

# Cause and Effect

## Galatians 3:6-14

*We live in a world of cause and effect. Choosing the right cause leads to a good end; choosing the wrong cause leads to a disastrous end.*

### **I. FAITH CAUSES RIGHTEOUSNESS (VS 6-9)**

*Embracing Christ In Faith Leads To Righteousness.*

- A. FAITH FROM BEGINNING TO END (6-7)
- B. BIBLE PROPHECY
- C. BLESSINGS (9)

### **II. LAW CAUSES A CURSE (VS 10-12)**

*Trying To Earn Our Salvation By Being Good Leads To Total Disaster.*

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### **III. CHRIST CAUSES THE SPIRIT (VS 13-14)**

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- A. ATONEMENT (13)
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# Cause and Effect

## Galatians 3:6-14

Paul has continued to argue through this letter that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Further, he has argued that there is no other way. He especially focuses on the fact that Gentiles cannot be saved by keeping the Jewish religious, cultural, and political laws. For that matter, Paul argued that Jews couldn't be saved by keeping the law either.

He has argued from several different angles. In today's text, it seems as if Paul is arguing from a Scientific-Philosophical-Theological method. We all understand the scientific notion of cause and effect. If we plant lettuce seeds in the ground in springtime then lettuce comes up in the summer. The cause of the lettuce is the planting of the seed. If there is a lack of rain, then the lettuce may die. The lack of rain is the cause of the lettuce dying.

We pretty much understand cause and effect in the everyday life as well. If I turn on the light switch, the light goes on. If I touch a hot stove, my hand is burned.

Paul is going to argue that way about salvation this morning. Faith in Christ leads to salvation. Following religious laws as a means of salvation leads to death.

In many cases, as in the scientific world, causes lead to effects that in turn become causes themselves that lead to other effects. We want to make sure we are on the right road.

Let me tell you a little story. An old sailor was out in a bar one night and he came across a former shipmate. After some time his old shipmate said, "I hope you don't mind me saying so, but you don't look so good. You must have run into a streak of bad luck."

The old sailor responded, "Yes, I ran into a streak of bad luck. You see this peg leg? One day, I was out on deck, daydreaming. One of the loose lines wrapped around my leg. The line tightened and I was dangling up in the air. My leg was so mangled they had to amputate it up to the knee.

You see this hook for a hand? One day a shipmate fell overboard. I reached out to pull him up, and a shark came up and bit off my hand.

You see this patch over my eye? One day I was looking up into the sky, a seagull that was flying over did his business, unloaded, and it hit me right in the eye."

The other sailor responded, "Wow. You have had a streak of bad luck. But you mean to tell me that the seagull poop blinded you?"

"No, ... that was the first day I had my hook."

You see, there are always consequences to our choices in life. Good choices lead to good consequences. Bad choices lead to bad consequences.

I have warned us from the beginning of our studies through Galatians, that we cannot use this as a defense against modern day legalism. The situation we are studying through Galatians and for the most part, through the entire New Testament is that Christianity at this time is basically comprised of Messianic Jews. Gentiles are coming into the church and the assimilation process is what the problem is. The main question in the Galatian churches is whether or not Gentiles need to embrace the Jewish cultural, political, and religious laws in addition to giving their lives to Christ in faith.

Let me give you an idea of how this causes confusion. As we read through this letter, it seems as if Paul is saying that the Old Testament Laws are obsolete. Now if we simply think about a culturally religious law like circumcision or eating unclean food, we can easily let that go.

But how about some of the more important laws, lets say like the Ten Commandments? Just because these new Gentiles became Christians through their faith in Christ, do they not need to obey the commandments; do not make idols, do not worship false gods, do not steal, kill, murder, covet, or commit adultery? And how about the Sabbath? Can they do anything they want just as long as they have placed their faith in Christ? We may want to say that Paul is

only referring to cultural, ceremonial, and political laws. But Paul is going to argue this morning that if you accept one part of the Law, you have to accept the whole law.

I can remember in my early days of seminary, Luig had come home from a women's bible study. She said that a woman was teaching this passage and said that we are saved by grace through faith alone. Luig asked the question, "You mean if we just say the words, 'Jesus forgive me of my sins and come into my heart,' and believe He is God raised from the dead, we can just go on and murder and steal and still be saved?"

