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Galatians 3:10, 13-14 “Cursed on a Cross for You!”

Intro. In this text of Scripture Paul introduces a word picture that conveys both our need, and what Christ did for us. He talks about redemption (also 4:5). Redemption is one of the most beautiful pictures in the Bible of what God has done to save us. The word “redeemed” (*exagorazo*) literally means to buy out of the market place. The market place of ancient cities and villages was very busy, a center of activity. One of the items for sale in the market place would be slaves, who would be sold on the auction block. Many people were slaves in Roman society. Some were sold into slavery because they could not pay their debts. Others were taken as slaves as a spoil of battle. Thankfully, we no longer see this sort of thing in our society, but the Galatians were very familiar with slavery, and they knew at least a few examples of redemption from slavery.

Now imagine yourself as a slave up for auction in the marketplace. You stand on the auction block as potential buyers examine you. You are condemned to live according to the wishes and commands of your master. You may face backbreaking work. If you are skilled, you could perform services according to your skill. If you’re a woman, you could be forced into becoming a concubine of your master. Either way, your future is bleak. You are no longer free to come and go as you please. You are under the control of another. So there you stand on the auction block. The bidding begins. One man bids 30, and you cringe as you look at the kind of man who could purchase you. Another bids 35, and as you look his way, he seems to be a better sort of man, and you’re more hopeful. The bidding continues. The price escalates. Then you hear a familiar voice bidding for you. It’s your beloved fiancé! He has come to buy your freedom! You’re hopeful, but then he is outbid by a cruel-looking man. The price goes even higher. Is your redeemer not only willing, but *able* to pay the great price, or are you cursed to remain in bondage? In human life, the story could end either way.

Let me tell another story that I know can have a happy ending. According to v.10, mankind is under the curse of sin, for no one has fully kept God’s law. All have sinned. Likewise, James 2:10 says, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” So we are all guilty, condemned to bondage and to death. We are bound by the chains of sin. Try as we may, we can’t seem to stop sinning. The world, our sin nature, and the devil all control us. We are not truly free. And even if we could stop sinning, obedience to the Law and good works could not make up for our past. But our loving Redeemer, Jesus Christ, has stepped forth to redeem us. No price is too great to pay. He is both able and willing to pay any price. What will He have to pay to redeem us from the curse of sin? Our text gives the answer. I want so share with you this morning how to be redeemed from the curse of sin. First of all, I want you to:

I. CONSIDER THE COST OF YOUR REDEMPTION

What was the price Jesus paid in order to redeem you? V.13 tells us. It says, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law,¹ having become a curse for us.” That is the great price of our redemption. You see, beginning in Genesis 3, we see that sin brings a curse. Therefore, the

¹ The law itself is good. The “curse of the law” is first the curse that comes from breaking God’s law, and then the curse that the Law pronounces on the one that is hung on a tree.

price of our redemption was for Jesus to become a curse in our place. He had to become our substitute, for the holiness and righteousness of God demands that sin be punished. The idea of substitution is seen in the little word translated “for” (*hyper*).² It means here “in place of.” He became a curse in our place. There is no gospel without substitution. Isa. 53:5 says, “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities....” Because He was innocent and sinless, He could die on behalf of those who have sinned, and so absorb their curse. Jesus suffered and died in our place as a substitute. He bore the curse in our place. And it is also interesting that the root meaning of that word is “above.” He became a curse above us. Jesus placed Himself between the sinner and the wrath of God and was made a curse for us on the cross. The wrath of God had to be poured out on sin. The lightning bolts of God were poised to be launched. The sword of God was drawn, ready to execute. But Jesus placed Himself above us, covered us, and bore God’s wrath in our place. Christ took the lightning bolt of God’s wrath. He took the sword of justice. He endured the same pains and sufferings that we ought to have endured. He bore the curse of sin in our place. That is an incredible truth. He covered us as He bore the punishment of our sin, and now we can get out from under the curse.

