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Lectures on Galatians

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Lectures on Galatians

THIRD LECTURE

Gal. 3:13

I

Christ became a curse for us.

Why do you not jump up quivering from this electric shock?

Christ, the Only-begotten of the Father, in the bosom of the Father from eternity, in the glory of the Father—this majestic Christ became a curse for us.

A startling statement! What is it all about?

God said, If a man keep my commandments, "he shall live in them," Lev. 18:5.

Many centuries later the Savior still said the same, Keep the commandments, "and thou shalt live," Luke 10:25-37; Matt. 19:16-22.

Sounds good; but what if I break the Law?

Cursed is every one who continueth not in all good things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them, says God, Deut. 27:26; 28:15; Josh. 8:32-35.

"Cursed" is the lawbreaker say Peter and Paul, 2 Pet. 2:14; Eph. 2:2, 3.

"Cursed" is the lawbreaker, the Savior Himself will say on the terrible Judgment Day, Matt. 25:41.

Doesn't that make the cold shivers run up and down your spine? God's curse!

Who keeps the Law?

There was a rich young ruler, so likable that "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him." This fine fellow fooled himself and said he had kept the Law from his youth. The Savior, however, proved he had not yet even begun to keep it, was in fact breaking it right there and then. How? Loving his money more than his neighbor, loving his gold more than his God; in fact, making gold his god. Money is the acid test, Mark 10:17-30; Luke 18:18-30.

Nicodemus was a grave and reverend gentleman, a fine Pharisee, an honorable ruler of the Jews, a venerable teacher in Israel. And yet the very first thing the Savior said was, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven," John 3:1-21.

Saul of Tarsus boasted, "Touching the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless," Phil. 3:6. Later he learned his lesson and declared "There is no distinction; for all sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Rom. 1:3-23.

We all have broken the Law, and so we all are under the curse of the Law. If we cannot save ourselves by the works of the Law, how can we escape the curse of the Law?

Christ went to the slave market and bought us out of the curse. What price? He became a curse for us. 1 Pet. 1:18; 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21.

How?

He was hanged on the tree; and he that is hanged is accursed of God, Deut. 21:23. He knew no sin, and so He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and the curse of God fell on the Lamb of God that bore the sins of the world. He was stricken, smitten of God. And He felt to the full the force of the curse. It forced from Him the heart-breaking wail, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

The Son of God — forsaken by God!

The Son of God — a curse of God!

Reason reels. But in that moment He suffered the torments of the damned. He endured the curse, and that is the fine He paid to buy us free from the curse.

He gave Himself an offering and a sacrifice to God and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, the Righteous instead of the unrighteous, as our Substitute and Representative, to make the vicarious atonement; to pay our fine and have us freed.

The wages of sin is death. Christ died for our sins. That is the Gospel whereby we are saved, 1 Cor. 15:2, 3.

II

Christ became a curse for us — what for?

That upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

What is this "blessing of Abraham"? Abraham *believed* God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness, Gen. 15:6.

Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are as the sons of Abraham.

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God justifies the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel in advance unto Abraham, In thee shall all the nations be blessed, in the Seed of Abraham, in Him who is Christ, Gen. 12:3; Luke 1:55, 73; John 8:56. So, then, they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham. In other words, the blessing of Abraham is justification by faith.

More than a thousand years after God had preached this Gospel to Abraham it was again preached by the prophet Habakkuk, 2:4:

"The righteous shall live by faith." Hundreds of years after Habakkuk the same Gospel was again preached by Paul:

"The just shall live by faith," Gal. 3:11; Rom. 1:17; 3:28; 4:3; Jas. 2:23.

More than a thousand years after Paul the same Gospel was again preached by Luther:

"The just shall live by faith."

If there had been a law given which could have made alive, verily righteousness would have been of the Law. But the Scriptures locked up all things under sin — in jail, with the Law as the jailer to hinder escape.

What for?

That the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given them that believe — the only way to get out of that prison.

Before the faith came, faith in the "Seed," Christ, we were kept under guard by the Law, locked up together for the faith to be revealed in Christ. And so the Law has been our boy-leader till Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith — which receives the merits of Christ.

But the faith — Christ — having come, we are no longer under a boy-leader. Now we are of age.

