

New Creation Teaching Ministry

Galatians Week 6

Galatians 3:10-14

The Place of the Law

(1) Paul is going to give a fuller treatment of the nature and function of the law a little later (beginning at Gal. 3:19, 'Why then the Law?'), and we will come to this in due course.

- We must be aware that much of what Paul is writing about has already been preached and discussed at length with the Galatians. In many ways, the material here is like theological bullet points, to bring to remembrance the things that had already been proclaimed among them. Not least in the matter of the 'curse' to which we will turn.

(2) Paul uses the word 'Law' in a variety of ways. Sometimes it refers to the Old Testament (or part of it), e.g. Acts 24:14; 28:23; Rom. 3:21; 1 Cor. 9:8f.; 14:21, 34, etc.; often it refers to the gift of the law as a written code, given to Israel via the Mosaic covenant on Mt Sinai, e.g. Rom. 9:4; Gal. 3:17; cf. Rom. 2:12-14, 17, 27; 1 Cor. 9:21; and thus it can refer to specific commandments, e.g. Rom. 7:7; sometimes it can refer to a principle of operation e.g. Rom. 8:2 cf. 3:27; 7:23, 25; and often the word 'law' is linked negatively with the word 'works' as in 'works of the law' e.g. Rom. 3:20f., 28; Gal. 2:16 cf. 2:21; 3:5 cf. 5:4 etc.

- In this passage, the term is used in a number of these ways, overlapping in meaning.

(3) Unfailingly, however, the law of itself is good (e.g. Rom. 7:12, 14, 22), and it is clear that love is the fulfilment of the law (e.g. Rom. 13:8, 10; Gal. 5:14 cf. Matt. 22:36-40)

- Thus the problem is not Law per se, but what happens when fallen humanity encounters the Law (or *vice versa*).
 - The Law brings wrath (Rom. 4:15); defines sin as transgression (Rom. 5:13) and in actuality increases sin (Rom. 5:20 cf. 7:8f.).

(4) There is close relationship between doing 'works of the law' and living in the 'flesh'

- e.g. the parallelism between Gal. 3:2 and 3:3; the force of the allegory in Gal. 4:22ff.; the 'dogs' and 'evil doers' who want to put confidence in the flesh, particularly in the matter of circumcision in Phil. 3:2ff.
 - The 'flesh' will present itself in religious garb by doing deeds of seeming obedience and righteousness, but the end is self-aggrandisement through self-justification.

(5) The law, when in contact with fallen humanity in its sin, only commands 'doing', not 'believing'.

- When we are justified we do 'works' (see Eph. 2:10), but not the other way around ('Christians do not become righteous by doing righteous works; but once they have been justified by faith in Christ, they do righteous works' Luther, Vol. 26 p. 256).
 - These proper works are all done in and through the fruit of the Spirit.
- Law-way and faith-way (or better, grace-way) are radically different.
 - See the 'for' connecting Gal. 3:10 with 3:9. The blessing comes through faith...for the curse comes through works of the law. Same point is made

in Gal. 3:11, '*for* the righteous by faith shall live'. In Gal. 5:1 'law way' is called the 'yoke of slavery', which leads to being in effect, 'severed from Christ'.

- Problem for us. To be good at something you **do** it (e.g. piano, surgery, growing mushrooms, administering the company). In the plan of God to be righteous (justified) you **believe** something, without doing anything.

The Nature of the Curse

(1) Paul uses the word *curse* here in different contexts: (a) Curse of relying on works of the law (3:10); (b) the 'curse of the law', and (c) Christ as becoming 'curse' for us (3:13).

- These act as theological bullet points to remind the Galatians of what he has said previously.
- And we notice the universality: the law and its curse is not something that can be handled by more education so that we would appreciate it more, or more detailed precepts on the best way to use the law! It is a curse, from which we need to be **redeemed**. It is also universal. Christ redeemed 'us' from the curse of the law, but here Paul is not speaking about Jews only! Whole race in some sense under the curse of the law, and the yoke of works of the law.
 - Law, conscience, fear, wrath, the Accuser, the Flesh and reason are often grouped together by Luther as a mighty complex of enemies which can only be defeated by faith.

(2) The three uses of the 'curse' overlap, but are not identical.

- 3:10 'as many as are of works of the law'...i.e. relying on works of the law are cursed. Why? Implication of the quote from Deut. 27:26 is that if one relies on works of the law, we will never be able to fulfil the Law. Compare with Gal. 5:3; Acts 15:10.
 - Summation of the law is love. None has loved God and neighbour with all might and strength for whole of life! E.g. rich young ruler.
 - Issue is not outward observance but the heart obedience ('circumcised heart in Deut. 30:6), which cannot be changed by external matters (see, for example, the discussion about food etc. in Mark 7:22f.)
- 3:13 'the curse of the law' i.e. more generally. Old Testament curses have a full description
 - Old Testament covenant curses were proclaimed from Mt. Ebal (Deut. 27:26) and cover every area of life should they be brought into effect (Deut. 28:15-68), just as the blessing would cover all areas of human endeavour (e.g. Deut. 28:1-14).
- Christ became curse for us (more below), but he entered into all of our failure to keep the law (and thus our guilt), as well as all the curses of God as the representative Israelite. He fulfils Deut. 27:26 Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

Christ as Curse For Us

(1) Overall, the curse is contrasted with the blessing. The end point is that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles by faith.

