

## Works or Grace?, Part 2

Scripture: Galatians 3:10–14

Code: 48-13

For this morning I want to draw your attention to Galatians chapter 3, Galatians chapter 3, and we come to the portion of Scripture that is verses 10 to 13. Let me – well, actually I'll read down to verse 14. Galatians 3:10 to 14.

“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.’ Now that no one is justified by Law before God is evident; for, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith.’ However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, ‘He who practices them shall live by them.’ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’ – in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing the Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Back to verse 10: “Cursed is everyone.” Cursed is everyone, a universal statement; parallel to statements like, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” But to say “cursed is everyone,” adds some strength to it. In fact, that is a very, very difficult statement for people to hear, and appears to be a very difficult statement for preachers to preach. Preachers are eager to tell the world that God loves them. And that message is inoffensive, that message is welcoming, that message is acceptable, that message is even marketable.

And preachers are also eager to tell the world that God wants to bless them; in fact, that He has endless blessings just waiting to be received. He wants to make them happy, and healthy, and trouble-free, and successful, and fulfilled, and full of personal purpose. He even wants to bless them in ways that are designed around their own dreams, which they can sort of speak into existence and He will accommodate them. That seems to be the rather constant message of the contemporary evangelical preachers; and what preachers don't tell people is that all of them are under a curse.

All of them are cursed. And they're not cursed by Satan, they're cursed by God. And that curse will be realized in eternal punishment and eternal remorse, from which there will be no conscious escape or deliverance. Every human being who has ever lived is born cursed, and it is a curse that is permanent and eternal. That is the truth that we see in verse 10.

But this is the hidden truth of Christianity. This is the part of the Bible that preachers don't want to talk about, because it offends people. And so they are unfaithful to leave out the truth that essentially makes the gospel so wonderful. Cursed is everyone.

What does it mean to be cursed? Well, in the Greek it's *kataran*. It's the opposite of *euloge*, which is to be blessed. To be cursed is the opposite. To be blessed is to be granted all that is good; to be cursed is to be granted all that is bad. A curse is some kind of harm, death, destruction, pain,

suffering. To be cursed is to be despised and doomed, devoted to destruction; that's the New Testament term. The Old Testament uses three words, and they essentially are synonyms; they mean exactly the same thing. To be cursed is to be assigned, consigned to harm and destruction and damnation.

Now the Bible has a lot to say about curses. We do understand that there are curses that men unleash on other men, people unleash on other people; and they really intend to invoke Satan and demons to do harm. Primitive people throughout history have invoked such curses by their magic spells and incantations, and endeavored to bring the demons that they worship and the demons that are an essential part of their life and culture down on the heads of their enemies to either kill their enemies, destroy their crops, kill their animals, or bring some defeat in battle, or general harm.

Curses are a part of the kingdom of darkness. You have illustrations of that in the Old Testament where you have Balaam who is kind of the king of cursers. It was said about Balaam in Numbers 22:6, that whoever he cursed was cursed. So he was a diviner, a sorcerer, a medium who literally transmitted satanic and demonic curses to other people, which brought Satan and demons down on their lives for harm. Goliath ineffectively cursed David, Shimei of Saul's house ineffectively cursed David when he was fleeing from Absalom, 2 Samuel 16. So curses do exist in the kingdom of darkness; evil men pronounce them on each other.

But we're not talking about that. We're not talking about the kind of cursing that goes on within the kingdom of darkness. What we're talking about when we come to this verse is the cursing of God; and that curse is pronounced on the entire human race. And Jesus said this about that curse; He said, "Do not fear those who destroy the body, but fear Him who destroys both body and soul in hell," Matthew 10:28.

Fear the curse of God. That truth needs to be proclaimed. Everyone is under a curse, which means even in the present they are under the curse of God, and will be after death throughout eternity; and then the implications and results of that curse will escalate into incomprehensible suffering. Cursed is everyone.

