

The Curse of the Law and the Curse of Christ

Galatians 3:6-29

Most of you live under the tyranny of false religion that mingles the stories of the Bible with a quest for self-justification through moral superiority. When caught in sin what do we do? Consider one of our past presidents who was clearly caught in lie and a sex scandal. How did he respond? Did he come clean? Did he confess? Did he address the problem head on? No! Instead, a steady stream of spin was put forward and a lie was no longer a lie, a sin was no longer a sin, and 'is' was no longer 'is.'

Don't be appalled at the memory or the reality of one man's rationalization and avoidance of responsibility. You do the same thing every time you offer excuses for your sin without any real consideration for the justice and holiness of God. The typical response of people today when caught in sin is to rationalize and justify themselves. We have the impression that we have the right to do what we are doing even though we know it is wrong: "You just don't understand my situation." Men sleep around on their wives and feel justified because "she doesn't take care of me." Wives refuse to submit to and follow their husbands because he doesn't deserve it. We'll go to the golf club and drop money like a bad habit, but we'll refuse to get involved with someone who needs our help because their messy lives will complicate ours. We'll avoid rated R movies, screen our reading material, be careful never to use a cuss word, and refuse to hang out with those who without realizing that Jesus himself hung out in such crowds.

On the other side of the equation, are some who accept the responsibility of their actions, but feel that they can never be justified. Guilt and shame rest upon their shoulders to the extent that they live defeated and exasperated. Others don't seem to have the same inner struggles and seem to live in greater joy and peace. You try to live up to the expectations of others, but you continue to fail. You live in constant fear that someone will find out who you

really are and expose you for the hypocrite you know yourself to be. You want to get real with people, you want to find freedom and joy, but you are afraid that once everyone finds out what you are no one will want to be around you.

We live in a hypocritical culture and we are partakers of it's self-justification and it's self-loathing. Some of you feel perfectly justified with your rebellion against God because you have set up your own path for self-justification. You've created your own list of sins which you'll never do, and you are appalled that others do. You have a sliding scale of sin and you judge yourself and others by where you are on that scale. The problem you have is that God has a scale and it is not yours.

Others of know you are sinners and want to be forgiven, but you are trying to play the game of self-justification and it is not working. You continually heap guilt upon guilt, but you do not feel free from your bondage to sin. You have bought into the false gospel of our culture by pursuing self-righteousness on your own, but you can't do it. You wonder how everyone else is doing it because you have not realized that they are not.

Before God, we all stand condemned. Our pitiful attempts to rationalize, justify, divert, cover, hide, or excuse our sin does nothing to set us free from its power and control in our lives. Justification by faith alone cuts at the heart of the flesh because it requires us to own our sin and renders us helpless before God. As long as we believe we can be righteous before God on the basis of works of law we delude ourselves with a sense of self-justification thinking we can somehow escape the notice of God. The problem with religion in general is that it deals with sin but it doesn't solve it. It produces moral people but it doesn't produce righteous people because it fails to recognize the seriousness of our crimes against God, and therefore fails to accept the terms of His solution. The cross is little more than a sentimental symbol to many of you rather than the place where God dealt with your sin once and for all.

1. Faith is the way of blessing. While the Judaizers of Galatia lured the Gentile Christians to the law by calling upon the example of Abraham with whom circumcision was established (Gen. 17), Paul shows that Abraham stands as the prime example of those who are justified by faith apart from works of the law. He quotes Gen. 15:6 to demonstrate that righteousness is imputed on the basis of faith.

Genesis 15:6 (ESV): And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Habakkuk 2:4 (ESV): “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

Faith was operative long before the law was given: “Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law” (Galatians 3:21 [ESV]).

2. Law is the way of cursing. The law far from being the way of blessing actually is the way of cursing.

Deuteronomy 27:26 (ESV): “Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.”

Leviticus 18:5 (ESV): You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

We can only be justified by the law if we can completely keep the law.

3. Jesus is the way of redemption. Jesus redeems us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

Deuteronomy 21:23 (ESV): his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is

cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.