- The idea of blessing in the Old Testament has a lot of interconnected ideas such as peace with God, rest, fruitfulness, security, communion with God etc. It is linked to his favour being upon us, by having his presence with us (e.g. the Aaronic blessing of Numb. 6:22f.)
- Here, the blessing is in the gift of the Spirit, who brings all these things to us and assures us that they are so...by faith.
 - This cannot be separated from our union with Christ in whom we find all the blessings of God (Eph. 1:3 cf. Gal. 3:14)

(2) The curse of the law of commandments against us (as in Col. 2:13ff.) lies in the guilt of our sin, and therefore Christ had to enter the place of guilt, under judgment.

(3) 'Cursed is every one' does not refer to crucifixion (not practiced in Israel), but to the fact that one hung on a tree was there because they had been found guilty, and suffered death as the punishment for guilt. This one was thus 'cursed' by the guilt of their sin.

- Christ is hung on tree (*xulon* = timber, wood)...Christ as curse for us, as he bore our sin and its guilt.
 - Luther (L.W. Vol. 26 p. 277, 280ff.)

Galatians 3:15-22

(1) The discussion about the place and purpose of the Law is based on the place and purpose of the covenant arrangements God had put in place.

- The word for 'covenant' (*diatheke*) is the word for 'will/testament' and it is used to indicate that the conditions of the covenant were not open to debate.
 - This covenant (with Abraham) was based on promise, not just in a general sense of the word, but with specific reference to the coming seed (i.e. Christ). Gal. 3:16 alludes to Gen. 3:15, and all that flows from that in terms of the expectation of God's saving visitation.
- Does the Law (given through Moses 430 years later) invalidate the promise? Does it supercede it? Paul's answer (3:17-18) is that No it does neither of these things. The Abrahamic covenant, being based on God's promise, still stands. The Law would only be in force until the coming of the Seed, the child of promise.
- Why the Law then? What purpose has it served? Paul's point is that the Law had a place, though a subsidiary one, under the covenant of promise (3:19-21). It was added 'because of transgressions' i.e. for the sake of defining transgression.
 - ND's commentary page 28ff.

Galatians 3:23-4:7

This passage explains and illustrates the function of the Law on the one hand, but then indicates the great positive outcome of God's plan and purpose on the other. Paul brings us to see the almost inexpressible truth that through Christ, we receive the full rights of sonship, and the full relationship with him as our Abba, which is our inheritance.

To be 'under the Law' is not a benign place to be!

(1) The passage at hand must be understood against the background of two things

- Firstly, to be under the Law is to be under a curse (Gal. 3:10-13)

- Secondly, the object of God's purposes in salvation history is that we would receive the promise of the Spirit (Gal. 3:14).
- These two positions are mutually exclusive. One cannot receive the promise by the Law, and one cannot live by the Spirit if one wishes to return to the Law (cf. Gal. 5:4-5)

(2) Therefore, the to be under the Law is not a 'benign' place! Paul uses some forceful vocabulary to make the point.

- Gal. 5:22 'shut up' = 'imprisoned'; NIV = 'Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin'; NJB = 'scripture makes no exception when it says that sin is master everywhere'; NRSV = 'scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin'
- Gal. 5:23 has a double emphasis, where we see both 'imprisoned' and 'held captive', emphasising that there is no escape. 'Kept under guard' and 'locked up', with no exit!
- Gal. 5:24 introduces the word *paidagogos*, variously translated as 'tutor', 'guardian', 'schoolmaster', 'disciplinarian'.
 - The term refers to the practice in the ancient Greco-Roman world of giving the children of a household over to the care of a slave, while in their minority (between 6-16).
 - The *paidagogos* had strict supervision of the children, and exercised a strong external compulsion over them, as they could do nothing without his permission. In effect, they experienced life as a slave (hence 4:1).
- Gal. 4:2 indicates that the life under the law was closely supervised 'guardians' and 'managers'. These are different words from those previously used, and indicate that the child was instructed in what to do, and that decisions were made for him. They emphasise that the child was not a free agent.
- Gal. 4:3 indicates that we were held in bondage (slavery) to the 'elemental spirits'; 'elementary principles'; 'elemental things'; 'basic principles' of this world.
 - The same word (*stoicheia*), is used in Gal. 4:9, where it is linked to the pagan gods and their associated spiritual powers (Gal. 4:8).
 - In other places the *stoicheia* are linked with works righteousness (e.g. Gal. 4:9 cf. Col. 2:8; 20ff.), indicating that living 'law way' actually brings us into the bondage of spiritual forces of evil. All idols command their worshippers 'law way', as does all superstition
 - § Therefore, too, when a church walks 'law way' the deeds of the flesh (including spiritual deeds such as idolatry and sorcery!) are present.