How do we know everyone is cursed? Because everyone dies. Everyone dies. "The soul that sins will die." "The wages of sin is death," and everyone is cursed because they sin. Back to verse 10: "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them." The book of the law referring to God's Word. The book of the law mentioned in Joshua 1, referring to Scripture, "You shall not let the book of the law depart from your mouth; but meditate on it day and night, and do all the things that are written in it." Any violation of the book of the law, the Word of God, brings the curse. So cursed is everyone, because everyone has broken the law of God.

To get a picture on what this curse might be like, we have a graphic illustration of it in the Pentateuch toward the end of the book of Deuteronomy. Go back to the Old Testament and turn to Deuteronomy chapter 27. We are in this portion of Deuteronomy with the children of Israel. They have come into the Promised Land. They have been delivered from Egypt after 400 years of captivity. They are now in the Promised Land, all twelve tribes are there. They have been assigned to sections of that land. And now the Lord, in the book of Deuteronomy, has given them His law again, and they are commanded to obey the law of God. So God designs a ceremony in an area that would be in the New Testament area of Samaria.

There's a town of Shechem, a very ancient town, and that town of Shechem sits in a very narrow valley between two mountains. One of the mountains is Mount Gerizim, the other is Mount Ebal; and God designs a ceremony to occur in that very place. And we'll look down at verse 9 of Deuteronomy 27.

"Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying, 'Be silent and listen, O Israel! This day you have become a people for the Lord your God. You're in the land, you are duly constituted God's people, and here is what you must do.' – verse 10 – "You shall therefore obey the Lord your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today.' Moses also charged the people on that day, saying, 'When you cross the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin.' – six of the tribes – "For the curse, they shall stand on Mount Ebal: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. The Levites shall then answer and say to all the men of Israel with a loud voice,' – and here comes what is going to be said.

Six of the tribes on Gerizim, six of the tribes on Ebal. Gerizim represents blessing, Ebal represents cursing; and God is going to pronounce blessing. We see that over in chapter 28, verse 3 and following. You see the word "blessed" repeated there.

But the opposite of that is the cursing, and the cursing dominates most of these two chapters and most of this event, starting in verse 15. "Here is the word of the Lord:" 'Cursed is the man who makes an idol or a molten image, an abomination to the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret.' And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen.' 'Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 'Cursed is he who moves his neighbor's boundary mark.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 'Cursed is he who misleads a blind person on the road.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 'Cursed is he who distorts the justice due an alien orphan and widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

"'Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's skirt.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 'Cursed is he who lies with any animal.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 'Cursed is he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or of his mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 'Cursed is he who lies with his mother-in-law.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 'Cursed is he who strikes his neighbor in secret.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 'Cursed is he who accepts a bribe to strike down an innocent person.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

All the people on all of these accounts are affirming the curse of a breaking of any commandment of God. And those are only representative commandments, there are many more; that's why verse 26 says, "Cursed is he who does not confirm all the words of this law by doing them. If you break this law at all you are cursed. And all the people shall say, 'Amen,'" thus affirming that curse.

If you come over into chapter 28, you can drop down to, say, verse 15: "It shall come about, that if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: Cursed shall you be in the city, cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your

herd and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in, cursed shall you be when you go out. The Lord will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me.”

And if you go over to verse 45: “So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the Lord your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you.”

And then down to verse 58, just to repeat it again: “If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the Lord your God, then the Lord will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sickness.” And it goes on from there.

It’s going to be so bad, verse 67, “In the morning you will say, ‘Would that it were evening!’ And in the evening you will say, ‘Would that it were morning!’ because of the dread of your heart which you dread, and for the sight of your eyes which you shall see.”

“Disobey Me and you will be cursed.” You know the rest of the history. The people that day all said, “Amen, amen, amen,” confirming their obedience, as they had done back in Exodus 24. But as the years passed and as the centuries passed, they turned away from God. They ignored God. They did exactly what God said they would be cursed for doing. They were sexually impure. They made idols and worshiped those idols. They did move boundaries; they were corrupt. They were murderous against their neighbors. They broke every law that God had given; and God punished them all along the way. The curses came on every generation. Every generation was cursed by suffering for their sins, and then dying only to enter eternal suffering in hell forever.

