



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Galatians 3:1-4

"O Foolish Galatians"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading for this morning is Galatians chapter 3, verse 1 through verse 14, and will you turn in your New Testament there and listen as we read these verses. The apostle writes,

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? (Probably that word suffered could be a little more accurately rendered here in our idiom, experienced.) Have you experienced so many things in vain? If it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (And I think if I may make one other slight correction. In the fifth verse, it is my opinion, there is doubt over this, that the present tense "doeth he it" is probably better put in the past tense. Did he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith, the reference being to the time when Paul preached the gospel to them in southern Asia

Minor.) Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we turn with thanksgiving and praise to Thee to render to Thee the worship that is due unto Thy marvelous and wonderful name. We thank Thee and praise Thee for a Father in heaven who has loved us, and has given his only begotten Son that we might be saved. We are grateful for the plan of redemption. And we thank Thee for the marvelous wisdom and mercy manifested in it. We thank Thee for the marvelous way, in which the name of God has been revealed, in mercy, in grace, in love, in wisdom, and in judgment. We thank Thee for all of the things that have to do with the nature and attributes of our great God. We desire, Lord, to know Thee and to worship Thee as Thou truly art.

We pray that our time together in the ministry of the word, in reflection upon it, in the Sunday School classes that follow, and especially around the Lord's Table, that they be the means of growth in grace for all of us. May, at the end of this day, we have a

deeper and a more personal conception of all that Thou art. We pray that this week, this first day of the week, may be days in which Thy name is lifted up and exalted and glorified in a most practical way, and all of the activities of it. We commit the week to Thee. We thank Thee for this the first day, a lovely day that Thou hast given to us.

And Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of prayer. We thank Thee for the privilege of a part in what Thou art doing. We thank Thee that the predestinating purpose of God includes all of the means by which those ends shall be accomplished; prayer, witnessing, the reading of the Scriptures, the fellowship, and counsel, and exhortation, and conviction that comes from our friends. We thank Thee and praise Thee for all that Thou hast revealed in holy Scripture.

And Father, we pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ, and not simply Believers Chapel. We pray that Thy may be upon the body, which Thou hast brought into existence for spiritual good. We ask that if it should please Thee, through the preaching of the word of God, in the meetings of the saints today many may come to know him whom to know is life eternal. And may each of us who are members of the church of Jesus Christ, through the faith given by our God in him, may that church be strengthened and edified.

We ask especially for the Chapel, too, for its ministry, its outreach, its elders and deacons and members and friends and visitors who are here with us today. Lord, may there be spiritual blessing experienced by all of us that will not only rejoice us, but glorify Thy name. We pray for our country, and for our President. And we especially remember those who are suffering, and who are in difficulty and trials, and some who are bereaving. We pray, Lord, for all of them, and we ask that Thou wilt minister to them in a most marvelous way. Guide and direct our elders and our deacons. And particularly we pray for the elders that Thou would give them wisdom, and strength, and counsel that comes from Thee. May Thy hand, Lord, be upon them for our spiritual good as they exercise

oversight over us. We commit the ministry of the word to Thee and the singing of the hymns of this day to Thee. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for this morning in our exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians is "O Foolish Galatians." "We are not made holy by our works, but rather through faith in Christ alone," the Augsburg Confession says, adding, "a doctrine that has almost disappeared." I think we can understand that statement, because it was written out of the context of the Protestant Reformation, and the doctrine of justification by faith had surely almost disappeared from the common speech of the day. We live in a similar doctrinal atmosphere. Justification by faith alone cries for rediscovery. The most likely place for it to be found is in the writings of the Apostle Paul. Now, Paul is not your handy companion man for modern man. He feels about Paul as did Pardoner in Sir David Lindsay's Three Estates, "By him that bore the crown of thorns, I would St. Paul had never been born." That really is the opinion of many, many people in our day.

