

# The Righteous Live by Faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] This morning our attention is going to be confined to verses 10 through 14.

! One of the things I'm sure that we all find disappointing is to make considerable effort! doing something we believe is good for us only to find out that it actually is not so good.

This happens with some foods that we eat, believing them to be healthy. And recently I came across an article on Shape.com written by Jennifer Walters that makes this point about seemingly healthy foods that are actually bad for us.

The title of the article is 50 Seemingly Healthy Foods That Are Bad For You. If you're a brave heart, you read this article. Here are a few that she mentions.

This first one. Light salad dressings. Some of us may have some of that today. She writes, Have you ever looked at the ingredient list on light salad dressings?

[ 1 : 16 ] They're about a mile long, filled with preservatives and other additives you can't pronounce, not to mention sodium and sugar. You're much better off drizzling your veggies with a little extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

Another one she mentions is flavored fat-free yogurt. She writes, Don't fall into the fat-free trap. Just because something is fat-free doesn't make it healthy. In fact, many flavored yogurts have upward of 15 grams of sugar in that tiny 6-ounce serving.

Our advice? Buy plain, fat-free Greek yogurt and flavor it up with some fruit or even a small drizzle of honey. That way you control what's in it.

Here's the last one I'll mention. This one was a little disappointing to me because I enjoy this one. I have enjoyed it for many years, almost every day. Flavored soy milk.

[ 2 : 28 ] As Walters writes, Soy has many health benefits, including being high in protein and potassium and low in cholesterol. And that statement kind of threw me off because soy has no cholesterol.

Only animal products would have that. So I'm kind of wondering about the other things that she's saying. However, she writes, Those tasty chocolate and vanilla varieties, they add so much sugar and unnecessary calories.

Save the flavored soy milks for the occasional yogurt, not yogurt, the occasional dessert, and choose unsweetened or plain varieties for your everyday drinking instead.

Well, she mentioned some other ones. If you want to, it's on shape.com. Now, I have no doubt that there would be nutritional experts who would disagree with some or all of what Ms. Walters says in this article.

And the question is, Who should we believe? And why should we believe one opinion over the other opinion? In a sense, from a spiritual vantage point, the Galatians faced a similar dilemma.

[ 3 : 50 ] The Apostle Paul had preached the gospel to them initially and called them to hope in Christ alone for salvation. And then some Jewish legalists came after him and they challenged what Paul told the Galatians.

And they taught instead that not only are you to believe in Christ, but you must also keep the law of Moses. Otherwise, you couldn't be saved.

So who should the Galatians believe? Should they believe Paul or should they believe the Jewish legalists? And how should the Apostle Paul, the one who founded the Galatian churches, respond? But the Apostle Paul does not just remind the Galatians about his apostolic authority. He does that. But he does more than that.

He also takes the time to teach the Galatians theology and to show them why it is impossible to be justified by keeping the law.

[ 4 : 58 ] And this morning, as we continue our series in the letter of Galatians, we come to this section of the letter where the Apostle Paul continues his argument that there is just one way, only one way to be justified and it's not through keeping the law.

So would you follow along as I read? Again, we are reading Galatians 3, verses 10 through 14. I'm reading from the English Standard Version if you have another translation.

Yours will read slightly differently. Galatians 3, starting in verse 10. For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse.

For it is written, Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.

Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law. For the righteous shall live by faith. For the law is not of faith.

[ 6 : 12 ] Rather, the one who does them shall live by them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

For it is written, Cursed is 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. Let's pray together. Father, we're so grateful this morning that we're able to gather in this place.

Thank you, Lord, that through the blood of Jesus Christ, through his sacrifice, undeserving sinners like us may have access into your presence.

And Lord, we thank you for your word this morning. And we pause in this moment to ask that you would, through the power of the Holy Spirit, speak to our hearts through your word.

[ 7 : 29 ] Through the power of the Holy Spirit, that you would grant us illumination and cause light to shine on your word that we may comprehend it.

And I ask for your hand of grace to be upon me that I may be faithful to proclaim your word to your people gathered this morning. Father, I ask that you would cause above my voice for your voice to be heard.

Father, I acknowledge this morning that without you I am nothing and I can do nothing. So you pour your grace out upon me and upon us this morning that we may hear and heed your word.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. I imagine that for many of us this morning, many of you this morning, even though we have read Galatians 3, 10 through 14, it may not be clear what the passage is actually about.