But for the nation collectively, the final act of God on account of the suffering comes when they are taken captive into Babylon eight-hundred years after that inauguration ceremony in Shechem. Eight-hundred years later we find them being taken captive by the Babylonians. This is God’s judgment on that disobedient nation. And a good insight into that judgment is in Jeremiah 11:1 to 17 – turn to it for a minute. It’s worth looking at; it’s so powerful. And if you want to understand curses, the curse of God, you must understand this.

Jeremiah 11: “The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, ‘Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and say to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Cursed is the man who doesn’t heed the words of this covenant which I commanded your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace.”’” Egypt is identified as an iron furnace because of its suffering.

“On that day when I said, ‘Listen to My voice, and do according to all which I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God.’” So he goes back to the Deuteronomy 27 and 28 historical moment, eight hundred years earlier and says, “Cursed are the ones who did not obey what I commanded them in that day.”

The curses come from God in this sort of terminal form as the Babylonians invade the city of Jerusalem, and slaughter the Jews, and take them captive. The northern kingdom is already gone

captive; and now the south, Judah and Jerusalem, taken captive by the Babylonians; and the reason is in verse 8: “They didn’t obey. They didn’t incline their ear. They walked, each one, in the stubbornness of his evil heart; therefore I brought on them all the words of this covenant.” He made a covenant promise, “I will curse you if you disobey. I will bless you if you obey.” He says, “I have brought the words of the covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not.”

“The Lord said to me,” – to Jeremiah – ‘A conspiracy has been found among the men of Judah and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors who refused to hear My words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant, which I made with their father. Therefore thus says the Lord,’ – and by the way, it was a covenant, because God declared the curses and the blessing, and the people all affirmed, “Amen.” They made their side of the promise and didn’t keep it.

“The cities of Judah” – verse 12 – “and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they surely will not save them in the time of their disaster. For your gods are as many as your cities, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to the shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal. Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not listen when they call to Me because of their disaster. What right has My beloved” – meaning Israel – “in My house when she has done many vile deeds? Can the sacrificial flesh take away from you your disaster, so that you can rejoice?” Offering animals isn’t going to change this.

“The Lord called your name, a green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form; with the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are worthless. The Lord of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced evil against you because of the evil of the house of Israel and the house of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me by offering up sacrifices to Baal.” Cursed. Cursed by God, just exactly as God said they would be if they did not do what He told them.

On a more personal note, Jeremiah 17:5, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord.’” On the other hand, verse 7: “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord whose trust is the Lord. If you had trusted the Lord you’d be blessed; but you have disobeyed the Lord and are cursed.”

Curses are laid down in the Pentateuch in the book of Deuteronomy; but there are curses throughout the Old Testament. There are reiterations of God’s curse on sinful people. The Psalms are full of curses. There are so many curses in the Psalms against the ungodly that C. S. Lewis wrote. In some of the Psalms the spirit of hatred which strikes us in the face is like heat from a furnace mouth.

R. M. Benson wrote in 1901 a book called *War Songs of the Prince of Peace*, and said there were no less than thirty-nine psalms that pronounced curses. One English study group in 1974 concluded that eighty-four psalms were not fit for Christians to sing. But the psalms are divinely authored and justified. They are just as justified as the psalms that comfort, because God wants to trouble sinners. He wants to trouble them profoundly. He wants to trouble them to the core of their being. He wants them to know that they are cursed.

Does God find pleasure in this? No. Ezekiel 33:11, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” God cries tears through the eyes of Jeremiah. God cries tears of through the eyes of Jesus, who

after pronouncing a curse on Jerusalem wept over Jerusalem.