The Apostle Paul and the doctrine that he proclaimed is very distasteful to modern man. It says, in effect, that man is justified, not by a human merit whatsoever, but by the merits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Galatians is one of Paul's most forceful expressions of justification by. A man cannot be saved through human merit, Paul states. In fact he states that were it true that a man could be saved through human merit, he would be making void the grace of God, "For if righteousness were to come by the law then Christ is dead in vain." It would be an insult to the God of grace. To affirm that one could be justified by Law is to say, in effect, that God has allowed a great blunder to take place in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus.

After the defense of his apostleship and his independent status in chapters 1 and 2, the apostle in chapters 3 and 4, argues his case from theology, or from Scripture. Grace and faith, not law and works are God's way. Now he has given us an indication of what he is going to be saying when he wrote in the 6th verse of the 2nd chapter, ""Knowing

that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." So in Galatians chapter 3 and 4 we turn to a scriptural, a biblical exposition of the doctrine that Paul has been introducing. He says then that we are saved by grace, that's the principle of our salvation. We are saved by the instrumentality of faith. We are not saved by works, the works of the Law. We are not saved by human merit; we are saved by what Christ has done for us.

There are three arguments that we are going to look at briefly in the exposition this morning, and the first is an argument from early Christian experience. The apostle asks the Galatians to look back over their past and to analyze some of the things that happened to them as the apostle preached the gospel to them. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been openly set forth, crucified among you?" It might cause you a little pause to note that the apostle accuses the Galatians believers of being foolish. Did not the Lord Jesus say that if we called anyone "fool" he was in danger of hell fire? Is the Apostle Paul guilty of the sin that our Lord referred to? No, he's not. In fact, the word foolish that is used here is the very word that the Lord Jesus used to describe disciple on the Emmaus Road who had failed to understand the significance of the Old Testament. He said to them, remember, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had written; ought not the Son not to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory." So he accused them of foolishness and not understanding that he came to die, and then to enter into his glory.

This word "foolish" here means spiritually dull. It means spiritually blind. "O foolish Galatians," not foolish in the sense that our Lord used the term. For there it refers to a Godless person. "O foolish Galatians, O spiritually dull Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth." Three questions are asked by Paul, and they all

define the past Christian experience of the Galatians. The first is a question regarding the reception of the Holy Spirit. "Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Now, I think it will help us to point out one or two interesting expressions that the apostle uses in verse 1, before we look at that question briefly. He accuses the Galatians of being bewitched. This Greek word that is used here is a rather interesting word. It was used of individuals who had magical powers. In fact, it was often the equivalent of what we mean when we speak of someone laying an evil eye upon someone else. That's really the force of it. And in fact, the Greeks had a great fear of the "evil eye." In many of the ancient writings that have been uncovered, sentences appear in personal letters that refer to the evil eye. For example, in one of them we read these words, "Above all I pray that you may be in health, unharmed by the evil eye, and fairing prosperously." So the idea of being exposed to magical powers through the evil eye was very common to them. The trouble with the Galatians, to put it simply, was "eye trouble." They had been bewitched by the Judaisers who had a laid and evil eye upon them. And the result was that instead of keeping their eye upon the ministry that the apostle had among them in proclaiming a crucified Messiah. They have not turned from the sole-sufficiency of Jesus Christ, and are attracted to the doctrine that one must not only believe in the Lord Jesus but also be circumcised in order to be saved.

Now what makes it even more ridiculous is that the apostle says that he had evidently set forth the Lord among them. He had placarded our Lord Jesus Christ. That's a media word; incidentally, it was a word that was used to refer to a poster on which someone put up a public announcement. It was a word that was used of a father who made up an announcement in which he signified to the whole community that he was no longer responsible for the debts of a son. So he was placarded. In fact, the apostle, if

you'll notice, plays on the idea of eyes and "evil eyes." He says, "Who has laid an evil eye on you? Before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been publicly placarded as Christ crucified."