And that's because this is kind of one of the dense parts of the letter. A deceased British pastor and theologian John Stott points this out about these verses.

[ 8 : 56 ] He says that although these verses may seem difficult in both concept and vocabulary, they are fundamental to an understanding of biblical Christianity.

Christianity. And I think it's important to notice what he said, the kind of Christianity that he refers to. We shouldn't miss what he actually says.

These verses are fundamental to understanding biblical Christianity, Christianity that's based on the Bible. And the distinction needs to be made because there is, certainly in our context, a cultural Christianity, Christianity, a Christianity that people have grown up in and they have particular ways of doing things.

And largely, it's based on moralism. It's based on a system, and I would add, a false system of believing that doing good deeds and living a good life will lead to eternal life.

And the reality is that that view is untrue and indeed impossible. In these five verses that are before us this morning, the Apostle Paul again makes the point to the Galatians that he has been making for the most part at the beginning of this letter.

[ 10 : 22 ] Here's the point that the Apostle Paul makes to the Galatians once again. Justification comes through faith in Christ, not through keeping the law.

Justification comes through faith in Christ, not through keeping the law. To put it another way, people are made right with God through faith in Christ, not through any human effort of law-keeping or doing good deeds.

And the Apostle Paul makes this point by explaining two important but easily overlooked realities that we find in these five verses.

And they are number one, the curse of the law and number two, the blessing of faith. And this one we're going to consider each of these realities because they didn't just apply to the Galatians, they

also apply to us.

Indeed, they apply to the entire human race. So let's consider the first, the curse of the law. Although the Apostle Paul is primarily addressing the Galatians, he makes some universal statements in this passage.

[ 11 : 41 ] Notice in verse 10 he makes two universal statements. First he says, for all who rely on works of the law are under a curse. All is a universal word.

Paul's statement applies universally, not just to the Galatians. And again, to be clear, it applies to us this morning. When Paul refers to relying on the works of the law, he is referring to relying on works of the law to be accepted by God, to be seen as righteous in God's sight, to be justified in God's sight.

And so all those who believe that they do good deeds and live good lives, and they rely on their good deeds and their good lives as the basis for salvation, what Paul says, universally, you're under a curse.

You're under a curse. Now that actually seems very unusual that relying on the works of the law, seeking to do the works of the law, seeking to do good, turns out to be a bad thing.

He says, you're under a curse if you are relying on works of the law. So why is this? Why is this seemingly good thing a bad thing?

[ 13 : 14 ] Well, Paul explains it for us in the very next part of this verse. He goes on and writes, for it is written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and to do them.

This is the second universal statement that he makes. And actually, it's not really Paul's statement. He is quoting from the Old Testament, the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 27, verse 26.

And this quotation tells us why those who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. Here's why. Because everyone who does not abide by everything written in the book of the law is under a curse.

Everyone who does not abide by everything written in the book of the law is under a curse. Now, although the law which would be defined as the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, was given only to the chosen people of God.

They were at the mountain when God gave them the Ten Commandments and gave them a revelation about himself. Though they received the law of God directly, it didn't mean that the law didn't apply to the Gentiles.

[ 14 : 45 ] It didn't mean that the law did not apply to those to whom God did not directly give it. So when Gentiles, for example, worshipped idols and even though they had no knowledge of God's law, they were breaking God's law.

When they murdered or did whatever else was contrary to God's law, they broke God's law and thus were under a curse. And even if it were possible to keep the law in terms of an outward conformity, even if that were possible, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount told us that that's not enough.

Jesus told us that keeping God's law also is a matter of heart. It is a matter of keeping God's law from the heart. So he says to us, it is not good enough not to murder.

He says, if we're angry with our brother, we've murdered him in our hearts. Why? Because anger is the first cousin, it is the seed that grows in to murder.

And Jesus said it is not good enough not to commit adultery. He says if you look at a woman with lustful intent, a man who does that, he commits adultery with her in his heart.

[ 16 : 13 ] Why? Because lust is the first cousin of adultery and sexual immorality. So everyone who does not keep everything written in every law in deed and in heart comes under a curse.

And this curse is not a bad word. It is the curse of God's judgment of condemnation upon all who fall short of keeping any aspect of what he requires.

sadly those who rely on the works of the law to be accepted by God do not understand or they do not know about Deuteronomy 27-26 or they do not understand or they're dishonest with their own sinfulness.