For you are all the sons of God through this faith in Christ Jesus.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ, Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:4; Titus 3:5; Is. 61:10; Luke 15:22; Matt. 22:11; Ps. 132:9, 16.

The cloak of righteousness of the First-born cloaks all unrighteousness of all forlorn.

Jesus' blood and righteousness
My jewels are and courtly dress;
In these 'fore God I'll victor stand
When entering the Promised Land.

Robed in Christ — or robbed of Christ.

In Christ there is no Jew nor Greek, there is no slave nor free, there is no male nor female; for you are as one person in union with Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. 12:12, 13; Col. 3:11. And if you belong to Christ, then are you Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

Triumphant logic! Q. E. D.

This glorious Gospel of freedom, this justification by faith alone, was preached to the Galatians and by them received joyfully. Alas! Soon Paul had to fire some sharp, searching questions.

1. O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was painted and placarded as crucified? 1 Cor. 2:2. Had you kept your eyes on the Crucified, you would have been saved from becoming bewitched by the satanic spell.

Crucified, that is the one thing needful. That is the one thing a thousand years later Luther preached. In the Wittenberg City Church Lucas Cranach painted Luther pointing the people to Christ crucified. Only this and nothing more.

2. This alone do I want to learn from you, Did you receive the

Spirit from the works of the Law or from the hearing of faith? — the preaching having faith for its content and aim.

That one thing decides; it is either — or. You know from your own personal experience you received the Spirit and became Christians when through the hearing of the Gospel God opened your heart and gave you faith, as in the case of Cornelius and Lydia, Acts 10:44; 16:14. You know this to be a fact, and this fact should turn you from the false preachers of works.

3. So very foolish are you? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now completing in the flesh? — when you are already complete in Christ, Col. 2:10.

This biting irony is a bold attempt to make them sensible, to see how senseless they are in their utter and deadly folly.

4. Did you experience so much in vain? if indeed it be in vain — which I cannot really believe of you. Paul is trying to touch their heart and conscience.

5. He that liberally supplies to you the Spirit and works wonders among you, Acts 14:3, does He do it from works of the Law or from the hearing of faith?

Again, your own experience tells you God is doing that not by the works of the Law but by the hearing of faith.

From the works of the Law — the very idea! Grotesque and blasphemous!

There are just two ways to be saved — by works and by faith.

1. The men of works shall live if they do the works of the Law. They cannot do them, and so they are under the curse.

The crown jeweler was offered a ruby, the finest by far he had ever seen but for one tiny flaw; and he rejected it from the regalia of England. At great cost a block of marble was brought from Paros for a statue of Napoleon, but Canova saw a tiny red line running through it; and he would not touch it with his chisel.

Whosoever shall keep the whole Law and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all, Jas. 2:10; Matt. 5:19.

2. The men of faith are justified and live by faith in Christ, who removed the curse from them by becoming a curse for them.

There is Mount Ebal of works with its curses. Here is Mount Gerizim of faith with its blessings, Deut. 27:11, 13. There is Mount Sinai with the Law. Here is Mount Calvary with its Gospel.

Here, and only here, is there real comfort for the sinner. Michelangelo was a colossal genius. He was the vigorous sculptor of the majestic Moses. He was the powerful painter of the terrible Last Judgment. He was the daring architect of St. Peter's, flinging into the sky the dome of the Pantheon over the cross. He was the Christian poet who at eighty wrote these fine lines:

My thoughts once prompt round hurtful things to twine;
 What are they now when two dread deaths are near?
 The one impends, the other shakes his spear.
 Painting and sculpture's aid in vain I crave.
 My only refuge is that Love Divine
 Which from the cross stretched forth its arms to save.

FOURTH LECTURE

THE SENDING OF THE SON

Gal. 4:4-31

I

When the fulness of time came!

That was the time set before by the Father when the minor should become of age, the time foretold by the prophets.

Alexander the Great spread the Greek language over the world; Caesar Augustus made the Roman peace so that all the world could travel back and forth in safety; the Jews were spread all over the world, and in their synagogues, with the Greek Old Testament, made known the promises of the coming Messiah. The old priest Zacharias prophesied, "God hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David." The Simeons and Hannahs and others were waiting for the redemption of Israel. Up north the sinful Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well knew that Messiah cometh, He that is called Christ; when He is come, He will declare unto us all things, John 4:25; Luke 1:69; 2:25, 30; 3:15.

