of faith are the true sons of Abraham. The person who believes God is the person who receives the promises of God (Rom. 4:5-12, 16-17, 23-25; Gal. 3:7-9, 14, 22, 26, 29). Paul argues that neither heritage nor nationality, neither merit nor works, neither the law nor the rules of the law have anything to do with the promises of God (Gal. 3:6-7). The true sons of Abraham are those who believe God — any person of any nation. In fact, God’s promise that a nation would be born to Abraham and “his offspring” (his seed) was the promise of an eternal nation. This eternal nation is to be of another world, of another dimension of being: the spiritual dimension, a dimension just as real as the physical dimension. But it is to have one distinction: every citizen is to be a believer — one who has believed God and His Word. This is exactly what this passage is saying: “They who believe are the children of Abraham, the children of God’s promise. They are to be blessed along with faithful Abraham. They are to be the citizens of God’s Kingdom, ‘the new heavens and the new earth.’” (See Heb. 11:8-18; 2 Pet. 3:10-14.)

II. *Galatians 03:08–09 The gospel of Faith*

Scripture “announced the gospel in advance to Abraham.” To Paul, Scripture was the Word of God, the very voice of God Himself. Therefore, Paul could just as easily say that Scripture spoke to Abraham as he could that God spoke to Abraham. (Note Paul’s high view of Scripture.)

1. Scripture declared the gospel of faith long before Christ ever came: Scripture declared the gospel to Abraham. As stated in the former note, God told Abraham that He would accept him and bless him if Abraham would believe (love and follow) the promise of God. What was the promise?

“All nations will be blessed through you.”

Abraham believed God; he separated himself from the world and gave his life totally to God; therefore, God accepted and judged Abraham righteous.

2. Those who are of faith are judged righteous with Abraham. Abraham was justified by believing God. What happened was this. Abraham believed God, and God took Abraham’s belief and counted his belief as righteousness. It was not Abraham’s works, but his faith that God took and counted as righteousness. It was all an act of God; therefore, all glory belonged to God, not to Abraham. Man is saved by faith; in other words, God takes a man’s faith and counts that man’s faith as righteousness. This has to be the case:

=> God is perfect; He is perfectly righteous. No man can achieve perfection; therefore, no man can live in the presence of God.

=> God is love; therefore, what God does is take a person’s faith and counts that faith as righteousness and perfection. Therefore, a man is able to live in God’s presence by faith or justification

Mat 7:22-23 *“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

Rom 3:20 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

Gal 2:16 *Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

Eph 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Titus 3:4-5 *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

GALATIANS 03: 08, 16 ABRAHAM

The scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." ... The promises were spoken to Abraham and his seed. The scripture does not say "and to the seeds," meaning many people, but "and to the seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

Galatians 03: 08, 16

The Scripture...announced the gospel to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). What does this mean?

God had promised Abraham an earthly son and a great earthly nation. But behind God's promise lay something more than just an earthly, human fulfilment. Abraham's son, Isaac, was a type of the real offspring (the *real seed*) that was to come, and the Jewish nation was a type of the *real nation* that was to be born. (See *Abraham's Seed*, Rom. 4:1-25.)

Paul gives at least two proofs for this typology.

1. The word "seed" is singular, not plural (Gal. 3:16). God's promise does not point to a great crowd of people, but to one single person. That person is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham. And the nation promised is the new nation of believers that God is creating to inherit the new heavens and earth (Gal.3:16; Eph. 1:9-10; 2:11-18; 3:6; 4:17-19).
2. The major events of Isaac's life parallel the life of Christ.
 - => First, Isaac was miraculously born (Gen. 15:2-3; 18:11; see Rom. 4:18-22; Heb. 11:11).
 - => Second, Isaac was to be offered up as a sacrifice (Gen. 22). Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac, and God accepted his willingness and motive as an actual fact. The word of Heb. 11:17 tells us this: "by faith Abraham...[who] received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son."
 - => Third, Isaac was delivered from death by a miracle of God (Gen. 22:10-13). Abraham knew that God was able to raise up Isaac from the dead, in order to fulfil His promise, if need be (Heb. 11:19). □

III. *Galatians 03:10–12 Law and Faith*

Scripture says that "the law puts a man under a curse." Note a critical point: in this verse the word curse (kataran) means to be condemned and doomed to punishment by the righteous judgment of God. How do we know this? By verse 13 where it is said that Christ bore the curse of the law for us (the condemnation, doom, death and punishment due us for having broken the law). The law carries with it a curse. A person either

keeps the law or else he is cursed; that is, he is to stand before the Judge and bear the punishment of a lawbreaker. The curse (penalty or punishment) for violating the law is...

- the mark of death (2 Cor. 3:7).

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom 7:5 *For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.*

- the mark of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9).

Rom 7:10-11 *I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.*

Heb 9:27 *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

Why does the law put a curse upon men? There are two clear reasons.

1. The man who approaches God by law is cursed because he does not keep the whole law. Note a crucial fact: there is a righteousness that is of the law (Rom. 10:5; 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 for sin, which is death. However, every thinking and honest man knows that he cannot keep the law of God in every single detail — not all the time. He knows that he sometimes comes short in...

- behaviour • emotions • motive
- worship • service

Every thinking and honest person knows that he is nowhere close to being perfect nor to attaining perfection. He knows that he fails and comes short too often. He knows that what this verse says is exactly true: no man can *continue in and do all things* which are written in the law of God.

