

## VOTC Sept # 3 – Galatians 3:10-14 “The Gospel Promise”

How are you righteous before God? This is certainly one of the most important questions you can ask in this life. Everyone inside & outside of the church has to wrestle w/ that question. What is the Christian answer? If I can borrow an answer from the HC, “*Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all of God’s commandments, and never having kept any of them. And even though I am still inclined toward all evil. Nevertheless, without any merit of my own, out of sheer grace, God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ. As if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, and as if I had been as perfectly obedient to the law as Christ was for me. All I need to do is accept this gift with a believing heart.*”

What a glorious truth! I love this truth. I love studying it, preaching about it, b/c it is the very heart of the gospel. But here is another reality, I struggle to believe it every day. I’m guessing you do too. Daily, we can find ourselves running on the *treadmill* of good works trying to hold onto God’s favor.

The Galatians were also struggling in this way. They wanted to add to the gospel some kind of law keeping as the reason for their acceptance w/ God. In order to show them the freedom of the gospel, he teaches them a very important difference between the law and the gospel.

### The Law-Gospel Distinction (v.10-14)

1. Paul here contrast two covenants - the unconditional covenant that God swore to Abraham in Genesis 15, with the conditional covenant that God made with Israel in Exodus 20, where the people swore an oath of obedience to God (v.10). This distinction is important for how we *relate* to God in the matter of justification.
2. Both Abraham and Moses are part of God’s redemptive story. Both eras picture the grace of God and the gospel in various ways. But what primarily *flavors* these two covenants is different.
  - a. Abrahamic covenant – has primarily a *promise* character (there are obligations like circumcision). But the covenant basis is God’s oath to Abraham to fulfill his promises. It’s *unconditional* in its nature, and so for us as well it requires faith.
  - b. Mosaic covenant – has primarily a *law* character (although broadly speaking it portrays God’s grace in the sacrificial system & priesthood) but at the heart of the covenant was message was this message, “*do this and you shall live.*”
3. John **Stott** puts it, “this is the difference between the Law and the Gospel: the Law says, “Do this”; the gospel says, “Christ has done it all.” The Law requires works of human achievement; the gospel requires faith in Christ’s achievement. The law makes demands and bids us obey; the gospel brings promises and bids us believe.”
4. What does this mean for us? There is certainly a mindset in our world that believes if we try hard enough to be good people, we will be ok in the end. This mindset is also among Christians. A recent Barna poll showed that 46% of professing Christians surveyed agreed w/ the following statement: “*if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven.*”
  - a. We can fall into this mindset, b/c our hearts are “are hardwired for the Law.” We can think, We can think we are ok if I don’t believe in Jesus, as long as I get Sundays off of work, go to church, participate in things, its ok. But we are missing what the Law says.

*“Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law to do them.”*

- b. Jesus said if we don’t believe in him, we are condemned already and are under God’s curse. In ourselves, we could never be good enough for God! This was the issue for these Galatian false teachers! They wanted to mix the law with the gospel. Jesus + circumcision and dietary laws and specific sabbath observance for acceptance w/ God. But they were putting themselves back under the law
5. Paul says those who rely on works of the law are under a curse. **Why?** The law requires perfect, perpetual, and personal obedience. You must *abide by ALL things written in the book of the Law, or you are cursed!* When it comes to the law, it is ALL or nothing. God demands that we not just try our best, but he calls for perfection, because he is worthy!
- a. The problem is we are all lawbreakers. *Sin is lawlessness (1 Jn. 3:4)*. Children’s catechism asks the question, “what does every sin deserve? The **wrath** and **curse** of God.” So, if we seek to relate to God on the basis of the law, or on the law mixed with grace, we are putting ourselves under the law and its curses.
  - b. APP: daily we struggle with this. It’s is not circumcision or dietary laws we struggle we might add, but we want might fall into thinking we are ok with God because of our quiet times, our entertainment choices, our moral behavior in some way. Paul says it is evident that *“no one is justified by the law.”*
6. We are acceptable on the basis of the gospel. What is the gospel? *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, “cursed in everyone who is hanged on a tree” – so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*
- a. In Adam, we are **cursed** because we are lawbreakers. But Jesus came to set us free from the curse of the law. To set us free from being under the law (**redeem**). How did he do that? He became a curse FOR US. In the OT, the covenant breaker would be put to death, often by stoning, then his/her body would be hung on a tree as a *demonstration* of God’s curse that falls on all covenant breakers (**Deut. 21:23**). In the NT, Jesus hung on the cross to pay for our sins, and he was treated as a covenant breaker in our place, so that we might receive the blessing of God.

## Conclusion

1. Paul says this gift is received by faith – the righteous shall live by faith!
2. How are you trying to relate to God today? Everyone is standing before him on one of two platforms. Seeking acceptance through the law, or acceptance with God in the gospel. There is middle ground and you can’t mix the two together.
  - a. Dear listener, Christ is all you need for a right standing with God. This week, may you live by faith in Christ, and rejoice that you can be right with him fully, because of what Jesus has done.

I hope you’ll join us next time for our final meditation on the book of the Galatians, as we conclude our series on Gospel Freedom. Until, may God bless you and keep you!