Now, I think we ought to stop for just a moment and notice the expression "crucified." The apostle not simply stresses the fact that he preached that Jesus Christ had been crucified, but the construction in the original text lays a great deal of stress on the character upon which he preached him as a crucified Savior. In other words, it's not simply that he preached that Jesus Christ was crucified, among other things, but he preached him as a crucified Savior. He lays a great deal of stress upon the fact that it is in that sense that he proclaimed him. He proclaimed him as crucified in the sense that his sufferings were looked at as atoning sufferings. He was proclaimed as the sole-sufficiency for human salvation. It is not legal works that save a man. It is the works of the Savior in suffering under the judgment of God for us. It is upon him and him alone, that our salvation rests. He preached him as crucified.

The same expression is used by the apostle in 1 Corinthians 2, when he says, "I determine not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and" and in this characteristic, "and him as crucified." As one who has been crucified, and whose ministry as a crucified Savior is the sum and substance of what he preached. You can see that nay kind of ministry that does not lay a great deal of stress upon the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is not in harmony with the apostolic ministry. We have entirely too much preaching today on the ancillary things, on the more secondary things. We have a lot of preaching on practical things, so called, but the most practical doctrine in the world is the doctrine of our crucified Savior. And the apostle proclaimed him in that sense.

Now he asks one question of the Galatians, "This only would I learn of you," I'm willing to rest my case on this point, "This only would I learn of you," did you receive the Holy Spirit by the works of the Law or by the hearing of faith? Now, of course, the answer to that was very simple, because the Galatians were Gentile and did not have the Law of Moses, but chances are that they didn't know a great deal about the Law of Moses.

And so, when they received the Holy Spirit it could only have been by the hearing of faith, not by doing the works of the Law. So the first question is a question that is intended by the apostle to show them that the faith by which they came, and the blessings of justification which they had one time rejoiced in, so much that they were willing to pluck out their eyes and give them to the apostle, came to them on the basis of faith only.

Now, he asks them another question. He says in the third verse, "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" In other words, have you made a beginning by believing in the Lord Jesus, and now are you to take the second step in salvation by being circumcised. Is salvation really a two step procedure, faith and then the observance of the rite of circumcision? We know that two human parents are required for a child to be conceived and born. Two spiritual parents are required for a child to be born into the family of God. If we may use this figure, the two parents are the Spirit of God and the word of God. When a normal child is born, he has all that he needs for life, and nothing need be added. When a child of God is born into God's family, he has all that he needs spiritually, and nothing needs to be added. All that is necessary is for a child to have food and exercise and necessary cleansing for him to survive and grow to maturity. Wouldn't it be strange, if, after parents have given birth to a child, the child should be incomplete in that you should be required to go to your doctor a month after birth to receive ears, and then two months after birth in order to receive twos, and then three months after birth to receive a mouth? Now, there are advantages in this, of course. [Laughter] We no doubt would want to put that off as long as possible. But we know from our own human experience that when a person is born he has all that is sufficient for his growth to maturity.

Now, when a person comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and is born into the family of God, he does not need to take other steps in order to gain a full salvation. He does not need to believe in Christ and then be baptized, and then to hold out to the end

various other types of things that have been suggested as necessary for continuance in the faith. So, having begun in the Spirit are you now trying to be perfected by the flesh? By the observance of the rite of circumcision or any other rite the apostle could have added, which is an act of the flesh. And if you'll pardon repetition, I do think it's necessary, however, the act of baptism is an act of the flesh, as well. And so I feel certain that the apostle's doctrine includes just such an act as that, too.

Now, the third question is one that concerns the manifestation of the Spirit. You remember if you turn over to Acts chapter 14 and read that chapter, that when the apostle was in Iconium that God testified to the work, to the preaching of the word, in "signs and wonders." Those are the specific words of Luke when he wrote the 14th chapter of the Book of Acts. So when the apostles came there, they were the signs of an apostle, the mighty charismatic gifts. And then at Lystra, rather, he healed the impotent man. This is what Paul refers to here when he says, "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you," I believe this should be rendered in the past tense, "did he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" And again, the Law was unknown to these heathen men in Iconium and Lystra, and Derbe, The answer was obvious. These mighty works were done through the hearing of faith, not through the works of the Law. So the apostle, then asking the Galatians to look back over their past experience, has in effect said to them, "There is no indication that the spiritual life into which you have been brought came from works of the Law at all. It has come on the basis of grace through faith."

