

# **A DEFENCE OF THE AUTHENTIC GOSPEL: A STUDY OF GALATIANS**

## **(LESSON THIRTY-NINE)**

### ***“THE LAW IS NOT OF FAITH” (PART TWO)***

#### **GALATIANS 3:10-12**

##### **(ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)**

*10 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.”*

*11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”*

*12 But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”*

In **Galatians 3:10-14**, Paul moves from the experience of the Galatian believers, and the experience of the patriarch Abraham, to the strict legal requirements of the Mosaic Law. In this section, Paul argues that self-effort to obtain right standing before God, instead of being a road to salvation, is in fact a road to damnation. Although he is primarily referring to the Mosaic Law, his argument is a general reference to every activity of men and women to attain right standing before God by means of a strict observance of some external moral standard.

In verse **10**, Paul quotes from **Deuteronomy 27:26**. *“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.””*

The word “*For*” at the beginning of the verse, connects this section with the preceding two. Both the Galatian believers and Abraham had been justified, or declared righteous, or saved, by faith alone, “**for**” it was impossible for them to have experienced this blessing as a result of legalistic works, since legalism always brings with it a curse!

In this verse Paul shatters the confidence of both the judaizers and the Galatians who had accepted their false, legalistic message, in their method of attaining right standing before God, arguing that no individual can possibly keep the Law perfectly.

In **Romans 10:1-4**, Paul explains that the root cause for the failure of the Gospel among the Jews was their ignorance of the righteousness of God and their substitution of a human righteousness. He says that they ignored **God’s way** of justifying sinful human beings and sought instead to, “*establish their own righteousness.*” The righteousness that the Jews desired was a righteousness that was their own in character, one achieved through their own efforts, and one that would glorify themselves. They did not desire a righteousness that was characterized by what God is in His glorious Person, and what He has done through the Person and work of His Son, and therefore a righteousness that glorifies Him. The Jews did not desire a righteousness that was handed to them as a gift for which they would feel obligated to thank and glorify God and Him alone.

Brothers and sisters, securing the righteousness of God by faith not only involves the discarding of all dependence upon self-effort for salvation, but also the total submission of the mind and heart to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. The Jews were not prepared to do either. Are we?

In **Galatians 3:11**, Paul quotes **Habakkuk 2:4** to show that justification can only be by faith: “*Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’*”

By quoting from the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk, Paul is arguing that not only were the Judaizers in his day in error, but that they would

also have been in error had they lived and argued in the same way six hundred years before! **Justification has never depended on works and it never will**, for the Scripture says *“The righteous shall live **by faith**.”* It is the person who places his or her entire confidence in God, trusting Him wholeheartedly, and accepting freely His gracious provision of salvation, who alone will be justified, or declared righteous, or saved. It is he or she alone who *“shall live.”*

In verse **12**, Paul writes, *“But the law is not of faith, rather ‘The one who does them shall live by them.’”* In this verse, as He did in the two previous verses, Paul quotes from the Old Testament Scriptures. This time he quotes from **Leviticus 18:5**, *“The one who does them shall live by them.”*

Some commentators believe that Paul’s motivation for quoting from **Leviticus 18:5** was a feeling that some of the Galatian believers might be thinking that **both** faith in Christ and works of the Law were necessary for salvation. In other words, they would be thinking that both Paul and the Judaizers were correct. Paul’s response to such a thought is, “Absolutely not! The two ways are totally incompatible!”

**David Guzik**, in his commentary on this verse writes the following:

“Some might come back to Paul and say, ‘Look, I’ll do the best I can under the law and let faith cover the rest. God will look at **my** performance, **my** effort, and **my** good intentions and credit it to **me** as righteousness. The important thing is that **I** am really trying.’ Paul proved from the Old Testament itself that this simply isn’t good enough. No; the paths of approval by the law and faith don’t run together, because **the law is not of faith.**”

The Law does not find its **origin** in faith but in works because the very nature of Law is the opposite of faith. Paul quotes **Leviticus 18:5** to prove that only **perfect** obedience to the Law is acceptable to God. The Law demands that we live up to its directions **perfectly**. God’s standards

are perfect. Any failure attracts a curse. If we choose to live under the Law, then we must live by its perfect standard. Since no one can keep the Law perfectly, God puts all those who attempt to do so under the curse based on their own premise. If they fail at **any** point, which is inevitable, they fall under condemnation. That is why we cannot combine the two systems of Grace and Law. Since we cannot comply perfectly with the Law, then we must go to grace and rely entirely on the Cross of Christ.

