

LSB Galatians 3:10 - 13, Revelation 1:9 - 19 Easter Morning 2023

9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the witness of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, 11 saying, "Write in a scroll what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." 12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; 13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. 14 And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters, 16 and having in His right hand seven stars, and a sharp two-edged sword which comes out of His mouth, and His face was like the sun shining in its power. 17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not fear; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forever and ever, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

This morning I want to do something ever so slightly different in order to capitalize on Easter, resurrection morning.

For those of you who are visiting or those who we don't get to see every week, I will say that our usual method is to exposit the scriptures, verse by verse, one verse at a time, one book at a time. We begin at the front of a book and work our way through to the back, and then begin another one.

Just now, if it please the Lord and He allows it, we are working our way consecutively through some of Paul's doctrinal letters. Galatians,

Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians in a continuous sweep. We are 9 weeks into that effort and have made it to Galatians chapter 3. But I interrupted our normal flow.

Normally we would begin in verse 6 of Galatians 3 because last week we finished looking through verse 5. But for Easter I decided to cherry pick some verses in that section and dwell on Easter. I'm going to draw our attention particularly to vss. 10 - 13 of Galatians chapter 3. Let me read to you that text very quickly;

10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to do them." 11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident, for "The righteous shall live by faith." 12 However, the Law is not of faith; rather, "He who does them shall live by them." 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"—

In my working years I made a living working in the area of photography. Not artistic photography, but rather, scientific photography. And something photographers learn early on is how to use contrast to work for you to define things. It's critical in portraying an image to have a sharp black edge on a white background. Contrast gives critical definition of an object.

A few years back the scientists who we were doing high speed photography for in order to measure things, asked the question, is the object we want to singularly dwell on the right color. There was talk of changing the color of the object of interest. Black? Gray?

It turns out that the object of interest was painted bright international orange. And the background for our pictures was either blue sky or dullish gray tan mountains.

So what I did to answer their query was to photograph different shades of

different colors against the blue grays that would be our background by default. And of course it was no surprise, that the generations before I got there had wisely chosen to paint their object of interest bright orange because it maximized the contrast of the default background that no one can change.

My strong vote was to leave things alone. A bright orange object in a blue gray sky was as close as you could get to being 180 degrees out in contrast on a color wheel. And luckily, for once, they listened to me.

You've all seen those color wheels, right. With the warm colors on one side and the cool colors on the other side, in pie wedges. Red is 180 degrees opposite of green. Violet is 180 degrees opposite of yellow green and so on.

And photographers who have to hustle to sell pretty pictures learn very early to look for those bright contrasts to make their pictures pop. Tan buildings jutting out of a cliffside in Greece with bright red doors and window trims and brick orange roofs against an azure sky. Bingo. Money pictures.

And God has an artistic eye in His creation. He didn't make the world in black and white, did He. We'll drive over to Lee Vining and June Lake in order to see shock yellow orange aspen leaves against a deep blue high Sierra sky. Some of my loveliest images that graced the hallways of the Admin building out where I used to work are cactus blossoms in full glory. Peach oranges and bright yellows against the olive gray green cactus and tan rust brown stones.

We love contrasts. And apparently God does also. And I purposely cherry picked verses this morning for our Easter thoughts that are a sharp contrast. I didn't even need to leave the chapter and book we have been already studying. Although I did skip a few verses that we'll consider next time, in order to bring you to these verses of absolute black and white contrast for our Easter thoughts.

Gal. 3:10b Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to do them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”

Gospel means "good news". It is a positive word. What could be better than good news. Your great great great uncle in Italy that you didn't even know existed followed the family tree all the way to you, and a check for 128 million dollars will arrive, unless of course you'd like to forget USA taxes in which case you can collect your citizenship and a Villa in Italy with the money.

Good news. We love good news. We try to balance lifes positives and negatives and we love it when good news can tip the balance a little bit in our favor. Gospel means good news.

I attended a mega church service recently. Good news. You know what the good news was? You're awesome and you have an awesome life, but Jesus can make it even more awesome.

Not much of a contrast. Apparently I have a pastel peach colored orange life but Jesus can be the neon light that makes my already awesome somehow even more awesome. That was the message. I'm a pretty color of orange but Jesus can even brighten that up, good as it already is.