Roman writers tell us even heathen looked for a great deliverer out of Judea. The time was when Caesar Augustus ruled the Roman world empire, when Quirinius was governor of Syria, when Herod the Great was king of Judea. In the history of the world God's hour struck, and God was there on the hour.

The Sending

God sent forth His Son, His Only-begotten, the Son of His love, in whom He was well pleased. God sent Him forth out of Himself, out of His bosom, out of His glory, out of the dim and distant eternity, into time, out of high heaven into the world below, sent Him in a manner most wonderful.

The Manner

1. Out of a woman, no human father, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, true God and true man in one person, the wonderful God-man.

Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh. And the learned monk Dionysius, who modestly called himself Exiguus, Little, about 500 at Rome began to count the Christian era *ab incarnatione Domini*, from which we got our A. D.

2. Come to be under the Law. From birth subject to the Law like everybody else. Though He was God's Son, yet learned He His obedience and became perfect through suffering. It became Him to fulfil all righteousness. He challenged the world, "Who of you convicteth Me of sin?" And the challenge still goes unanswered. Pilate's wife called Him "that just man"; Pilate examined Him and could find no fault in Him; on the brink of eternity Judas shrieked his farewell sermon, "I have betrayed the innocent blood!" The centurion confessed, "Surely this was a righteous man and the Son of God." He was "the Righteous." The God-born became the woman-born, and He became Law-bound, subject to the Law; and He kept the Law perfectly.

The Purpose

1. That He might buy free those under the Law.

All were under the Law, none could keep the Law; so all were children of disobedience, children of wrath, under the curse of the Law of God. Christ bought us free from the curse. How? Having become a curse in our stead. How? By hanging on the cursed tree.

Christ kept the Law in our stead, and now Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth, Rom. 10:4; 5:19; 6:16-22; 2 Cor. 5:21. He bought us free. The fine is paid, the debtor is freed, the year of jubilee is come. Thank God for the world's great Emancipator! Wonders never cease. More in store.

2. That we might receive sonship. We minors, legally infants, are now declared of age. Freed from guardians, governors, and stewards, we now have the standing of sons. When the Roman boy became of age, he put on the dress of manhood, the *toga virilis*. Christ is our *Toga virilis*.

The Son of God became the Son of man to make the sons of men the sons of God. By the perfect obedience of Christ we children of the devil have become the children of God.

When the Danish missionaries on Malabar put a convert to translate Luther's Small Catechism, he dropped his pen when he came to the sentence that we are the sons of God. "It is too much; let me put, 'they shall be permitted to kiss His feet.'" Yes, too much for us, but not for God. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God; and such we are, 1 John 3:1.

"And because ye are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!" God sent forth His Son among sinners: God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into saints. And at once the Spirit in our hearts cries and causes us to cry, cry eagerly

and joyously, Abba! Father! Luther says, "This little word 'Father,' spoken rightly from the heart, passeth all the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and of the most eloquent of rhetoricians that ever were in the world."

Note the Spirit of the Father is the Spirit of the Son, and so proceeds from the Father and the Son. Note also the Holy Trinity at work to work our salvation.

"Wherefore thou art no longer a slave," "a minor legally not different from a slave," "but a son,"—become of age, having the standing of a son. More in store!

"And if a son, then an heir," joint heir with Christ. That is the heavenly peak gleaming in glory. No more can be in store. *Ne plus ultra*—nothing beyond except the realization.

"Through God"—all, all this. Beginning middle, and end—all through God. What hast thou that thou didst not receive?

Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift! Unspeakable; with Johann Menzer we shout:

Oh, that I had a thousand voices,
A mouth to speak with thousand tongues!
My heart, which in the Lord rejoices,
Then would proclaim in grateful songs
To all, wherever I might be,
What great things God hath done for me.

II

We are heirs of God through God.

This blessed fact gives dynamic force to a passionate appeal. "Formerly ye did not know the true God." Ye were without Christ, and so ye were without God and hope in the world, Eph. 2:12. "Then ye slaved for them that by nature are not gods at all"—an idol is nothing in the world, 1 Thess. 4:5; Eph. 4:18; 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:21; 12:2.