Now, the Galatians, I am sure, were individuals who had been brought to recognize the fact that in the final analysis, an argument on spiritual things must be grounded in the word of God, because that's the final proof of all of the truth. Our principium as Christians, our first principle, is that the Bible is the word of God, and therefore, spiritual arguments are settled by the teaching of the word of God. So now he turns to the Scriptures. And you probably have noticed in reading through these verses

that the apostle cites about six passages from the Old Testament in this next section.

They are not always so evident. For example, in verse 6, that is a citation, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." So he's arguing from the word of God now for his truth.

It has been said that the best way to grasp an idea is to see it embodied in a man. I think there's a lot of truth to that. If we want to, for example, a perfect union of doctrine and duty, well to whom would we look. Well, we would look to our Lord Jesus Christ. Because the perfect expression of biblical doctrine is found in his words, and the perfect expression of the life of faith is found in his life. He beautifully incarnates the truth of God, so that we see doctrine, and we see the ethical effects, most perfectly, in the life of our Lord. We can see this in the lives of the apostles. We see a beautiful harmony of the doctrinal teaching and the practical outworking of that truth. The best way to grasp an idea is to see it embodied in a man.

I know when I was going through theological seminary; it was not so much the things that Dr. Chafer said to us, as the things that he said to us, plus the fact that he lived the truth that he proclaimed. He used to talk about walking by faith, and the institution was an institution of faith, in which no appeals were ever made for funds. And that had a great impression upon us. And I can remember at specific times, in which the institution was in need, we went to the Lord in prayer. We saw in Dr. Chafer the embodiment of the doctrine, which he was proclaiming. It had a great effect upon us. I think that it's probably true that the best way to grasp an idea is to see it embodied in a man.

Now, if you want to grasp the idea of faith and a mind of faith, to what man in the Bible does the Apostle Paul turn more frequently than anyone else? Why he turns to Abraham. Abraham is the embodiment of a man whose life rests upon faith. God appeared to him in sovereign grace, turned him to himself, brought him to faith in him, and his whole life is an expression of a life of faith. That's what Paul means when he says in this argument from the faith of Abraham, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it

was accounted to him for righteousness." Now, this illusion to Abraham is a master stroke, because the Judaisers were great followers of Moses.

Now, Moses was important. You surely cannot understand the Old Testament if you don't understand the contribution that Moses made. But in the final analysis, Moses was a man who introduced a system, which was a temporary system. Paul will talk about that in the next chapter of this epistle, or rather in this chapter, later on in this chapter of this very epistle. He will point out that the Law came in and performed its purpose, and then is passed off the scene. Moses was important, but Abraham is extremely important. So, when Paul says to these men who have revered Moses, "Back to Abraham," he was saying something that was very significant. In fact, I would imagine that someone could have started a movement calling it "Back to Abe," that movement. "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Now, the reason why Abraham is such a beautiful illustration is, because when a person believed in the Old Testament, he became a true member of the covenant. Ideally all of the children of Israel belonged to the covenant, and in token of that, they gave testimony to it by circumcision the males on the eighth day. That was a sign and a seal of the righteousness, which came by faith. But as so often happens, the sign and the seal became the primary things. And men were identified as the possessors of righteousness if they had been circumcised. But the essential inward necessity of faith was forgotten. This is something that we often forget in the Christian church today. We look out, and incidentally this is something that Jewish people have very difficult time comprehending about Christians. Jewish people tend to think that everybody who is a Gentile in the western world is a Christian. But that is not true at all. Even in the Christian church, the fact that a person is a member of a Christian church does not mean that he is a Christian, except in an outward sense only. A true Christian is a person who has believed in our Lord Jesus Christ and who has a personal faith in the Redeemer, the Messiah of Israel.