And it was true. I went out in the parking lot and the vehicles out there were like the new car shows at the L.A. Coliseum. Median age, 3 years or less. Median value, \$43,000. That's who was inside. You're bright peach orange but Jesus can be a Neon orange light making you even brighter. Not much contrast. Shades of the same color.

I have some really good news for you. Huge contrast good news. Immeasurably huge good news. Maximum contrast. But, for full effect, we'll begin with the bad. You're cursed. Not just cursed, but cursed by

God. And you're bankrupt. You owe an immeasurable debt. To God. And you've got no way to pay it. And God has already pronounced you cursed.

Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to do them."

That's the abbreviated version. Let me read you a bit from the extended small print long legal version; Deuteronomy 28;

15 "But it will be, if you do not listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep and to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I am commanding you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: 16 "Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field.

17 "Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. 18 "Cursed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. 19 "Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. 20 "Yahweh will send upon you the curse, confusion, and rebuke, in all that you send forth your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me.

21 Yahweh will make the pestilence cling to you until He has consumed you from the land where you are entering to possess it. 22 Yahweh will strike you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with scorching wind and with mildew, and they will pursue you until you perish. 23 And the heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron.

24 Yahweh will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. 25 "Yahweh shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them, and you will become an example of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth. 26 And your carcasses

will be food to all birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away.

27 “Yahweh will strike you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. 28 Yahweh will strike you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart;

29 and you will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you will not succeed in your ways; but you shall only be oppressed and robbed all your days, with none to save you. 30 You shall betroth a wife, but another man will violate her; you shall build a house, but you will not live in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but you will not use its fruit.

That's actually abbreviated. It keeps on going like that. When God curses, He is very thorough. Very thorough! And the curse is for all who have broken even a single commandment.

More bad news. Romans 3:23 All have sinned. All of us. All are under the curse. The logical question comes; Is that realistic? Does God really curse everyone to damnation who have if it were possible, only a single flaw? Is that the standard? Really?

Jesus said in Matthew 5:48 *Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* The standard to not be under the curse is perfection equal to God's perfection.

James says; *“Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, is guilty of all.”* James 2:10

No one can do it. No one can do it. We are all cursed under God's curse. All of those curses belong to us. That's frighteningly horrible. What is the contrasting brilliance that can offset that universal curse? If the curse is terrible, the contrasting cure must be glorious in comparison. Whatever could offset that level of curse must have a contrasting level of brilliant

glory!

This is why the "You're OK, I'm OK, but Jesus can make OK great" message of the modern Big Eva mega-church phenomenon is so impotent. It fails to tell me how dire my circumstance actually is. And it fails to glorify God for the magnificence of His remedy.

Well, how bad off are we. I mean if you're riding around in a Lexus and able to store up money for your retirement at 55 and easily make the payments on your 3000 square foot McMansion, are we really cursed?

It reminds me of an old story I read somewhere. In Nova Scotia of a particularly ornery atheistic farmer who would save the corner of his fields that shared a border with a church. He would purposely make all the noise and dust he possibly could next to the church on Sundays during worship.

And one day in conversation with the forbearing pastor he stated that his actions proved there is no God. And the pastor said, God doesn't necessarily collect every debt on the day it comes due. Just wait.

You may be riding around in a Lexus but your life is 5 minutes long and the curses delineated in Deuteronomy are a picnic compared to the final curse of eternal separation from God in outer blackness and burning torments. Forever.

We are born into a curse we didn't ask for. Our federal father Adam has passed along the sin and spiritual death gene to every person born. The curse is real, Lexus or not.

Right about now you're thinking, this is the weirdest Easter service I've ever had the misfortune to attend. Be patient. I'm just painting the indigo blue background for the brilliant yellow orange pink glorious sunrise. I want my picture to have full glorious contrast.

In the face of the terrifyingly real curse clearly stated about us in God's

holy word, is the glorious remedy free to any taker.

10b Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to do them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”

The language here is very contractual. These are legal terms. Payment must be made. God clearly states to Moses; *I will by no means let the guilty go unpunished.* Ex. 34:7

Payment must be made. It's written down, and God's justice demands restitution that we are bankrupt to pay. But then God sends His own Son to pay the debt for us. Do you see it there in verse 13?

Christ redeemed us, He purchased us by paying our debt. He bought us out of our debt, by paying our debt, in our place.

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us

The debt must have propitiation. Oops, another 5 syllable word. Propitiation is not the cancellation and absorption of debt, it is full repayment of the debt. Restitution. The debt doesn't get written off as a loss. The full value is paid. Right down to the full value of the emotions and spiritual losses.