The lady responded affirmatively. She said that indeed if one made that confession and believed, it didn't matter how we lived after that, we were saved. That sounded strange to Luig.

It is critical that we think seriously about what Paul is actually saying. There are two things we have to keep in mind. First of all, Paul is talking about salvation. Secondly, Paul is mainly arguing against Jewish-Christians. In other words, he is addressing communities that have acknowledged Jesus as Lord and Savior. These communities are composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers.

Here is the main idea of what Paul is trying to demonstrate in regards to the salvation process. **WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF CAUSE AND EFFECT. CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAUSE LEADS TO A GOOD END; CHOOSING THE WRONG CAUSE LEADS TO A DISASTROUS END.** Our eternal destinies are tied up in how we approach this issue. If we choose correctly, we will receive eternal life with Jesus in heaven. If we choose incorrectly, we will spend an eternity in hell, separated from Jesus forever.

## **I. FAITH CAUSES RIGHTEOUSNESS (VS 6-9)**

### ***Embracing Christ In Faith Leads To Righteousness.***

This morning we are going to examine several causes and what effects they bring about. In verses 6-9, we see that faith causes righteousness. In other words, **EMBRACING CHRIST IN FAITH LEADS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

#### **A. FAITH FROM BEGINNING TO END (6-7)**

Paul makes it clear in verses 6-7 that being in a right relationship with God has been about faith from beginning to end. Here Paul goes back to the father of the Hebrew nation, Abraham. This is an excellent choice because in addition to being the father of the Hebrew nation, God instituted the ceremony of circumcision with Abraham. And further, Abraham predates the Mosaic Law by 500 years. One of the main issues the Jewish Christians were trying to push is that all Gentiles who become Christians should be circumcised. The Jews prided themselves in being children of Abraham and they knew the Scriptures quite well concerning his life. Here Paul calls them to reflect on God's call of Abraham. God told Abraham to get up and leave his country, family, and friends behind to go to a land He was going to give to him. Abraham got up and left for this new land. Paul then quotes this verse from Genesis:

"Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6 / NIV).

It was simply putting in faith and trust in God that made Abraham righteous. God did not approach Abraham with the ritual of circumcision until 2 chapters later, and Abraham's great test of faith where God asked him to sacrifice his only son Isaac doesn't come until much later in chapter 22 of Genesis.

Here is Paul's point. God approached Abraham and invited Abraham into a relationship. Abraham accepted this offer by placing his faith and trust in God. God then declared Abraham righteous and entered into an eternal relationship with him. Abraham did many great things

and many stupid things but he remained in this close relationship with God because he placed his faith in God. He was already declared righteous before he was circumcised and before he took Isaac up the mountain to sacrifice. These acts did not make Abraham any more righteous than he already was.

Now look at the cause and effect relationship Paul is making. Faith made Abraham right with God and faith made the believers in the Galatian churches right with God also. Whether they were Jewish or Gentile, it was only when they placed their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ that they were made right with God. No religious acts can make them more righteous. Jews traced their ancestry and their privileged status with God back to Abraham. Now Paul traces every believer's spiritual lineage back to Abraham. Jews and Gentiles alike become true children of Abraham when they place their faith in Jesus Christ.

## **B. BIBLE PROPHECY**

Not only does that make logical sense, but also Paul goes on to say that this very day of Jews and Gentiles becoming one family through faith was part of Bible Prophecy. In blessing Abraham, God said to him;

*"I will make you into a great nation  
and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:2-3 / NIV).*

## **C. BLESSINGS (9)**

From the very beginning, God intended to bless Abraham and the Jewish nation with the intent that they would be a blessing to all nations. The Jewish nation came from Abraham. The line of King David came from the Jewish nation. Jesus the Jewish Messiah came from the line of King David, and now, both Jews and Gentiles alike come from faith in Jesus Christ. Paul is saying that that was God's intention from the very beginning.

But it doesn't stop there. When people place their faith and trust in Jesus, not only do we become children of Abraham and people of God, verse 9 states that we receive all the blessings as well. Abraham became the father of the faith-nation of God. It is now our privilege to be ambassadors of this new nation. We have the privilege of inviting all the people we want to this party. Through faith we inherit all the rights and responsibilities of being children of God. We must continually remind ourselves that we have received this great status along with all of our rights and responsibilities simply because we trusted Jesus for our salvation. The point is clear. **EMBRACING CHRIST IN FAITH LEADS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

It was the case with Abraham. It is the case with everyone.