And in the Old Testament, no man was a true Jew, a true Israelite, who did not also have faith in the Messiah who was to come. "Not all who are of Israel are Israel," the apostle states. So it is important for us to remember that in the Christian church, one must have a faith in the Redeemer before he is a true Christian, and one must have a true faith in the Redeemer to come before a Jewish man is really a Jewish man in the fullest sense. So this was an important point, because the apostle goes back to Abraham and speaks about the person who was circumcised, and who, in the 17th chapter, was told that circumcision was a sign of one's true relationship to the covenant.

Now, Paul makes an argument similar to this in Romans chapter 4, and he asks the question, "Does justification come by circumcision? No," he says, "it's very simple; all you have to do is look at Genesis chapter 17, and Genesis chapter 15." In Genesis chapter 17 Abraham is circumcised, but in Genesis chapter 15, he is pronounced righteous. And a numskull knows that chapter 15 precedes chapter 17. And so, if chapter 15 precedes chapter 17, and a man, such as Abraham is pronounced righteous in Genesis chapter 15, it's not because he was circumcised, which is not recorded until chapter 17. That's what he's talking about here when he says, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." If you, sitting in this audience today, have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore, are of faith, you are as he says, a son of Abraham.

Now, he does not say we are a son of Israel. He says we are a son of Abraham. Abraham is the great man of faith, and all who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ in both the Old Testament and the New, are sons of Abraham. Paul will labor the point later on, so we need not now here. "And the Scripture," he says, "foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying," in the famous Abrahamic promises, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." Notice all nations, in other words, the Gentiles were blessed in Abraham. Did you realize that you are a son of Abraham? You are, if you have believed, truly believed.

"So then," he concluded, "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." But surely salvation is a combination of faith and works, isn't it? Sometimes you hear people say, "Don't you remember the story of the two preachers who were in the row boat and debating whether salvation was by grace or works, or by faith and Law. One of the preachers argues vociferously for justification by faith, and the other argued for justification by works. And the boatman was sitting listening to them. Finally when they reached the point where neither had been able to confess the other and were at a loss for words, he spoke up, and said, 'I've been thinking it's kind of like these two oars in this boat. We call one oar faith and the other oar works.' He said, 'Now if I take the oar of faith, and I paddle with that, we'd just go round in a circle. And if I take the oar of works and paddle with it, we'd just go around in a circle. But if we take both of the oars, faith and works, then we're able to cross to the other side.'" Some people say that's a beautiful illustration of the fact that salvation is by faith and works, and it wouldn't be bad if we were going to heaven in a row boat. [Laughter] But we're not going to heaven in a row boat. We're going to heaven in the infinite grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and like the lost sheep that went astray and was found by the shepherd. We're being carried by our Savior through his manifold grace to our heavenly home. And it's all the work of God.

Now, finally the apostle will argue the negative. He will argue from the curse of the Law. When students turn to Galatians chapter 3, verse 10, through verse 14, they speak of this as an argument e contrario, which means from the contrary, the negative side. And he will show that if a man does put himself under Law, he puts himself under the curse, a curse that can only be cured by our Lord Jesus Christ. Look at the 10th verse, in which he speaks of the condemnation of the Law. "For as many as are of the works of the law," that is, as many as seek to be justified by faith, and specifically the doctrine of keeping the commandments of the Old Testament. Why, those men are under the curse. "For it is written," he says, appealing to Deuteronomy chapter 27, in verse 6, "Cursed is

every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." What a discouragement for legalists. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Notice, a legalist who begins by trying to get to heaven on the basis of what he does, can never know that he has salvation as long as he breathes, if he should begin with a breath of obedience. I've never seen one yet begin that way, but if he should begin with a breath of obedience, and proceed in obedience through all of his life, as long as he is breathing, he is in danger of falling from salvation. He's be constantly singing, "When he shall come with trumpet sound, oh may I then in him be found." He could never sing, "Oh then I shall in him be found." "Cursed is every one that continueth not," what a terrible way to try to get to heaven by, to try to get to heaven by doing things, to be responsible for perfection. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and all thy soul, and thy neighbor as thyself." Gospel? No, that's a curse. That's condemnation for men who are sinners, men who possess the nature that we possess.

