

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Curse of the Law

Scripture: Galatians 3:10

Code: 80-105

As we come to this table that is set before us, I want you to turn in your Bible to Galatians chapter 3. And I want to read just a portion of a verse there, and then just set our thoughts toward the Lord. Galatians chapter 3, just that tenth verse: "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under a curse, for it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them." "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them."

The curse of the law is a theme that any Bible student should know. When you look at the Old Testament and you remember the ten commandments, the first half of them relating to our attitude toward God and the second our attitude toward one another, we all agree that those ten commandments articulate God's moral law. But there's much more than that. As you read through the Old Testament and the New Testament it becomes clear that God has a very far-reaching and wide and comprehensive standard for human conduct.

It also becomes very apparent that this law is exacting on all mankind. In fact, our inability to keep it puts us all under a curse. God has set down a righteous law. God has designed a moral standard that touches every area of human life. We are told to live up to that law. And we are told if we fail, we are cursed.

Sometimes you hear people say, "Well, I'm doing my best, I hope God will accept me." Well, He won't. Some people say, "Well, I'm, I'm certainly a good person, and I'm religious, and I do a lot of good deeds. That ought to satisfy God." Well, it doesn't.

God has established a moral law that, in effect, does nothing more than curse us. Let me tell you why. First of all, God's law requires things contrary to human nature. God's law requires things contrary to human nature. It demands of us behaviors that are opposite the desires of our hearts. It asks us to do what we don't want to do. It demands unnatural things. You see, sinners love sin. Sinners love darkness. Sinners love the world. Sinners love the flesh. Sinners love their lusts and their passions. And to try to all of a sudden change your desires and want to keep the law of God is impossible. It is asking a frog to fly. It can't be done. It is contrary to all our desires. And so we are left to be cursed by it because we really don't care to keep it. And without the motivation, where is going to be the behavior?

Secondly, the law curses us another way: it curses us in that it calls for us to do impossible things. First of all it goes against our desires, and if we could even get our desires in line, it asks us to do impossible things. Sinners can't do holy things, can't think holy thoughts, can't speak holy words, even if they desired them. We can't perform them. We don't have the desire and we don't have the ability. And so we're cursed by it.

Thirdly, the law exacts on everybody absolute perfection of performance. That's right. Cursed is everyone who doesn't abide by all things written in the book of the law. The law exacts on everyone absolute perfection of performance and accepts nothing less. The law is a sever creditor that demands perfect compliance. Sinners don't have the ability to do that. We can't be perfect. Not at all. And so we are held up to an exacting perfection that we cannot possibly attain.

And so the law asks us to do things that are against our nature. It asks us to do things that we don't have the ability to do. And it demands that we do them all with absolute perfection. And we fail on all three counts and therefore the law sentences us to death for violation.

Fourthly, looking at the curse of the law, the law refuses to accept good intentions and good effort as any consolation. The law refuses to accept good intentions or good effort as any consolation. Sinners could do a few good things. Sinners could be kind. Sinners could do a good deed, be charitable, demonstrate unselfishness. They can do a few good things to some degree, but all the good things they do, all of them cumulatively, mean nothing. Because the law will not accept good intention or a few good works as some form of consolation. Anything that falls short of perfection is absolutely unacceptable to the law. The law just puts the rules down, and it knows no exception to perfect obedience.

Fifthly, sort of following that point up a little bit, the law accepts no limited payment. The law's not going to allow you to say, "Well, I know I broke a lot of laws, but I'd like to start paying off my debt. Maybe if I did five good deeds this week and five next week I could sort of get on a weekly payment plan, and just pay into this deal five good deeds a week and erase my debt." No, the law accepts no limited payment plans. The law demands absolute damnation forever to anyone who violates it once. And there's no payment plan.

Sinners who violate God's law one time find that it is permanently fatal. In fact, were you to keep the law of God your whole life long and break it in the last moment of breath before you died, you would be forever damned for that one violation.

Sixthly, the law is an unrelenting taskmaster--it never eases up and it never lightens the load. The law doesn't say, "Well look, just work hard at this thing, keep it perfectly for the first five years and I'll give you a few sins for the second five." The law never lightens the burden. The law never eases up.

Sinners never have any rest. They never have anything to look forward to in terms of the easing of the standard of the law--it never eases up. It has stringent, unbending, and unrelenting demands and no days off and no exceptions.

Number seven, the law shatters the soul like an iron rod shatters a clay pot. Like a hammer smashes glass the law shatters the soul. What do I mean by that? Sinners live with guilt, shame, restlessness, sorrow, pain, unfulfillment, dissatisfaction, futility, ignorance, doubt, hopelessness. And they can't recover, and they can't find a cure for their shattered souls. The law is a steel rod that shatters the soul.

Number eight, the law gives a man the severest sentence to eternal punishment in hell. The law gives a man or a woman the severest sentence to eternal punishment in hell. Sinners can never be released from it. There is no parole. There is no time off for good behavior. Sinners will be tormented forever and ever and ever.

Number nine, this is very important, the law, with all of its demands, provides no help to the sinner. No help! The law doesn't say, "Here are the demands and I'll give you this to help you keep them." The law offers no help, no strength. The law is impotent--it has no strength, it has no power, it offers us nothing. Sinners already are powerless to obey the demands of the law, and the law offers them no assistance--absolutely none.