You know this past week in the Discipleship Foundation's two class we looked at the account of the rich young ruler in Mark 10 17-27 this rich young ruler comes to Jesus and Mark tells us that he actually ran to Jesus he ran up to Jesus and knelt down and asked him good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life and Jesus in turn said to him no one is good but God alone and no doubt

Jesus said that to him because he only recognized Jesus as a good teacher and Jesus in essence was saying to him you're calling me a teacher yet you're calling me good only God is good and Jesus proceeds to tell him keep the commandments do not murder do not commit adultery do not steal do not bear false witness do not defraud honor your father and your mother and he said to Jesus I've kept all these from my youth and Mark tells us that Jesus looked at him and Jesus loved him again I don't know how Jesus communicated something by looking at this man that Mark was able to capture to say in the look that Jesus gave him Jesus loved him but it was significant enough that Mark captures it and Jesus looking at him and loving him says to him you lack one thing go and sell what you have all that you have give to the poor and you'll have treasure in heaven and then come and follow me Mark tells us that this rich young ruler was disheartened by this saying and although he came running to Jesus all excited about gaining eternal life Mark tells us he walked away sorrowful because he had great possessions love brothers and sisters the rich young ruler loved his possessions more than he wanted eternal life and we can see that although the rich young ruler thought he loved God he was unwilling to do what he was told was necessary to gain eternal life with

[19:26] God he reminds us that law keeping is more than outward obedience law keeping is an issue of the heart and it is harder to do than it seems but when we think about this rich young ruler there's something about him that we can easily miss that is very much connected to what the apostle Paul is addressing in these five verses the rich young ruler was on the right path the rich young ruler was convinced in his mind that he had kept the commandments convinced in his mind that he did all these things that Jesus told him to do yet he knew deep down he didn't have eternal life and so he goes to Jesus and he says to him what must I do to inherit eternal life in essence he didn't say this out loud but in his heart he had to be saying I've kept the commandments I've obeyed what you called me to do but I know I don't have eternal life and so tell me what must

I do to have eternal life he experienced what the apostle Paul tells us in verse 11 as his conclusion to the two universal statements that he made in verse 10 no one can be justified before God and obtain eternal life through law keeping the rich young ruler was well on his way to understanding how to gain eternal life he accepted keeping the commandments couldn't do it therefore he found himself going to Jesus and so the startling point that the apostle Paul makes first off is that rather than coming under the blessing of God everyone comes under the curse of God because no one is able to keep the law perfectly that's the first point now the second point the blessing of faith first point curse of the law now the blessing of faith notice what

Paul says in verse 11 after making his case about the impossibility to be justified while those who are seeking to rely on the law are under curse he says this in verse 11 now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law for the righteous shall live by faith again the apostle Paul makes two universal statements in verse 11 first he says no one is justified before God by the law without exception this is true without exception this is true no one is justified before God by the law and we can tease this out and we can we can actually say that no one is justified before God by any human effort to be accepted by him doing good deeds living a good life all of that none of it will bring justification before a holy God and then he goes on to tell us why he tells us why this is and he makes yet another universal statement concerning all who would be considered righteous by God he says for or because the righteous shall live by faith now I know there's a time and it probably is still true now but when those who were a part of the faith movement the charismatic movement would say they took this as a kind of mental ability to believe for the impossible and they use this verse to say that's what this means that if you're a person of faith would you live by faith and everything for you is by faith and you believe

God for this you believe God for the impossible not what this verse is saying at all that's a distortion of this verse this verse is speaking about not that kind of biological life they're referring to but it's talking about eternal life it's talking about spiritual life and here again the apostle Paul quotes from the old testament and in this case he's quoting Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4 now notice in verse 11 that the apostle Paul uses the words justified and righteous and really they are interchangeable words he's using those words interchangeably we could say if you look at verse 11 we could say now it is evident that no one is righteous instead of justified before God by the law for the justified instead of the righteous shall live by faith you can use those words interchangeably because to be justified before God's sight is to be declared righteous by God and to be declared righteous by

God is what it means to be justified by God and again let's remember this is not something that is intrinsic to us this is not a righteousness that we own Martin Luther said it is an alien righteousness it's a righteousness that is outside of ourselves because left to ourselves none of us could attain the righteousness that is perfectly acceptable and pleasing to God so the only righteousness that God can accept concerning us is an alien righteousness a righteousness that has been imputed to us that's been credited to us but not earned by us now why is it evident as the apostle Paul says he says it's evident why is it evident that no one is justified before God by the law well two reasons first no one can obey everything required in the law we've already seen that already that's the first reason it's evident no one can obey everything required in the law and second