The prophets pronounced curses, things like, “Behold, I will punish evil ones. The young men will die by the sword. Their sons and their daughters will die by famine, and none of them will be left. Behold, I’m bringing such evil on this place, that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle because they have filled this place with the blood of innocents, and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal. Therefore, behold, days are coming when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the valley of Ben Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter. I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth. I’ll make the city a horror, a thing to be hissed at. Everybody who passes by will be horrified and will hiss because of all its disasters. I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and daughters.” That’s what people do in a famine under siege.

Nahum pronounced a terrible curse on unbelieving people in the city of Nineveh. “The Lord is a jealous God and avenging. The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries and keeps wrath for His enemies. Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the heat of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by Him. Woe” – he said – “to that bloody city.”

Isaiah ushered an oracle, a curse against Babylon. “Behold, the day of the Lord comes cruel with wrath and fierce anger, to make the earth a desolation, and destroy its sinners from it. Their infants will be dashed in pieces before their eyes, their houses will be plundered, and their wives ravished.”

Nineveh and Babylon were cities of cruel and ruthless nature, which had brought untold misery on many peoples; and God cursed them and punished them for it.

But curses are not just for Israel and not just for other cities and nations, as we find in the Old Testament. The truth of the matter is, as we read in our passage, everyone is cursed. Listen to Romans 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” The truth has been given to us, the law of God written in our hearts; but all men suppress that truth and behave in ungodly and unrighteous ways; and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them all, against them all.

The martyrs under the altar in Revelation during the time of the tribulation to come cry out to God, “O Lord, holy and true, how long will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” And in Revelation chapter 18, just a remarkable look at a future time when the Lord Jesus returns, and this is what we read in that eighteenth chapter, and we’ll look at verse 18.

We see the smoke of the final kingdom of Antichrist, the final Babylon. “And they’re crying, ‘What city is like the great city?’ And they threw dust on their heads. They were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’” That’s the destruction at the return of Christ, a destruction of the capital city of Antichrist’s system. And what is the response of the godly? Verse 20: “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.”

Chapter 19, we even get a glimpse of heaven. “A great multitude in heaven upon seeing this cry,

'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous. Hallelujah, for the smoke rises up forever and ever.' Hallelujahs ring through heaven when God unleashes the final curse.

Why? It isn't that we wish hell for people, it is that we wish glory for God. It is that we as the redeemed both on earth and in heaven desire that God be honored, that Christ be exalted, and that sinners would turn to Him, escape the curse.

Our Lord Jesus was no different. In Matthew 25:41, He said, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels." That was sort of the culminating warning, the culminating reality of the curse.

But Jesus pronounced curses as well as blessings throughout His ministry. In Luke 10, He cursed Chorazin and Bethsaida, Capernaum. In Luke 11, He cursed the Pharisees and the scribes, the religious leaders of Israel. In Luke 17, He cursed the people who make His children stumble. In Luke 22, He cursed Judas. In Romans 12, it tells us God says, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay." And, again, this is heartbreaking to God, but His holiness demands it. It is heartbreaking to us, but His glory is what we seek.

Job says in Job 31:29, "Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, or exulted when evil befell him? No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life in a curse." You don't curse anyone; I don't curse anyone. We are called to confront people with the gospel of blessing against the backdrop of the reality of the divine curse. We should be heartbroken over the condition of the world.

Jeremiah says, even though he knows that the judgment is as a result of the curse, he says this: "I have not pursued You" – speaking of God – "to send evil, nor have I desired the day of disaster; and You know that, God, You know that." He had no pleasure in the death of the wicked, neither does our Lord. Jesus pronounced a curse on Jerusalem and said it would be destroyed, and then wept, and then wept. But because God is holy and just, He must punish sin; and that is why the curse exists.

Now let's go back to Galatians. And just a few things to say based upon what I've already said. There are two curses in this passage. The first one is the divine curse on all men, the divine curse on all men. The second is the divine curse on one man. First, the divine curse on all men, and then the divine curse on one man. We'll look at the first one this morning: the divine curse on all men.