Number ten, the law, once it has been offended, provides no restoration, no restitution. The law doesn't offer the sinner a plan for restitution, a plan for restoration. The law doesn't offer some path to renewed opportunity. The law offers no salvation, no deliverance.

And that leads me to number eleven: the law listens to no one's repentance. The law listens to no one's repentance. The law doesn't care how sorry you are about your sin. The law doesn't care how weepy you are, how broken you are, how contrite you are. The law doesn't care how repentant you are. The law doesn't care how eager you are to make amends and change. The law is utterly indifferent to all repentance.

Twelve, the law offers no forgiveness. The law offers no forgiveness. You can't go to the law and plead for mercy. You can't go to the law and plead for grace. The law has none. The law says, "This is the righteous standard, period." There is no mercy, there is no grace, there is no way that you can find a path of forgiveness.

Number thirteen, the law, rather than eliminating sin, stirs up sin. The law, rather than eliminating sin, stirs up sin. What do you mean by that? The law states things we are not to do, and in so stating them stirs up sinful desire. Tell a child, "You can't do that," and watch him want to do it. Tell a man, "This is forbidden," and watch him desire it. The law, rather than eliminating sin, stirs up sin. Sinners

who live by it are excited by it, and the more and more sin.

Number fourteen, the law offers no hope. The law offers no hope--no promise of a better day, no promise of a brighter tomorrow. Sinners have nothing to look forward to--nothing but judgment.

Now do you know why the apostle Paul says, "Those who live under the law are cursed." What an unbelievable curse! Here we are required to do things contrary to the desires of our heart. The law asks us to do things we don't even want to do.

Secondly, the law demands us to do duties that we can't do.

Thirdly, the law of God exacts on us an absolute perfection of performance and accepts nothing less.

Fourthly, the law refuses to accept our good intentions and our zealous efforts as any consolation if we fall short of perfection.

Fifthly, the law accepts no limited or partial payment but demands absolute damnation for everyone who has violated it once.

Sixthly, the law is an unrelenting taskmaster that never eases up and never lightens the load.

Seventh, we said the law breaks the soul, crushes and smashes the soul like a steel rod does a clay pot, crushing the person into brokenness and guilt and shame.

We said the law gives a man a severe sentence, the most severe sentence to an eternal punishment in hell.

The law provides no strength--it is impotent, it can't help us to keep itself.

The law, once it has been offended, offers no amends, provides no restoration and no restitution, listens to no repentance, and offers no forgiveness.

The law, rather than eliminating sin, just stirs it up.

And finally we said the law offers no hope and no promise of a better day.

Do you want to live under the law? Do you want to work your way to heaven under those circumstances? Do you want to try and rack up your good deeds and offer them to God and see if He'll accept them? You better try again. All the law is going to do is damn you. No matter how much you try to please God, you can't do it. So all that the law does is destroy. "By the deeds of the law," Paul said, "no one will ever be made right with God." The law is too demanding--you can't do it. All

you have to do is break it one time and you are irretrievably damned to hell. I don't know about you but I don't want to live under a law like that, do you?

There's one other thing the law does. In Galatians chapter 3 verse 24 it tells us. It says this: "Therefore, the law has become our schoolmaster, or our tutor, to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith." Boy, is that good news! There's one other thing the law does: it leads you to Christ. How does it do that? It ought to be pretty obvious. When you've looked at the law and you've understood it, and you've understood what it does and what it demands, you get desperate. And you say to yourself, I can't save myself. I can't keep this law. I can't please God. I can't earn my salvation. I can't do this. And you find yourself in a desperate situation which drives you to someone to save you from the law's sentence. And that someone is Christ.

The law, then, is like a tutor that leads you to Christ, and to come to Christ to be justified or to be made right with God not by law but by faith...faith. We can all say a hallelujah to that, can't we? We're not under the law, we're under grace. We realized that we couldn't keep the law, and so we cried out and said, "We need somebody to save us from the sentence of the law." That somebody was Christ. Jesus Christ came into the world and He took the punishment that you deserve and I deserve for breaking God's law. He took it on Himself--He bore our judgment. He took the wrath of God for us. And if we put our faith in Him, we're made right with God. You can't do it by the law, but you can do it by faith believing in Jesus Christ.

That's why we're at this table. We're here to celebrate the Savior who delivered us from the curse of the law. And as we come to this table, it ought to be with exuberant gratitude. If we were left under the law, we were forever damned. But Jesus Christ delivered us from the curse of the law. Jesus Christ died our death on the cross and bore the punishment for our sin. And if we believe in Him, we are made right with God and will never be judged and never condemned. That's God's promise.

Father we thank you for the fact that we're not under the law. We thank you that Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain but He washed it white as snow. We thank you, Father, that You didn't leave us under the curse of the law, but that Jesus became a curse for us to deliver us from the demand of the law. We thank you. Words cannot express the gratitude of our hearts. If we were under law we would be doomed and damned. Thank you, O God, that in Christ we're under grace through faith and we have nothing to fear. For he became a curse for us, taking on Himself the fury of the law that had been violated, that we might be forgiven and receive the promise of eternal life. We celebrate His death with great thanksgiving.

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