Now the question is, how and when did Christ become a curse for us? Paul implies the answer to that when he quotes from Dt. 21 in the last of v.13, “Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.” The Old Testament provided a law that if a person was guilty of death, he was to be stoned. And if he committed an especially great crime, they were to hang his dead body upon a tree, exposed for all to see. This evidently was an ancient practice. In Gen. 40:19 Joseph interpreted a dream for Pharaoh’s baker saying, “Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.” Do you remember the scene in *the Passion of the Christ*, when a bird started eating out the eye of one of the thieves crucified with Jesus? This practice is still being done today. Do you remember what happened in Felujah, Iraq? They not only killed 4 Americans, but they hung their decapitated bodies from a bridge for all to see. Now I believe God included this law, for He could foresee that Jesus would die for our sins upon a cross made from a tree. In fact, Peter must have had this same truth in mind when he said in Acts 5:30, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.”³ Do you see how much Jesus loves you, that He would be willing to be cursed in such a way for you?

Now there are at least 5 aspects of the curse that Jesus bore, and I give them in the order in which Jesus experienced them. First, the curse of sin involves bondage. For thousands of years humanity has endured various forms of bondage because of the curse of sin. To this day, millions are in bondage to oppressive, evil governments. And even in free societies, many people are in bondage to sin, whether it be an addiction to alcohol, drugs, pornography, or to some other forms of lust or sin. But Jesus Christ was willing to experience bondage for us. He was arrested and bound (Mt. 27:2; Mark 15:1; John 18:12, 24). After His Jewish trial, and before He was delivered to Pilate, He no doubt spent hours bound in a prison. When I was in Israel, they took us to the very dungeon where Jesus was probably held. Secondly, remember in Genesis 3 that the ground was cursed because of man’s sin. As a result, Genesis 3:18 says, “Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you....” Even so, Jesus wore a crown of thorns upon His brow. The curse of the thorns was thrust deeply into his scalp, drawing blood and causing barbs of pain. Yet, Jesus accepted it as part of the price of our redemption. Thirdly, the curse involves condemnation. The curse of

² A.T. Robertson says, “This use of *uper* for substitution is common in the papyri and in ancient Greek as in the N.T.” For example, John 11:50 says, “...it is expedient for us that one man should die **for** the people....”

³ Likewise, Acts 10:39 says, “And we are witnesses of all things which He did..., whom they killed by hanging on a tree.” The same Greek words for “hang” and “tree” are used in these verses.

breaking the law was primarily condemnation. Romans 6:23 says, "...the wages of sin is death..." We were condemned to die. Though Jesus never sinned, He was condemned to die. What Christ did was to die the death of a transgressor. 1 Pet. 2:24 says, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross... for by His wounds you were healed." Fourthly, the curse involves shame. This is one of the primary aspects of the curse of being hanged on a tree, or on a cross. One time Cheryl told me of one of her bad childhood memories. The teacher had sent home work to be signed by her parents. However, she forgot to bring the signed papers to class. As a result, she was sent out of the classroom to sit on the steps during recess. In her mind, missing recess was only a small part of her punishment. Worse than that was the fact that she felt so ashamed. In her mind, only the bad kids were banished to the steps! Perhaps you were made to stand in the corner during class. Even so, Isaiah 53:12 says that Jesus "was numbered with the transgressors." He was crucified with violent robbers and murders. For 6 hours Jesus hung on a cross, barely clothed, if at all, and exposed in shame to the many bypassers near a busy road leading in and out of Jerusalem. Mt. 27:39 says, "And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads." Jesus experience for you and for me the shame and humiliation of being held up for ridicule, dying a criminal's death. Finally, the curse involves alienation from God. As long as you are under the curse of sin, you are cursed to live life on your own. You cannot count on God's help. Well, Jesus experienced this aspect of the curse as well when He was on the cross. He cried out with a loud voice in Matthew 27:46, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" During 3 hours of darkness, He was all alone. The Father did not intervene to help Him. He experienced what sinners in hell experience, alienation from God in outer darkness.