The Law, or any other system of rule-keeping cannot save a sinner or set up the standard for the Christian life. Those who attempt to keep the Law as a works system fail to meet God's standard for salvation because their works can never be of sufficient quality or quantity to satisfy the absolute standard of who God is and what He demands. God cannot tolerate sin to the slightest degree. It is a religious fairy tale to believe that someone can measure up to God's standards. In fact, God does not hold out this expectation for us!

If we commit one sin, that one sin makes it impossible for us to have fellowship with God. He must be consistent with His own standards. If we follow the Law but do not keep it, how can it save or sanctify us?

The person who achieves a 10% score as it relates to keeping the Law, is no worse off in God's eyes than the person who achieves a 90% score (which is impossible). If a person chooses the Law as a system of salvation, then he or she will stand before an absolutely perfect God based on the Law. And their failure to keep the Law will result in him or her being cursed!

**Kenneth Wuest** comments on this verse as follows:

"The statement, '*The law is not of faith,*' means that the two principles of Law and of faith as a means of justification are mutually exclusive of one another. They are diametrically opposed to each other. Then Paul quotes **Leviticus 18:5**, '*The man that doeth them shall live in them.*' Light is thrown upon this statement by the apostle in **Romans**

**10:5** where he quotes this same passage from **Leviticus**, when he says, *'Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law.'* That means that there **is** a righteousness that a human being could accrue to himself by a perfect obedience to the law, a thing which a fallen sinful human being cannot do, but which a perfect sinless being could do. But that righteousness would be different from the righteousness which God imputes to the believing sinner. The former would be obtained by **works**, and would be a **human** righteousness. The latter is obtained by **faith** and is a **divine** righteousness. Under the legal enactments of the Mosaic law, this could be the futile attempt of a sinner **to work out** under law a righteousness which God could approve. Under grace, it is the act of a believing sinner **accepting as a gift**, a righteousness which God has approved, even the Lord Jesus Himself."

Brothers and sisters, even if a person was successful in keeping the whole Law, the righteousness that he or she would have would be inferior, because it would be his or her own. The Gospel on the other hand offers us a righteousness of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As ways by which human beings attempt to obtain salvation the two simply do not mix. The **Law-works** way of **justification** means leaning on self. The **grace-faith** way of salvation means leaning on Christ. They are thoroughly antagonistic. In the matter of right standing with God, the choice is Faith **or** Law, not Faith **and** Law.

I know of no better way to argue this point than to quote from **John Gresham Machen**, the New Testament scholar who is considered to be the last of the great Princeton theologians:

"Those who have been saved by the Lord Jesus Christ are in a far more blessed condition than Adam was before he fell. Adam, before he fell, was righteous in the sight of God, but he was still under the possibility of becoming unrighteous. Those who have been saved by the Lord Jesus Christ not only are righteous in the sight of God but they are beyond the possibility of becoming unrighteous. In their case, the

probation is over. It is not over because they have stood it successfully. It is not over because they themselves have earned the reward of assured blessedness which God promised on condition of perfect obedience. But it is over because Christ has stood it for them; it is over because Christ has merited for them the reward by His perfect obedience to God's law.

I think I can make the matter plain if I imagine a dialogue between the law of God and a sinful man saved by grace.

'Man,' says the law of God, 'have you obeyed my commands?'

'No,' says the sinner saved by grace. 'I have disobeyed them, not only in the person of my representative Adam in his first sin, but also in that, I myself have sinned in thought, word, and deed.'

'Well, then sinner,' says the law of God, 'have you paid the penalty which I pronounced upon disobedience?'