(3) So to be 'under Law' is to be in a terrible place of spiritual captivity, bondage, and slavery.

- It is the place from which we must be *redeemed* (Gal. 3:13 cf. 4:5).
- And this is universal: not simply Jews who had the Mosaic Law, but Gentiles as well...all were under the lock and key of the Law and the *stoicheia*.

The Goal is Redemption

(1) The purpose of this state is not that we would be held eternally in the grip of the guilt of the Law, our works righteousness, or the slavery to disciplinarians, guardians, and basis principalities and powers! Rather, there is a purpose: to enclose us up to the coming of the Son.

(2) This is spoken about in a number of ways:

- Gal. 3:23 Being shut up to the faith that was to be revealed
- Gal. 3:24 Paidagogos leads us to Christ (Note the sequence: it leads us to **Christ** that we may be justified by faith! I.e. no justification outside of Christ, so we preach Christ and him crucified, ever more than we preach the doctrine of justification *per se*.)
- Gal. 3:25 The faith (or faith) has come, therefore we are no longer under lock and key
- Gal. 3:26-27 we have believed in Christ and thus we have 'put on Christ' in baptism
 - No difference between belief and baptism in the New Testament!
- Gal. 3:28 indicates that the old situation where the Law maintained strict distinctions between races, cultures, societal ranks etc, was now all transformed!
 - Did any slave owners serve their slaves at the Lord's Table?
 - Did Jews eat in Gentile homes?
 - Did males and females sit under the same word and minister with the gifts of the Spirit distributed to each according to his will?
- Gal. 4:1-2 indicates that there is a time for the rule of the guardians to pass away. It is spoken of in terms of a coming of age, by which the sons enter into the inheritance of all the estate.
 - In this case, the estate is that of the God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth!

(3) The means of this liberation is a **redemption**, in which the Incarnate Son of God is under the Law, so that he might redeem those also under it.

- He is 'through woman' (Gal. 4:4), i.e. born of Mary, but the word indicates reserve in speaking about the conception. This is not a birth like any others that had occurred in the line of faith before. See, for example the unusual ways the birth is spoken of in other parts of the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 1:3; Phil. 2:7). Where we translate 'born of a woman, born under the law' in Gal. 4:4, the word used is very different from the normal word (as seen, for example in Matt. 11:11). Means 'became', 'came'...the Son comes to us from the Father...he is not generated from below
 - He comes as a man, under the Law (not simply in terms of obedience to it, but ultimately bearing its curse, as in 3:10ff).
 - He became curse for us, taking on all the principalities and powers that attacked him as he bore the guilt of our sin (See Col. 2:13ff.)

The Goal is Redemption, That We Might Receive the Promise!

(1) The redemption is not an end in itself. So also in the Old Testament exodus events 'Israel is my son, my first born...let Israel go that he might worship me'. He bore his son up on eagles' wings and brought him to himself!

- Everything in this passage is in accord with the timing and predetermined plan of God the Father. He sends forth the Son, at the time when he has prepared all things 'the fullness of times', so that the redemption is the *Father's* gift to us, in his Son.

(2) Here the matter is expressed in terms of the Promise

- This has been Paul's point all the way through this chapter: the Spirit is received by grace through faith. He is the Promised gift to the nations (Gal. 3:1f. cf. 3:14).
- Thus, being imprisoned under sin was so that the Promise could come to all who believe (Gal. 3:22 cf. the account of preaching to the household of Cornelius in Acts 10, as mentioned in earlier sermons).

(3) The Promised Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, who has set us free, at a date he has set, and through the ascended Christ he has poured out the Spirit upon us (Acts 2:33)

- The *cry* (*krazo*) of the Spirit is Abba! (cf. Mark 14:36)
 - The emphasis is as much on the verb as the noun!
 - The status of 'adopted' is as legal and forensic as that of justification, but it is also deeply personal and relational.
- This cry is at once our eternal security, and the highest manifestation of human dignity. It is that for which we have been created.

(4) The security of that Promise should give us great hope. The end point of the adoption is the glorification of us as the sons of God. "God's peer community" to use Geoff's phrase.

- We **are** his heirs. We **will be** conformed to the image of the Son, which will be our glory. The unity, security, depth and faithfulness of the Son **will be** ours. The battle in which we currently live (in the 'current evil age') **will be no more!** There **will never again** be in us any propensity to sin, or **any desire** for impurity, greed, envy or any selfish action, motivation or thought!
- This **is all by Promise, not by works of the law...therefore it is secure!**