Oh, dear friend, as Jesus faced the cross in Gethsemane, it is no wonder that He prayed in Mt. 26:39, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me..." But it was not the Father's will, for the only way we could be saved from the curse of sin was for Jesus to drink every drop of that curse Himself!

Argumentation: Surely, the price He paid was the only one high enough to redeem all of mankind. Eph. 1:7 says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." 1 Pet. 1:18-19 says, "knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold,... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Though your mom would probably pay any price to save you, she cannot. Only the precious blood of Jesus, and only what He endured at the cross is sufficient to save.

Why have I asked you to consider the price Jesus paid to redeem you? First, when you consider the great price that Jesus paid for your redemption, you should be overwhelmed by the love of Jesus for you. Then you should respond by allowing Him to redeem you from the curse. I will tell you a little later what you must do. Secondly, you should respond with love, gratitude and praise. And let us not do so just with our lips, but also with our lives. 1 Cor. 6:20 says, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

A preacher, who had been converted late in life, had been guilty of stealing before he was saved. After he had just started preaching about His Savior, he passed a hen house on his way home from church one night. It was a great temptation for him to steal a hen, but he stopped and prayed, "Lord, your property is in danger, and I don't mean the chickens."⁴

Another application is this: whereas we tend to make light of sin, the great price of redemption shows us how serious sin really is to our holy God. As v.10 indicates, even one sin is enough to impose the curse upon us. Remember, one sin plunged the human race into the curse.

⁴ Told by J. Vernon McGee, Thru The Bible, Vol. 4 (Pasadena: Thru The Bible Radio, 1982).

Dear friend, when you realize how greatly Jesus suffered for you, you see how great an issue your sin really is. Look into the cup that Jesus drank for you, and you will see the horror of sin, and the horror of the curse. I wouldn't go another day treating sin lightly. I would repent of sin, and seek the forgiveness that Christ provided for you on the cross.

So consider the cost of redemption, and it can change your life. But to motivate you further toward Christ, I urge you also to:

II. CONSIDER THE BLESSINGS OF YOUR REDEMPTION

God not only wants to save you from the curse of sin, but He also wants to bless you. So notice the result of redemption in v.14, "that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus..." Remember that God called Abraham, that through him "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). This blessing passed on to Isaac (26:4), and to Jacob (28:14), and ultimately to Jesus, the Messiah. Notice that the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles "in Christ Jesus." And because of what He did, the blessing not only is extended to the Jews, but to all the nations. All that God desired for and promised to Abraham of salvation and its benefits would spread to the nations. That includes you! So what a contrast we have here. He went to that cross, which was to Him a tree of the curse, in order that He might make it for you and me a tree of blessing! So we are no longer under the curse. Instead, we can be blessed! In fact, Paul says in Ephesians that we can be "blessed ... with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (1:3).

Now the concept of being blessed is in clear contrast with the curse, but it is also very general. What are some of the specific ways that we can be blessed in Jesus Christ?

A. Forgiveness - Jesus was condemned (Mt. 27:3; Mark 10:33; 14:64; Luke 24:20; Acts 13:27) that we might be justified and forgiven! The Law only condemns us. It is as if we were on death row, but Christ came and set us free from sin's eternal condemnation. Now, you and I can be free from the condemnation of sin. And I have good news for you. God justifies His people at once; the curse is removed in a single moment. Sinner, hear that! Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

One night a young woman, who had a very rough past involving alcohol, drugs, and prostitution, felt the tug of God at her heart in a church service. She responded to God's call and accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. The immediate change in her was evident, and as time went on, she became a faithful member of the church and even teacher of young children. She also in time caught the eye and heart of the pastor's son, and eventually they began to make wedding plans. This is when the problems began. About half of the church did not think that a woman with a past such as hers was suitable for a pastor's son. The issue became such a bone of contention that they decided to have a meeting. As the people made their arguments and tensions increased, the young woman became very upset about all the things being brought up about her past. As she began to cry, the pastor's son stood to speak. "My fiancée's past is not what is on trial here," he said. Today you have put the blood of Jesus on trial. What you are questioning is the ability of the blood of Jesus to wash away sin. So, does it wash away sin or not?" The whole church began to weep as they realized that they had been slandering the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵

Another blessing that Jesus will grant you is:

⁵ Author unknown: forwarded by Bernie Koerselman.

