

# CHRIST BECAME A CURSE FOR US

## (Sermon Summary)

**Preacher: Josiah Bell, Melbourne Hall, Leicester.**

**Reading: Galatians 3:1 -14.**

Galatia, in the time of the apostle Paul, was the central part of what we today call Turkey. The tone of Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia was very urgent because Paul's spirit had been greatly agitated. It is true that what is close to our hearts is what we care about and what we will react strongly about. Paul saw a danger threatening the churches and it is a danger that is still with us today. In our passage, it is particularly v10 and v13 that we are concentrating on.

Here we see that the concept of a curse is being addressed by Paul. To understand the meaning of a 'curse' we can turn back to Numbers 22. Here Balak, king of Moab, sent for Balaam to come and curse Israel, because the Moabites were sick with dread (v3). To curse is to want something bad to happen to someone and, in this instance, to go and find someone shady, Balaam, to do this for you. But there is such a thing as God cursing which has nothing to do with superstition or using the help of an evil person. When God curses there are bad consequences for the people who are cursed, though here, the person who is cursing is righteous and good. It is like in a court of law where the judge passing sentence is righteous, but where the consequences for the person sentenced are not good ones.

So it is important to know who the group of people in v10 are, for these are the people cursed by God, and then to know, furthermore, whether we are in that group of people so cursed.

From the verse we see that the group cursed are those who are of the works of the law. These are people who see the free offer of God, who holds out to us forgiveness of sin, eternal life, rescue from the curse, love, joy, peace, security and the promise that all things are ours, but instead want to pay for it themselves. It is like someone who is being shown hospitality by another but then gets his wallet out to pay for the meal. It is as if we are saying to God that my life is good enough and that I don't need a free salvation or a free gift. But if we say in effect that we can do the works of the law, we are under a curse. We are proud and self-righteous. God hates this, puts His curse on those who say this and these people are on the road to hell. So where are we? Do you offer your own righteous to God, even though the Bible tells us that our own righteousness is like filthy rags?

What God requires of us is perfection in obeying His law. It would be like an archer having to fire his arrows and hit the bulls-eye every single time. Even if you hit the bulls-eye 99 times out of a hundred, the one miss means we have not reached perfection. The maximum you can score in snooker is 147. It is rare for a player to be able to score this. But the standard God requires would be like having to hit this target every single time. It is a delusion and people simply do not see what they are setting themselves to do. God requires us to love Him. But to accomplish this we would have to love Him all the time, from the moment we wake until we go to sleep. We could not be allowed any fleeting thoughts that take us away from this or any laziness. We would have to speak the truth from our hearts every time and, from our youth to our old age, we would never have to have an adulterous thought. No crude language would be allowable and no expression of anger. If we failed in any of these things, we would be under the curse. It is ludicrous and ridiculous to think that people could placate God by a little prayer, or Bible reading, or giving money to a good cause. God's verdict on us is already in and yet people still believe they can please Him by the works the law.

Christians can be guilty of believing and trusting in Christ, but then allowing these other ideas to creep back in. We can say that we trust in Jesus but that we also need to do these different things. For the churches in Galatia, it was to have Christ but then also to be circumcised. We might say that we believe in Christ but that we also read the Bible through in a year or that we share our faith, and these become the basis for our confidence. We look at ourselves and think we are doing OK. But this is to be like an unbeliever and Paul does not allow us to mix anything with Christ. And this is always the danger we are in as Christians. We are just one step away from drifting from Christ.

The answer to this problem is v13. The clue is in the first word of the verse, 'Christ'. There are only two places to look – inwardly or to Christ. The remedy does not lie within us. The key to our hopelessness is Christ. He meets us, not with another list of things to do, but gives us Himself. The curse of the law is to be under the judgment of God, to know the terrors of God, to be in hell. The Lord redeemed us from all this by becoming the curse for us.

We learn in Deuteronomy 21:22 that those who are hung on a tree are cursed. It was a public execution and done in a very visible way. This is what happened to the Lord when He was publicly executed on the cross. He is showing us what a curse is like, what to be under judgment is like. The cross gives us a glimpse of what it means to be under the curse of God. It is not something vague but means to be cut off from the loving presence of God, to have nothing of His peace and forgiveness. It is to experience pain and anguish. It is to have the reversal of the blessings pronounced in Numbers 6: 24-26. It is like hearing instead that the Lord will curse us, and turn away His face from us, and give us pain and torment.

There are only two places we can be – under the curse or redeemed from it. Where are we? Which applies to us? And, if we are Christians, we are faced up with the question of why we are drifting from a simple trust to a sense, instead, of His displeasure, where there is no hope and no peace. We should rather ever look to the Lord Himself.