## **II. LAW CAUSES A CURSE (VS 10-12)**

### ***Trying To Earn Our Salvation By Being Good Leads To Total Disaster.***

And even though this all seems so clear and right, there are those who insist and trying to earn their righteousness by being good, intelligent, or religious. But when we try to earn our

standing with God through our own efforts, we will always fall short. That's why verses 10-12 illustrate that trying to keep laws as a means to righteousness only causes a curse. In other words **TRYING TO EARN OUR SALVATION BY BEING GOOD LEADS TO TOTAL DISASTER.**

### **A. THE CURSE (10)**

Verse 10 describes how we incur a curse when we try to obtain righteousness by keeping the law. Two common mistakes that were prevalent in the Jewish community were thinking that simply by being born into a Jewish family, being circumcised, and celebrating the Jewish holy days made them right with God, or by being good and meticulously following all the religious laws would make them right with God.

I think those are two mistakes commonly made by Christians as well. Many think that simply because they were born into a Christian family and were baptized, that they are in a right relationship with God. Others think that being religious, going to prayer meeting and other events make them right with God.

Those attitudes lead to the curse of being separated from God. The function of laws is always negative. Let me give you some examples. If everyone at work was a good employee, showed up on time, and did their work, there would no need to make rules that pertained to punching in and out. If someone abuses something in the workplace, a new rule is sure to follow. Paul will later show that the Law was never intended to be used as a way of salvation. His point is this. No one can possibly keep the law, no matter how hard one tries. Even unintentional sins bring guilt. Listen to what the Law says:

*"If a member of the community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD'S commands, he is guilty" (Leviticus 4:27 / NIV).*

*"The LORD said to Moses: When a person commits a violation and sins unintentionally in regard to any of the LORD'S holy things, he is to bring to the LORD as a penalty a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel. It is a guilt offering" (Leviticus 5:14-15 / NIV).*

Since God is absolutely perfect, if we want to be in a right relationship with Him based on how well we are able to keep religious laws, we are doomed because we are guilty for sins we don't even know we are committing. We have to exercise the law with all its sacrifices and commands perfectly. That really is impossible. To hammer home the point, Paul quotes the Old Testament law:

"Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out. Then all the people shall say, Amen!" (Deuteronomy 27:26 / NIV).

Paul has just presented two ways one can choose to be saved. The first is simply by placing ones faith and trust in Jesus finished work on the cross. The second way is by trying to earn ones salvation by keeping religious laws. The first is relatively simple. The second is impossible.

### **B. ONLY ONE POSSIBLE WAY (11)**

And in verse 11, he continues on by emphasizing that there is and always was only one possible way. We know that King David was one of the heroes of our faith. God referred to him as a man after His own heart. Let me first quote from the Jewish law:

"If a man commits adultery with another man's wife – with the wife of his neighbor – both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death" (Leviticus 20:10 / NIV).

*"Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a man must be put to death. You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 24:21-22 / NIV).*

*"Do not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer, who deserves to die. He must surely be put to death. ... Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and*

*atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it" (Numbers 35:31 & 33 / NIV).*

Now we all know that David committed adultery and murder. He had an affair with a married woman named Bath Sheba while he himself was married. And to cover up his affair, he had her husband killed. According to the Jewish law, King David should have been put to death. Yet, God spared his life. In David's great prayer of repentance recorded in Psalm 51, he acknowledges this fact. The whole Psalm reflects this but listen especially to verse 16:

*"You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;  
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings"  
(Psalm 51:16 / NIV).*

David recognized that he should have been executed twice for his sins. No amount of religious sacrifices could make him right with God. Therefore, if David were depending on being religious to be right with God, he would have now been cursed. David knew that God wanted him to place his faith and trust in Him by coming to Him with a humble and truly repentant heart.

Paul sums up how even Old Testament saints were in a right relationship with God. He quoted the prophet Habakkuk:

*"See, he is puffed up;  
his desires are not upright  
but the righteous will live by his faith"  
(Habakkuk 2:4 /NIV).*

It was only faith that put Abraham in a right relationship with God. It was only faith that put Moses, Joshua, the prophets, King David, and the rest of the Hebrew heroes of faith in a right relationship with God.