But not only does he say that you have to continue, incidentally, this is why in many systems of theology there is no assurance of everlasting life or no sense of security, because they have not understood grace. And not understanding grace, they can never be sure. Any time anyone says "We cannot be sure of salvation." You can just write it down that ninety-nine point nine percent of the time; they're on a works system. That's why they cannot know. He says, "You must in all things which are written in the book of the law," not simply the Ten Commandments, but everything else. Further, in the book of the Law, now the book of the Law covers more than one short passage or so, and finally he says, "To do them." In the Greek text, there is a great deal of stress that rests upon this "to" and even the tense that the apostle uses stresses the fact that you must do them, as if to suggest the idea of completeness. You cannot pick and choose.

There was a man, who heard a sermon on the Law, and when the preacher got through the Ten Commandments, he was picking and choosing among them, and so, when he finished, this man went out of the church and said, "Well, at least I've never made a graven image." It's amazing the things that we can really trust in. We can pick out one little thing that we think that perhaps we have managed to live by, and so therefore we live by it. The Law is no religious cafeteria, in which you are able to go down the line and pick out the things that you like. The legalist must live in doing, and he lives in complete doing. His doctrine is do and live. Now, Christianity teaches that we live by virtue of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, then we respond in true faith, and then we really live. It's a work of God. It's not do and live; it's live, believe, and truly live. That's the biblical doctrine. Do you know that if you break one little law, you're a law breaker?

Now, I mention that you are all sitting there very happy, because you've already filled out ten-forty, and you've all been completely honest. You've given the Internal Revenue Service the benefit of every doubt, just as a principle. And consequently, your conscious is absolutely clear. You cannot think of any place where you have fudged a little bit, where you've taken advantage, a little bit, of the United States of America. But do you know that if you have filled out a beautiful form, typed it up so it looks very nice; I guess that's an advantage. I think I would naturally, if I were an examiner, suspect one that comes in with little marks all over the side, written in handwriting that you couldn't read, and a few notes on the side, too. I probably would say, put this one aside, let's check this one out. But yours is very nice, and you have done it perfectly, but nevertheless, there is one little place in there where you have definitely fraudulently made some statements that are not true. You know what you are? You have obeyed the law to the almost nth degree, but not quite. Do you know what you are? A law breaker; that's what you are, a law breaker, for you see, to break one of those little commandments is to become a law breaker.

That's what the Bible says about the man who seeks to get to heaven on the basis of the things that he does. Let me put it another way. You look out of your window one morning, and next door you see your next door neighbor driving up in an automobile that's obviously new, it's shining. You look at it very carefully, it's a new Cadillac. And you say, "Boy, I sure would like to have that myself." Then being a good scriptural Christian, member of a fundamental church, in a few moments you say, "Wait a minute that was really wrong for me to say that, that was an unworthy thought. I really should rejoice that he has it, and I don't. So, Lord I rejoice that he has the Cadillac, and I don't have it." Well, of course, that's a nice thing to do after the fact, but unfortunately you're already guilty of coveting. You already are a lawbreaker. Even when you do something about it, you're still a law breaker. The apostle, pointing to "Thou shall not covet," in Romans 7 says, "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." In other words, I really thought I was living up to the Law, until finally I saw through "Thou shall not covet," that I had broken the Law and actually the Law slew me, so that I died. He was a law breaker. Verse 11 says, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them." Go on along the legal way, my friend, if you're seeking to get to heaven by the basis of what you're doing, I just want you to know without any question whatsoever on the authority of the word of God, that it must be one hundred percent doing, perfect. Now, if you cannot say that, if you know deep down within your heart, you are at this moment not perfect, what you need is a remedy for a law breaker, because that's what you are.