Matt. 10:40. "Where, then, is that gratulation of yourselves" for having heard the Gospel? "For I bear you witness that, if possible, ye would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. So, then, am I become your enemy by telling you the truth? My little children, of whom I am in birth pains until Christ be fully formed in you"—it seems here he breaks off and breaks down. It seems we can see his fatherly breast heaving in anguish, his lips quivering, and the water standing in his eyes.

Wonderful man, this Paul!

Having proved his teaching of justification by faith alone, he pictures it with the story of Hagar, the slave woman, and Sarah, the free woman. "Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother." And he ends in triumph—"Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a slave and therefore slaves to the Law, but of the free woman and therefore free men," through the freedom wherewith Christ made us free. Rom. 9:7-9.

When Charles II became king, he dismissed Milton from his post of Latin secretary, held under Cromwell, fined him, and publicly burned his writings on liberty. Now poor and blind, he wrote *Paradise Lost*. Later the dissolute king felt the need of the matchless talents of the mighty poet and asked him back to his post with all its great advantages. He spurned the splendid bribe and chose poverty, neglect, a good conscience, and liberty. "Give me the liberty to believe and to utter freely, according to conscience, above all other liberties."

Christ made us free; now let us ring the Liberty Bell and proclaim freedom to all the earth.

Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem were born
But not within thyself, thy soul shall be forlorn;
The cross of Golgotha thou lookest to in vain
Unless within thyself it be set up again.

"But now ye have come to know the true God — or rather are known and acknowledged by God as His own." It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. God has done it all; you have done nothing at all. Salvation is not achieved, but received. Luther puts it very neatly: "Not therefore are they known because they know; but, on the contrary, because they have been known, therefore do they know." Phil. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:19; Matt. 7:23; John 10:15, 27; 1 John 4:10; 1 Cor. 8:3; 13:12.

Heirs of God through God, "How is it ye are turning back again to the weak and beggarly elements for which ye are wanting to slave over again?" Surely a severely scornful sentence. Do you prefer the slavery of heathenism and Judaism to the glorious liberty of the sons and heirs of God? "You are strictly keeping the Jewish Sabbath-days and new moons and the seventh months and festival seasons and years — new year and sabbatical year." And you are keeping them in order to be saved when you already are the sons and heirs of God! You are deserting the liberty of God's sons and putting your necks into the yoke of the slavery of Judaism.

"I fear for you; mayhap I have toiled for you for nothing." Luther finely says: "These words breathe the tears of Paul." Anguished in heart, Paul yet sees a glimmer of hope; the senseless Galatians may yet come to their senses and come back into the liberty of the Gospel. They had been "bewitched." But he hopes the satanic spell can yet be broken. He fondly recalls the former days to his "brethren."

"You know at the first I preached the Gospel to you because of illness. And my appearance was a temptation to you to despise and loathe me, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus."

FIFTH LECTURE
CHRISTIAN FREEDOM
Gal. 5:1-12

I

Christ Set Us Free

The eternal Son of God left the throne of glory He had with the Father before the world was and through the door of the blessed Virgin Mary stepped into time and the world and was cradled in the lowly manger at Bethlehem. And He did this in order to set us free.

The Scriptures, yes, God Himself, had shut up all things under sin — as in a prison.

But God is gracious and said, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom," Job 33:24. Christ gave His life a ransom for us and so bought us out of prison and set us free. He set us free from the curse of the Law; free from the bondage of sin; free from the tyranny of Satan; free from an accusing conscience; free from the fear of death; free from the wrath of God. If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed, free in the glorious freedom of the children of God, John 8:32, 36; Rom. 6:22; 8:2, 21; 2 Cor. 3:17.

William Tyndale wrote: "The Law and the Gospel are two keys. The Law is the key that shutteth up all men under condemnation, and the Gospel is the key which opens the door and lets them out." Bunyan's Pilgrims were shut up in the Doubting Castle of Giant Despair, but they got out by the Key of Promise which Christian found in his bosom.

II

For Freedom Christ Set Us Free

For freedom! To have and to hold, to enjoy and to cherish forever. Christ set us free at the tremendous cost of becoming a curse for us. Remember that and value that.

III

Therefore!

Keep standing fast therefore and stop enduring again a yoke of slavery.

You had been entangled in the yoke of the slavery of your vile heathen religion, and now you are threatened to become entangled in the yoke of the slavery of Judaism. Stand fast! "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty!"