B. Freedom - This blessing we can receive is reflected in the concept of redemption, which is freedom for those redeemed. Again, the word means, “to buy *out* of the market.” We are delivered *from* bondage by Jesus Christ. The essential idea is that people are by nature slaves to sin. Furthermore, sin leads to bondage. However, we can be free from the control of sin, that is, we can be free from the power of sinful habits. We should also maintain freedom in other ways. Paul said in 1 Cor. 7:23, “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.” Young lady, don’t get into a controlling relationship with a young man, where interferes with going to church, or obeying God.

There was a great pastor by the name of Gregory. He was the undershepherd of the flock of the Lord in Rome in the 500s AD. At that time Rome still practiced slavery. What we know today as England was conquered by the Roman legions. And the slaves were brought down to Rome by the thousands and sold there on the auction block. They were very noticeable because most of the people of the Roman Empire were dark-eyed and dark-haired and dark-skinned. And many of these slaves that were brought back were fair-haired and fair-skinned and blue eyed. And this pastor, Gregory, went down to the slave blocks in Rome. And when one of those fair-haired, fair-eyed, fair-skinned youths was placed on the auction block, he bought the lad. And then having bought him, he told the young fellow, “You’re free. I haven’t bought you to abuse you. Nor have I bought you for menial tasks and labor. I haven’t bought you to be a servant or a slave in my house. I have bought you that you might be free.” Then the pastor would say, “I invite you to come with me. I want to introduce you to the blessed Jesus. Would you study the Word of God with me? And would you follow me in the discipleship of the Christian faith?” Many did out of gratitude, and even eventually went back to England as missionaries.⁶

Christ has bought us and redeemed us by his own blood. Out of gratitude we should be willing to become His disciples and missionaries, representing Him on earth bringing glory to Him. Finally, yet another blessing that we can receive is the:

C. Filling of the Spirit – In the last of v.14 Paul mentions “the promise of the Spirit.” Paul began his entire argument with this gift of the Spirit (vv. 1-5). The medium of all blessing is the Holy Spirit. Later we shall learn more about the Holy Spirit as the power of God’s new people (5:1-26). Through the Holy Spirit we can have power over sin, and power for service unto God. Through the Spirit we can have comfort from God’s presence. The Holy Spirit leads us. There are even more blessings bestowed by the Holy Spirit.

So I appeal to you, picture your life blessed by God. Instead of guilt and condemnation, you have forgiveness. Instead of the bondage and addiction of sin, you are free to live right and honorably. You are free from shame. And instead of alienation from God, you are indwelt and filled by the Holy Spirit. Instead of struggling alone, you have His strength and comfort as you face the trials of life. Don’t you want to have these blessings? If you already enjoy these blessings, thank God and bless His name!

So when you consider the great price Jesus paid in bearing the curse, and when you consider the blessings He wants to give you, then you should take that third step and:

III. RECEIVE THE BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION BY FAITH

Just because Jesus drank every drop of the cup of the curse of sin, and just because He wants the blessings of salvation to pass to all mankind, that does not mean that you are

⁶ Told by W.A. Criswell 05-22-77.

automatically saved. We have to do something to be set free from the curse and receive the blessings of salvation. Notice our necessary response in v.14, "...that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Notice that Paul says, "might receive." It is not automatic. Each person must do their part. So what is required? Well, we see here that the curse is lifted by faith in Christ, and then the river of blessing can begin to flow into our lives. Likewise, John 3:18 says, "He who believes in Him is not condemned...."