Now fortunately the apostle, in the 13th verse, gives us the remedy. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now, when he says that he has been made a curse for us, it is evident that he means that our Lord Jesus has borne the penal judgment for our sins. When men are under a curse that means they are under the penalty of broken

Law. And when he says that Christ has borne the curse for us, he means that Christ has borne the penalty of the broken Law for us. He says in other places, "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him." Paul does not say he has been made of sin, but he says that he has been made sin. That is, he hath become the sin sacrifice for us.

There is a beautiful story in three prepositions here, which many have commented upon. I'll try to do it just with my hands very simply. Verse 10 says, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." This is the curse, and this is I. I am under the curse, if I'm on a legal principle. Under, notice the preposition. Then in the 13th verse we read, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Now the word "for" is a Greek preposition which really has the idea of over. So here am I under the curse, but Christ has been made a curse for us, over us, so that now he has intervened between the curse and myself, so that the curse, when it falls, falls upon him, and it does not fall upon me. Further, he has just said, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law," a preposition that means "out from." So that as a result of the curse falling upon him, I am out from under the curse. Beautiful theology in three prepositions, under, over, out from. "For it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." And the consequences are that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

What's the blessing of Abraham? Well, justification first. I stand before God just as if I had never sinned, just as if I had always done everything right; just as if I had breathed my first breath of obedience and breathed my last breath of obedience, and never failed. I have a righteousness that is acceptable to God, by virtue of what Christ has done. In addition, I have life, "For the just shall live by faith." And that is spelled out as time goes on through the progress of divine revelation, as including the possession of the Holy Spirit.

Well, let me close by saying how could the Galatians fall for a legal salvation? How could any man every hope to be saved by doing, and so how could he ever possibly seek to get into a frame of life where he thought that he would seek to find justification before God for what he does? How could a man do that? Are you wondering? You know why you're wondering, because you've been enlightened. How could the Galatians be in danger of falling into the system? They were bewitched, that's what Paul says. "Who has bewitched you? Who has laid an evil eye upon you? You have become spiritually dull." When a man becomes spiritually dull, he becomes a prey for anything. It's when a man is blinded that he believes that he can be justified by the works of the Law. It's because he's spiritually dead. That's why. When you speak to your friend, and he doesn't respond at all, he thinks that you get to heaven by joining the church or by doing good works, or by being a philanthropist, or by praying through, or by any other kinds of religious exercises. When he's filled with human pride, what's the matter with him? It's not simply native intelligence, it's spiritual blindness and obtuseness.

Now, legalism is an appealing thing. It's an appeal to the flesh. It's an appeal to our senses. It's an appeal to pride. But it's an appeal that becomes a trap. What must I do when the light breaks through? Well, the Scriptures tell us that Jesus Christ has offered and offering that is sufficient for all of our guilt, and that if we flee to him and what he has done for us, we have everlasting life. So what shall I do? Flee to Christ's offering for sinners. Charles Simeon once said, "Has God provided an offering for me that I may lay my sins on his head? Then God-willing I will not bear them on my own soul one moment longer." As we often sing, "Not the labor of my hands, could fulfill Thy Law's demands; could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow, these for sin could not atone, Thou must save and Thou alone."

If you're here this morning and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ. If you are seeking to get to heaven by the things that you do, you are under divine condemnation. There is no hope. You are hopeless, and you are helpless, and you shall

soon see the end of that path. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death." But we offer to you, as on the authority of the word of God, as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus, a way of life through the sufferings of Jesus Christ. May God help you to see your desperate condition, and may you flee to him and his cross. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we turn again with thanksgiving to Thee for the Lord Jesus Christ, what a wonderful thing it is to read in holy Scripture Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law by being made a curse for us. For truly, O God, we were in desperate plight, and Thou has redeemed us through grace. We worship Thy name. We praise Thee. We thank Thee that our salvation is not wrought by a combination of our efforts and yours. We praise Thee that salvation is from the Lord. Accept our thanks. And again, O Father, we pray if there are some here who have never believed, who do not see their lost condition, through the Holy Spirit, deliver them from the bewitching eyes of legalism, and turn them to Christ. For Jesus' sake. Amen.