Back to verse 10: "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.'" I don't want to get too carried away with this, it's such a simple point, such a simple point.

The whole human race is cursed. Why? Because they are under the works of the law. In other words, they have the lifetime obligation to obey God, as Israel did. Israel couldn't fulfill it. They needed to repent and trust God for righteousness like Abraham. But what happens? People go the way of works. Under the law, they think if they keep some of the law some of the time and do some good things to some minimal or nominal degree that that's enough to satisfy God.

You see, the whole world is of the works of the law. The whole world is basically required to obey the

law of God, the whole world. The problem is they can't: they sin, they die, and they're cursed. It gets compounded. It gets compounded, because religion says, "You can do good works and please God," so they believe false religion, and they are double-cursed: cursed already because of the universality of sin and corruption, and the inability to obey the law of God, which leaves them under the curse. They then follow a religion that says they can do works, and God will accept those works as all that's required: moral works, religious works, sacraments, whatever. And that is not possible, so they are doubly cursed.

It is particularly deadly when people want to add works to the gospel, because now, instead of saying, "Salvation is by faith alone," which is Paul's whole point in this section, there are people who want to say, "Salvation is certainly by faith in Christ, believing in Him, His death and resurrection, plus works, plus works."

Back in chapter 1, Paul said, "That's a false gospel, and anybody who believes and preaches that false gospel is cursed." So the curse is even more profound: universally cursed, because we can't keep the law of God; doubly cursed, because we believe that our works can gain us salvation; and the triple curse is, we propagate that as a true form of religion, and anybody who does that, Galatians 1, is accursed.

Let me make it even more practical. Anyone who believes that works are necessary for salvation has bought into a cursed gospel. Anyone who preaches that is preaching a cursed gospel. And the people who are believing it and preaching it are themselves cursed: cursed by their sin, doubly cursed by their works system, triply cursed by preaching it.

Let me shock you. This week a new survey by the Pew survey people came out; pretty timely. A question was asked to thousands of people across America who are evangelical Protestants, and the question is this: "Is salvation by faith alone, or is it by faith and good deeds?" This is Protestants, not Catholics. They surveyed Catholics. Eighty-two percent of Roman Catholics said salvation is by faith and good deeds, eighty-two percent of Catholics. Where were the other eighteen percent? They're just Catholics who don't know what Catholics believe, nominal Catholics. But Catholics get it. They know what they're supposed to believe, and they believe that heresy.

Protestants, evangelical Protestants were asked, "Is salvation by faith alone, or by faith plus good deeds?" Fifty-two percent of evangelical Protestants said faith plus good deeds. I told you when we started chapter 3 about being bewitched, and I told you that most churches and most people sitting in evangelical churches across this country, if not the world, are bewitched. They are bewitched by this lie of works being added to salvation.

The Galatians had become bewitched, and they were true believers; but they were buying into the fact that works were necessary. Even though they hadn't believed that, they had believed correctly and been saved, they were allowing for an accursed heresy. So Paul is colliding with them head-on in chapters 3 and 4 of Galatians.

Jews had come into the Galatian region and told these believers, "Yes, we believe in Jesus, we believe in His death and resurrection. But it's not enough to believe in Him; you have to have works and good deeds." Paul is so exercised by this, that he writes this epistle to the Galatians; and in 3 and 4, the two middle chapters, he addresses salvation by faith alone, by faith alone, and he explains



salvation, forgiveness, kingdom citizenship, eternal heaven is given to the person who believes God. And he uses Abraham even, way back to Abraham, verse 6: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." His believing was all God asked, and God granted Him his own righteousness. He goes back to the Old Testament, Genesis 15:6.

Here in verse 10 he does the same thing: "As many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written," – and now he quotes Deuteronomy 27:26, which we read earlier – 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.' You're all cursed if you don't keep it all." And you might say, "You mean all of it all the time?" All of it all the time.