There is a misunderstanding of faith by many today. Justifying faith does not have to be strong faith; it only has to be true faith. So I want to review what is involved in faith. First, justifying faith involves self-renunciation, putting away all confidence in one's own merit and works. You cannot save yourself. Like the Israelites who had Pharaoh's army pursuing behind them and the impassable Red Sea in front of them, the sinner must acknowledge his sinfulness and his total inability to save himself. When he sees God's justice pursuing him and God's judgment ahead of him, he realizes his helplessness in himself and realizes he has nowhere to turn but to God's mercy and grace. Justifying faith also involves full reliance on the Lord. It is trusting fully in Him. Again, notice that the blessing comes "in Christ Jesus." Our faith must be directed to Jesus. He is the only way (John 14:6). To believe is to fall down upon the promise, and to lie there.

It is said that, if we were to fold our arms, and lie motionless upon the water, we would not sink, especially in salt water. To believe is to float upon the waters of grace.

Next, justifying faith involves appropriation. Faith is the hand that reaches out to receive the blessings that Christ offers. Faith is the light switch that allows the power to flow. Finally, true faith involves submission to Christ. It is yielding our lives to His control. He is our Redeemer. We have been bought with a price. We must yield our lives to His control. That is the ultimate expression of trust.

Will you trust in Jesus Christ today?

Conclusion: Every one of us is in one of two verses. You are either in v.10—under the curse. Or you are in v.13—redeemed from the curse. Which verse are you in? Are you under the curse or are you redeemed from the curse? Have you experienced the blessing of forgiveness? Have you experienced the blessing of freedom from condemnation, and freedom from the power of sin? Oh, that I could go to each person and plead with them to trust in Jesus as their Savior!

If I knew that you had a fatal disease, and yet you would not take the medicine that alone could cure you, I would implore you upon my knees to take that medicine. As the angels laid hold upon Lot, to deliver him from judgment, I would wish that I could lay hold of you, and bring you out from under the curse, and into the blessings of the Lord.

Many of you will remember David Bloom, who was an NBC News correspondent. He died on April 6, 2003, while covering Operation Iraqi Freedom. Ironically, Bloom did not die from injuries sustained in conflict, but rather of a pulmonary embolism. That condition occurs among those who sit for long periods of time, and Bloom spent much of his time in a cramped Army vehicle. When Bloom began experiencing pain, he consulted military doctors and even described his symptoms over the phone to overseas physicians. They suspected deep venous thrombosis, and advised him to seek proper medical attention. He ignored their advice, swallowed some aspirins, and kept on working. Shortly thereafter, he died of a pulmonary embolism. Bloom took several precautions to avoid becoming a casualty of war, but ignored the warnings of doctors who insisted that his life was in danger from a treatable condition. Bloom left behind a wife and three young daughters because he didn't heed the warnings.⁷

⁷ Frederik Balfour, "David Bloom's Last Ride," *BusinessWeek* online (4-7-03).

The curse of sin is a reality that should be quite obvious. The Bible warns of the ultimate end of those who remain under the curse. Will you heed the warnings? Will you turn to the One who can deliver you from the curse? Consider today the great price Jesus suffered to redeem you from the curse of condemnation, bondage, and alienation from God. Consider the blessings of forgiveness, freedom, and the presence of God's Spirit that He wants to give you. If you do so, surely you will put your faith in Jesus, and receive these blessings today!

Sources: William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Galatians & Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968); John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5 (Pasadena: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Scot McKnight, *The NIV Application Commentary: Galatians* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 4:23] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2012), inc. A.T. Robertson's, *New Testament Word Pictures*; Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 201-212; Dr. Jerry Vines (notes from his sermon tape on this text dated 9/16/84); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Free: Galatians* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1975); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Galatians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1944, 1973);. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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