[ 26 : 24 ] Habakkuk 2 4 tells us that the only way to life eternal life the only way to live eternally to have eternal life is through being justified or being declared righteous that's the only way can't earn it it is a declared righteousness and it comes through faith in Christ not through works of the law and in verse 12 Paul gives a further explanation explanation before he explains and tells us why we can't be justified by the law he tells us he says the law doesn't operate by faith look at what he says but the law is not a faith rather the one who does them shall live by them the way the law works is if you do the law all of it in deed and in heart you will live you will gain eternal life the law works by works do what the law says and you are going to live but again our problem is that no one can do the law because in order to have eternal life through the law you have to keep the law fully and you have to keep the law perfectly no one who has ever walked the face of the earth no one has ever perfectly kept

God's law except one person and that's the Lord Jesus Christ he alone perfectly kept God's law and that's the reason that he alone is qualified to be the savior and the substitute for all who would put their trust in him to be accepted by God through him now back in verse 10 Paul shares some universal bad news some universal bad news that it is easy for us to miss the universal bad news is that it is not just those who rely on the works of the law who are under a curse truth is everyone is under a curse because God himself declared to his servant

Moses in Deuteronomy 27 26 that everyone who does not abide by all things in the book of the law is cursed so it's not just those who are actively like the Galatians trying to be justified by the law everyone is because God says everyone who does not abide by everything written in the law is under a curse that's all of humanity that's the entirety of the human race and so the question is how do we come from under the curse we don't come from under the curse by trying to do the impossible which is keeping the law so that God could accept us we don't do that there's only one way to come from under the curse of not keeping

God's law knowingly or unknowingly! And Paul tells the Galatians what it is in verses 13 and 14 by extension he tells us so let's look at that he says Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us for it is written cursed is everyone who was 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 notice the first word of the solution to come from underneath the curse Christ Christ that's how we come from under the curse through Christ now these two verses are a complex sentence so let's make sure that we understand what Paul is saying how does Christ redeem us from the curse of the

Lord we're told in verse 13 he does so by becoming a curse for us and how did he become a curse for us again we're told in verse 13 by hanging on a tree a quotation from Deuteronomy 21 23 Christ became a curse for us when he was crucified and hung on Calvary's cross and why did Christ do this why did he do all of this why did he who knew no sin become sin for us why did he who had no merit in himself to deserve a curse become a curse for us so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit by faith that's why [ 32 : 18 ] Christ did it I got a question for you who are the us that Paul is referring to in verse 13 and who are the we that he is referring to in verse 14 who are the us Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law and then in verse 14 it talks about so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith who are the us and who are the we now some people would say well the us is the whole world the us is the world Jesus died for the whole world now that is true then it means that the curse of

God's condemnation of guilt for breaking his law has been removed from the world and no one stands guilty before God under that curse of rejection and disobedience or rejection for disobedience that's what it would mean if if we say that us means everybody the whole world but that's not true notice it is only in Christ Jesus in verse four verse 14 sorry that the blessing of

Abraham comes to the Gentiles and again let's remember this when this promise was given to Abraham it wasn't just there were no Jews at that point the Lord told Abraham I'm going to bless the whole world through you that God in his own providence and for his own reasons chose the nation of

Israel and that they would be the light to the rest of the world but at the time that this promise was given to not just for the Gentiles of course Paul is addressing Gentiles he's addressing the Galatians so he is addressing them in this specific way but it is only in Christ Jesus that the blessing of Abraham comes to anyone that they might receive the promised spirit in salvation which is through faith in Christ so us in verse 13 and we in verse 14 refers to those who have and will put their faith in Jesus Christ to be accepted by God and to be declared justified righteous by him listen to how again John

Stott put it in his commentary on these verses referring to verses 13 and 14 he writes does this mean that everybody has been redeemed from the law's curse through the sin bearing curse bearing cross of Christ indeed not for verse 13 must not be read without verse 14 where it is written that Christ became a curse for us that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles that we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith it was in Christ that God acted for our salvation and so we must be in Christ to receive it he went on to say we are not saved by a distant