Matthew 5:48, Jesus said, "Be perfect," – how perfect? – "as perfect as your Father in heaven." Listen to James 2:10, "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, is guilty of all." So if you are operating, according to verse 10, in the sphere of the works of the law, and you ever violate one law one time, you're cursed, you're cursed. And that's the testimony of Deuteronomy 27:26, "You're cursed."

Jewish leaders thought they were the spiritual people, they were the righteous people. Our Lord addresses them, and Paul does as well. "You're not only cursed because of universal sin, you're cursed because you believe in works, and you're cursed beyond that for propagating a cursed message." Romans 4:15 says, "The law works wrath." If you want to live by the law, you'll only know the wrath of God now and forever.

Then verse 11: "Now that no one, no one," – cursed is everyone – "and now no one is justified by the Law before God." Cursed is everyone because of what Scripture says. No one is justified by the Law before God, again, because of what Scripture says. "The righteous man shall live by faith." And that's taken out of the prophet Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 4: "The righteous man shall live by faith."

So in verse 6, he quoted Genesis 15:6. In verse 10, he quoted Deuteronomy 27:26. In verse 11, he quotes Habakkuk 2:4, "The righteous live by faith." And somebody might say, "Well, faith and works go together. I mean, they're kind of partners, they're kind of twins like both sides of a coin."

No. Please notice verse 12: "However," – verse 12 – "or," – we could say – "the Law is not of faith." They're mutually exclusive. Did you get that? They are mutually exclusive. They are two realities that are not compatible.

Romans 4 says, "As soon as you introduce works, you void faith," Romans chapter 4, verse 14. "As soon as you introduce works into salvation, you void faith. They are mutually exclusive.

On the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them." That's taken from Leviticus 18:5. "You want to live by the Law, then you must keep it," that's what that's saying. "He who practices them shall live by them. That's your religion: works, morality, goodness, ceremony. Then you have to live by them, and you have to be perfect."

So he refers to Genesis, refers to Deuteronomy, Habakkuk, Leviticus, all to say what Romans 3:20 says, "By the deeds of the Law no one will be justified in God's sight, no one." Everyone cursed; no one justified. Everyone cursed by their works, everyone; and no one justified by their works. Instead

of being saved by good deeds, those who go that way, which is what all false religion does, are double-cursed: cursed by the universality of sin, and cursed by the corruption of religion. And if they proclaim that method to anybody else, they're triple cursed by proclaiming a cursed message. That's what people need to hear, the divine curse on all man.

As we close, let me just comment on verse 13, point two: The divine curse on the one man. Here's the second curse – and we'll look at this next time – verse 13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law." That's the gospel, folks, that's the good news. I wanted you to feel the weight of the curse, so that that statement has meaning to you. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law." He bought us, purchased us, freed us, delivered us. That's the gospel. And the good news only has real value against the backdrop of the horrendous reality of the whole human race being eternally cursed.

Father, we thank You again this morning for the time to be together and to worship You. We rejoice in the fellowship of the saints, but more in the fellowship we have with You through the gospel. We thank You that You have delivered us from Satan's domain; but more importantly, we thank You that You have delivered us from Your own curse. What an amazing reality, that the very one who cursed us is the one who sent His Son to be a curse for us to deliver us from the curse.

We are filled with joy, gratitude, love, adoration, worship, praise. We are unworthy; we couldn't earn our way. But You have granted us Your own righteousness. You've credited it to our account, reckoned it to us, imputed it to us, covered us with it, simply because we put our faith in Jesus Christ. And now for the first time ever, with the Holy Spirit living in us, and with a new nature, we are able to obey Your law, not perfectly, but certainly genuinely. And we long for the day when in Your presence we will render perfect obedience. But until that time, we thank You and praise You for granting us a righteousness we don't deserve by grace and grace alone, grace that is greater than our sin. We thank You. Amen.

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