Stand fast! In the face of certain death Christ boldly said, "I am the Son of the Living God."

Stand fast! In the face of jail and scourging Peter said, "We must obey God rather than men."

Stand fast! The Pope had damned him and the Kaiser banned him, yet in the face of hell-fire and earth-fire Luther said, "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise."

Stand fast! Be a Bayard, without fear and without reproach.

Stand fast! Be a Stonewall Jackson.

Stand fast! In the face of the fiery lava of Mount Vesuvius rolling over him, the Roman guard at Pompeii stood fast. He had orders to stand and no orders to go away.

**Stand fast! The boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but he had fled.**

In the face of the flames he would stand because his father had told him to stand.

It can be done! It has been done!

Stand fast! Now comes the pitched and decisive battle that will make or break Christianity, the most momentous moment in the history of the Church. Paul fires five quick shots.

1. Behold, I, Paul, say to you, If ye get circumcised, Christ will do you no good!

What a thunderbolt! It is either—or. Either Christ or circumcision. It cannot be Christ and circumcision. That mixture kills Christianity and also Judaism. It is Christ or anti Christ.

2. Yes, I testify again to every man receiving circumcision that he is a debtor to do the whole Law.

Another thunderbolt! Did you bargain for that? Why, even the false brethren themselves do not keep it. Yes, and even Peter himself called it a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. And he said that at Jerusalem! Gal. 6:13; Acts 15:10.

And so, look before you leap! If ye get circumcised, ye will be under the curse of the Law. Circumcision is excision. That should wake them up and give them pause.

3. Ye get severed from Christ, ye who try to be justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace—as a ship driven out of her course upon the rocks and wrecked. A third thunderbolt!

Cut off from Christ, you are without God and without hope in the world. Cut off from the Vine, the branches will be burned, Eph. 2:12; John 15:6. The Master is just as severe as His servant.

4. We, by the Spirit, from faith confidently and eagerly expect the hope of righteousness. The Spirit works faith. Faith is the source of our expecting righteousness. To be sure, we have righteousness now, but we hope to be declared righteous in public at the Judgment and to receive our crown of righteousness. Titus 2:13; 2 Tim. 4:8; Matt. 25:34.

They by works, we by faith; they by the flesh, we by the Spirit. What a yawning gulf!

5. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; but what counts is faith working through love. Again: Neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, Gal. 6:15. Once again: Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God, 1 Cor. 7:19.

Circumcision is good for nothing—to *save* us. Uncircumcision is good for nothing—to *save* us. Timothy was not a better Christian for being circumcised. Titus was not a better Christian for being uncircumcised. Then what does save? What does save is faith. What faith? Faith in Christ, which, of course, works through love. A living faith is a loving faith; and a loving faith is a laboring faith. Faith without works is dead—having no fruit. Works without faith are dead—having no root.

The Savior says: "If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments. This is My commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. By this all men shall know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another," John 14:15, 21; 15: 12-14; 13:34, 35; 1 Thess. 4:9.

Luther says: "Faith without love is, as it were, a dream, an image of faith; just as the appearance of a face in a mirror is not a real face." Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote: "Faith is the source; charity, that is, the whole Christian life, is the stream from it." Faith, love, hope—that is the sum of Christianity.

The Christian has two hands. In the article on justification God's Gospel hand opens my empty receiving hand of faith and fills it with Christ's righteousness.

Now my thankful giving hand will open and give itself to do good works of love to the neighbor.

Faith is the strong mother giving birth to lovely love. Justification gives life to sanctification. Saved to serve. Are you win-some? Then win some. Each one reach one.

Paul adds: "Ye were running beautifully; who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth?" It wasn't God. So who was it? Beware! "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

Paul hopefully adds, "I have confidence in you that ye will be none otherwise minded." You will repent and return to your Savior.

Paul now pays his last respects to the false brethren everlastingly shouting circumcision: "They who would unsettle you ought even to have themselves mutilated"—like the frenzied priests of the vile Cybele and others. "Lutherlike in its force and audacity," says Plumptre. With this parting shot of scorn blazing at white heat, Paul turns his back on the sneaking and sinister Judaizers.

Oak Park, Ill.

(To be concluded)

WM. DALLMANN