Christ who died hundreds of years ago and lives millions of miles away but by an existential Christ who having died and risen again is now our contemporary as a result we can be in him personally and vitally united in him today these words that the apostle Paul writes to the Galatians when he says that Christ became a curse for us in Jewish society he did not have to say that he need not have said that Christ became a curse because the Jews knew that he was a curse because it's written in their law cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree and this was a stumbling block for [ 37 : 33 ] Jews they could not understand how Messiah could possibly be one hanging on this cross hanging on this Roman cross between two thieves dying an ignoble death they could not understand that they could not accept that they had a problem with that and the reason is they missed the point they missed the point that Jesus was cursed as a substitute not for his own sins but for our sins because he had no sin he became a curse for us by being our substitute because that was the only way to redeem us from the law's curse and Jesus himself if he were not perfect if he had no sin if he himself did not keep the law and came under the curse he could not redeem us from the curse because he himself needed to be redeemed from the curse but he was

God's perfect holy substitute who took the place of sinners and you see when we understand this we appreciate why Jesus cried out on the cross we appreciate why Jesus said my God my God why have you forsaken me and the reason he forsook him was because he was treating him the way we deserve to be treated he rejected him and poured his wrath out on him because that's what we all deserved but the Jews missed that they somehow thought that they could be redeemed without a substitute without a real penalty being paid Jesus took that penalty in himself when he hung on the cross between two thieves and between heaven and earth dying a death that he didn't deserve to die bearing sins that he did not commit enduring wrath that we deserved and so the reality is this morning that there are only two spiritual places where men and women boys and girls stand only two places and every single person in this room every single person in the world stands in one of these two places we either stand outside of

Christ or we stand in Christ and to be outside of Christ is to be under the curse it is to be under the curse of the law because whether we actively try to fulfill it or we ignore it altogether we come under the curse because God says cursed is everyone who does not continue in everything that is written in the law brothers and sisters the only place to escape the curse the only place to escape the curse is to be in the one who absorbed the curse and that is Jesus Christ to be found in him and we are found in him in union with him through faith through faith not through some effort of our own not through some work of our own but in sheer faith putting our trust in him throwing ourselves on his mercy on

God's mercy through him that is the only way to enjoy the blessing of salvation when we are standing in Jesus Christ and I say again this morning every single one of us is in one of two places we are either outside of Jesus Christ under the curse or we are in Jesus Christ with the curse removed and when we acknowledge that we are in Christ and that we have put our faith in Christ to do that is to truly own our sin and accept that Christ's curse was indeed our curse his death was

indeed our death this is Paul's argument to the Galatians and it's his argument to us as well the penalty for disobedience for not obeying

God's law is going to be punished in one of two places either on the back of Jesus Christ on the cross or on our own backs in hell and this morning we all need to consider where we're standing where where are you standing what ground are you on are you in Christ are you outside of Christ or do you have this notion that God grades on a curve and God is going to compare your life to somebody else's life and to the lives of other people and in that way you're not so bad or you have this notion that many people have that God can't send all these people to hell there's too many people to send to hell I trust every one of us this morning realizes that our best works of righteousness scripture says they're filthy rags in

[ 43 : 19 ] God's sight and see friends when we come to realize this we abandon self effort we abandon trying to please the holy God and we do what he says in his word and that is to place faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone the one whom he has approved the one who went to the cross and paid the price for sin the one who has redeemed sinners from the curse we throw ourselves on his mercy we put our faith in him alone and we rest in that and we trust in that and that is our only confidence before God and not to some extent to every extent it's not 99% trusting in Jesus and then this little bit this 1% or whatever small amount we add to it to make us acceptable for

God none of us no part of us no part of what we can do goes into the equation of acceptance before a holy God we come with empty hands we come like the song writer says nothing in my hands I bring but simply to the cross I claim and that is our only hope you may be wondering well what's the purpose of the law what then does the law serve us if it doesn't justify us if we can't be justified through it because we can't keep it what then is the purpose of the law the purpose of the law Paul goes on to explain and to tell us later on so we will certainly see that the law has a purpose brothers and sisters let us seek to

God's law reveals his righteous requirements to us requirements that we cannot fulfill in and of ourselves and so one thing we should know at this particular point in Paul's letter is the purpose of the law is not to seek to be justified by the law in God's sight we can rule that out that's not the purpose of the law but let us recognize that God has revealed his righteous requirements in his law and they do provide us with light and guidance that we may follow but let's not put our confidence in those things let's not put our hope in those things because again if we can keep the 99.99% we still will fall short of what God requires of us so brothers and sisters though law keeping seems like a good thing it is a bad thing because it cannot remove the curse that the entire human race is under only faith in

Jesus Christ and his finished work on the cross can do that let's pray together