'No,' says the sinner, 'I have not paid the penalty myself, but Christ has paid it for me. He was my representative when He died there on the cross. Hence, so far as the penalty is concerned, I am clear.'

'Well, then sinner,' says the law of God, 'how about the conditions which God has pronounced for the attainment of assured blessedness? Have you stood the test? Have you merited eternal life by perfect obedience during the period of probation?'

'No,' says the sinner, 'I have not merited eternal life by my own perfect obedience. God knows and my own conscience knows that even after I became a Christian, I have sinned in thought, word and deed. But although I have not merited eternal life by any obedience of my own, Christ has merited it for me by His perfect obedience. He was not for Himself, subject to the law. No, obedience was required of Him for Himself, since He was Lord of all. That obedience, then, which He

rendered to the law when He was on earth, was rendered by Him as my representative. I have no righteousness of my own, but clad in Christ's perfect righteousness, imputed to me and received by faith alone. I can glory in the fact that so far as I am concerned the probation has been kept, and as God is true there awaits me, the glorious reward which Christ thus earned for me.'

Such, put in bold, simple form, is the dialogue between every Christian and the law of God. How gloriously complete is the salvation wrought for us by Christ! Christ paid the penalty, and He merited the reward. Those are the two great things that He has done for us."

The **Law** will have **doers** that think they deserve to be saved because of their **works**. The **Gospel** will have only **sinners**, who know that they do not deserve to be saved and therefore rely entirely on the **grace** of God through **faith** in Christ to save them. They have done **working** and instead are **trusting** the One who did all the work that God required on their behalf!

Brothers and sisters, anyone who tries to be saved or sanctified by his or her own effort, independent of God, is doomed to fail. **This is what the Scripture says:** "*Cursed is anyone who does not affirm and obey the terms of these instructions* ' And all the people will reply, 'Amen.' " (**Deuteronomy 26:27 New Living Translation**).

The obvious impossibility of carrying out such a moral program should make it plain that no one can sustain a relationship with God in that way.

The person who lives in a right relationship with God does so by embracing what God has arranged for him or her. Doing things for God is the opposite of entering into what God has done for you. **This is what the Scripture says:** "*Look at that man, bloated by self-importance — full of himself but soul-empty. But the person in right standing before God through loyal and steady believing is fully alive, really alive.*" (**Habakkuk 2:4 The Message**).

Rule-keeping does not naturally evolve into living by faith. Rule-keeping only perpetuates itself in more and more rule-keeping. **This is what the Scripture says:** *“So you must keep my statutes and my regulations; anyone who does so will live by keeping them. I am the LORD.”* (Leviticus 18:5 New English Translation).

During one of his evangelistic campaigns, the noted American evangelist, **D. L. Moody**, was approached by a man who had been to a number of the services, and who, although convicted of his need for Christ, had kept on resisting the Holy Spirit. Now the last night had come. The service was over, the people were going home, the work crew was busy folding up the chairs and dismantling the platform, and Mr. Moody was preparing to leave. The man finally plucked up his courage. He came to the evangelist and blurted out, “Mr. Moody, what must I do to be saved?” Moody looked at him and said “I’m sorry, sir but you’re too late.” “Too late, Mr. Moody?” The man was desperate now. “Surely I’m not too late!” Moody replied “Yes, sir, you’re too late. As a matter of fact, you’re two thousand years too late if you want to **do** something to be saved. All the ‘doing’ has been done. But if you would like to accept Christ by faith as your personal Savior, you’re just in time. You can do that right here, right now.”

We will give **C.H. Spurgeon** the final word this evening:

“The justified man is not justified by the law, but by faith. He stands before God not in what he does, **not even in what the Spirit enables him to do**. His own prayers and tears...his own labors, his earnest... attempts to extend the kingdom of Christ—all tell for nothing in the matter of his justification. He hangs them all upon the cross of Christ and relies only upon the cross, looking in no manner whatever to anything that comes of himself.”

It is my hope and prayer that this is a description of every one of us!