God's anger is assuaged. His wrath is appeased. The punishment is equal to the crime. This isn't a write off with loss absorbed. This is the righting of every wrong. Full punishment due. Full punishment received. How?

God threw His full wrath, that we deserved, at a substitute. His only begotten Son. His own beloved Son, stood in our place, and all of the curses we deserved were spent on Him. Fully!

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us

When? How? —*for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”*

Where is that written? It's an obscure law from the law of Moses given by God. It comes from Deuteronomy 21:

22 “And if a man has committed a sin, the judgment of which is death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (because cursed of God is he who is hanged), so that you do not make unclean your land which Yahweh your God gives you as an inheritance.

The jews didn't use crucifixion for their capital punishment. They used stones. Their own law specified stoning as the capital punishment for crimes of a capital nature.

But after you were dead they would tie you to a tree. A clear message. God has abandoned this person to death. God has rejected this person. Do what this guy did and you'll be next. But God instructed them to then bury the dead person before the night. Then those chilling words. *because cursed of God is he who is hanged*

Jesus died a brutal death, hanging on a tree, becoming the substitutionary curse for every cursed sinner who will believe. He is the propitiation, the payment, in our place, in full, for every sinner who looks to Jesus and believes. He was sinless. He didn't die because of His sins. He paid your debt. He died as your substitute and received the punishment for your sins.

How do you appropriate all of the riches of Jesus dying in your place in order to restore you to God, curseless, sinless, righteous, since the curse of sin was paid in your place, on the cross? It's in verse 11.

11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”

More legal language. Justification. Righteousness. Justification is the declaration of righteousness, right standing before God. Righteousness is being perfect and without flaw. The opposite of sin. The opposite of rebellion.

The law of God proves us guilty. By faith we are declared justified before God having received as a gift, the righteousness of Christ. Our sin left at the cross, His righteousness declared to be ours in place of our sins. The righteous shall live by faith.

We don't live by doing religious stuff. Sacraments and liturgical gibberish, prayer rugs and bobbing up and down, muttering words with our minds disengaged.

We live by understanding the reality of the curse that should have been ours and reliance, or faith, if you will, on the finished work of Christ on the cross, payment for our sins, in our place, the sufficiency of His death, in our place, to declare us justified before God by a righteousness freely given to us.

Our faith is **in** the transaction at the cross. But if those events stopped at the cross alone, we would have no basis for such a faith. Our faith is **based in** the resurrection from the dead, on the third day, of Jesus.

The mechanics of the transaction took place on the cross where my curse was transferred to and put upon Jesus the Christ, and His righteousness was then credited to my account, if I believe on Him.

But the proof of that transaction in reality is the resurrection of Jesus from the grave, on the third day. God raised Him up from the dead. And He appeared eventually to as many as 500 reliable witnesses, alive, after death. John was His final witness, as we read this morning, John viewed

His living glory after He ascended into heaven.

Anybody can say they're the Messiah. Charlie Manson said he was the messiah. He claimed to be the most important human to have ever lived. The messiah. He died in 2017. He stayed in the grave. I don't believe his claims.

Jesus claimed to be equal with the Father. The jews understood that perfectly and they killed Him for saying it. He was blameless. Sinless. And He rose from the dead on the third day.

The resurrection is the proof to us that all of the curses we deserve were born, on that cross, by Jesus, in our place. A substitutionary death of a sinless man that was the propitiation, the payment in full, of all the curses we deserved.

In Christ we have the downpayment, in this life, by the indwelling Holy Spirit, of all of the blessings that will be ours fully in the next world. His resurrection is the proof of every promise. We live by faith in those facts. But soon our faith will be sight.

The true gospel needs to begin at a realistic statement of our destitution, our dereliction, our bankruptcy to repay any of our disastrous rebellious cursed state. We are bankrupts. Blessed are the what? Poor in spirit. Spiritual bankrupts who know they're bankrupt.

Understanding who we are gives full glory to the Christ who reversed our destitution, paid our debt, and gave us His glory. He took our curse upon Himself and gave us His righteousness in it's place. He rose from the dead as proof to all men for all time.

In ourselves we are derelicts. In Christ we are justified and declared righteous having His righteousness credited to our accounts. That's unspeakably glorious! He is risen INDEED!