Rom 10:5 *Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them."*

Gal 3:10, 12 *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." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."*

2. God's chosen way for approaching Him is to "live by faith." Scripture declares as clearly as it can: no man is justified by the law in the sight of God. As stated above, God is perfect; He is perfectly righteous. No man can achieve perfection; therefore,

no man can live in the presence of God. No matter how good he is or how much good he does, he cannot achieve perfection. The fact is evident, for if a man had achieved perfection, he would be perfect — living forever in a perfect state of being, even on this earth.

But note this: God is love. So what God does is take a person's faith and count that faith as righteousness, as perfection. Therefore, a man is able to live in God's presence by faith or justification. The point is this: God's way for a man to approach Him is the way of faith: "The righteous will live by faith."

Note also that the law is not of faith, but any man who attempts to live by the law will be allowed to so live. But the man must realize: he shall be judged by the law.

Rom 3:20 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

Gal 2:16 *Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

Eph 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Titus 3:4-5 *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

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." Gal 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, except 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). □

GALATIANS 03:11 JUSTIFICATION AND FAITH

Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." Galatians 03:11

This verse is used three times in the new Testament. A different point is emphasized each time it is used. It tells how a man can be righteous with God (see Hab. 2:3-4).

1. "*The righteous will live by faith*" (Rom. 1:17). Who can live by faith? Only the righteous. People make two claims to justification. The man who says, "I am justified by doing the best I can" is simply saying that he expects God to excuse his sin. But God does not excuse sin; God forgives sin. Excusing sin is nothing more than license — allowing man to go on living as he wishes and always coming up short. Therefore, a man is not justified by doing the best he can — by living after the law. He is justified by faith, by trusting God to forgive him. Once a man has really trusted God, he is just. And *the righteous* then begins to live by faith. The former man, whether a legalist or a man of fleshly indulgence, has no opportunity to live by faith. Why? Simply because he never started the life of faith. It is the just, not the legalist or the man of sinful indulgence, who lives by faith.
2. "*The righteous will live by faith*" (Gal. 3:11). By what rule does a person live? By the principle of faith, not by the principle of works. The person declared *just* by faith shall live apart from works. The believer is saved by faith, and the believer lives by faith (Gal. 3:11).
3. "*The righteous will live by faith*" (Heb. 10:38). By what power does a person live? By the power that is given us by God because of faith. The Christian believes God, believes in the promises God has made. Therefore, the believer does what God says. The power of faith *energizes* him to live a righteous life. Works have nothing to do with making him *righteous* nor with keeping him righteous. □

IV. Galatians 03:13–14 Redemption from the Curse

Scripture says that "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law." The word *redeemed* (exegorasen) means to buy back or to buy from or to ransom. Christ has bought man back and ransomed him from the curse of the law. That man has broken the law of God is unquestionable; every honest man knows this. Therefore, every man stands guilty before God and must be judged and condemned to bear the curse and punishment of the law. But this is the glorious news: Jesus Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. How?

1. Jesus Christ was made a curse for us. Simply stated, Jesus Christ took our condemnation, doom, death and punishment upon Himself and bore them all for us. Jesus Christ took our place as the lawbreaker and guilty party before God, and He bore the punishment of the lawbreaker for us. How was this possible?

- => Because Jesus Christ had obeyed and kept the law of God perfectly. He had never broken the law, not even once. He was sinless and perfect. He had secured the Ideal Righteousness and Perfection before God. Therefore. He bore no guilt, no penalty and no mark of death. He had the right to stand before God and claim eternal life, the right to be accepted by God and to never experience death. He was perfect; He had secured incorruptible righteousness.
- => Because God is love. The glorious gospel is that instead of claiming the right to live in God's presence, Christ determined to give His perfection and righteousness to the people of the earth, and to take their sin upon Himself. He was determined to swap His ideal righteousness for man's unrighteousness, to swap His ideal life for man's sinful life.

Stated as simply as possible, Jesus Christ substituted Himself, His perfect life, for man's sinful life. He substituted His obedience to God for man's disobedience. He bore man's sin and punishment so that man might stand righteous and perfect before God. Jesus Christ bore the curse of the law for us. (See notes, Gal. 1:4-5; 1:6-9; note and *Justification*, Gal. 2:15-16; *Faith vs. Works*, Gal. 2:16; note, Gal. 2:19-21. Also cp. all the notes in Romans dealing with the subjects of Justification and Law.)

Note the Old Testament quotation: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" (Dut. 21:23). This does not mean that a man is cursed because he is executed upon a tree, but rather that a man who is executed upon a tree is there because he is cursed, having been judged as a lawbreaker. Jesus Christ took the sins of man, taking the place of the transgressor; therefore, He was cursed (condemned) to die as the unlawful and disobedient sinner died.

2. The purpose for Jesus Christ bearing the curse of the law was to open the door of blessing to all men. Christ bearing the curse of the law was the way God fulfilled His promise to Abraham: that all nations would be blessed in him. Christ bearing the curse of the law is also the way that God gives the promises made to Abraham to the world. Any man who believes in Jesus Christ — that Christ bore the curse of the law for him — is accepted by God and given the blessings of the promised land eternally.

In summary, the man who believes in Christ receives the promise of God's Holy Spirit, that is, the promise...

- of the divine nature.

2 Pet 1:4 *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

- of the new birth.

John 3:3-6 *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?"*

Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

***1 Pet 1:23** For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

- of being made a new creation.

***2 Cor 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

- of being made into a new self, a new man.

***Eph 4:24** And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

***Col 3:10** And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ■*