### **C. THE FUTILITY OF HUMAN GOODNESS (12)**

Paul ends this section in describing the futility of human goodness in verse 12. The Law, basically like all laws were meant to prevent and correct bad behavior. The Mosaic Law was meant to bring social, political, and religious order to a community of unruly people. Christians often get confused about practicing spiritual disciplines. Some people actually start to place their level of righteousness in how well and often they pray, fast, meditate, read the Bible, give, etc. The point is that they have no ability to save us or make us right with God. We are to use them as tools in our journey along the way. God can use the spiritual disciplines to move us along in our journey of holiness, but only God can make us righteous and we can only receive His righteousness by placing our faith and trust in Him. Paul ends the section by quoting Leviticus 18:5. If we want to think of ourselves as good or deserving of our right standing with God, then we must not just be 99% perfect, we must be 100% perfect, which none of us can achieve. If we insist that we are good and want to be judged on how good we are, then we will certainly spend an eternity in hell. **TRYING TO EARN OUR SALVATION BY BEING GOOD LEADS TO TOTAL DISASTER.**

## **III. CHRIST CAUSES THE SPIRIT (VS 13-14)**

### ***Receiving Christ As Lord And Savior Leads To A Life Of Freedom.***

We have seen that if we try to earn our righteous standing with God, we will end up being cursed. We have seen that is only by placing our faith in the finished work of Jesus that we are made right with God. And now in verses 13-14, we see that when we place our faith in Jesus Christ, He causes the Holy Spirit to take up residence in our lives. In other words,

**RECEIVING CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR LEADS TO A LIFE OF FREEDOM.** Paul describes the results of Jesus work on the cross from three different perspectives.

### **A. ATONEMENT (13)**

In verse 13, the result of Christ's death is atonement. In these two verses, Paul uses the word redeemed. This word comes from the world of commerce. It was used to describe the transaction in which a slave was bought back or in which a slave bought his own freedom. In Jewish law, if a person fell on hard economic times, he could sell himself into slavery for a specific period of time. If one of his relatives had enough money, he could pay off his owner and buy his freedom. This person was known as a kinsman redeemer. The thought here is that because of our sin, we have become slaves to death. When Jesus died on the cross, He paid our debt. By His payment, we were set free from our penalty of death. Jesus atoned for our sin. He took upon Himself the penalty that we deserved. If you are familiar with Hebrew history, you know that God redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt. He set them free from their captivity and made them into a nation. In the book of Ruth, a kinsman redeemer named Boaz rescued Ruth and her mother Naomi.

### **B. REDEMPTION (14a)**

In Ruth's case, not only did Boaz rescue them financially, he married Ruth and they became Great-Grandparents of King David in whose line Jesus is born. The first half of verse 14 describes this type of relational redemption. For 2,000 years, Gentiles were considered outcasts. They were considered to be despised of God. Only Jews were considered to be children of God. But now through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God now invites everyone who will acknowledge Jesus by faith, to become part of His chosen family. Paul often talks about the great mystery revealed in Christ. The mystery was that someday, Jews and Gentiles would be united into one family of faith. It was promised to Abraham at the very beginning, and now in Paul's lifetime, 2,000 years later, he got to see this prophecy fulfilled. Paul has made it clear that now people of every tribe, tongue, and nation become the chosen people of God by placing their faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone.

### **C. INDWELLING (14b)**

And the sign and blessing of being God's chosen people is manifested by the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit as described in the last half of verse 14. The New Testament describes the salvation experience in terms of receiving the Holy Spirit. The early conversions manifested the inward experience of receiving the Holy Spirit by the outward manifestation of speaking in tongues. As we have said before, this tongues speaking experience was a great unifying factor. When Jews came to Christ in faith, they received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. When Gentiles received the Holy Spirit, they spoke in tongues. They would have to deny their own experience of salvation if they wanted to deny the authenticity of the others' salvation.

Here is what is so important about connecting the experience of receiving the Holy Spirit and connecting it to redemption. Think about Jews who became Christians. Paul is saying to them that it would be absurd if now they found themselves in a right relationship with God by faith to now go back and try to be in a right relationship with God by trying to be religious and keeping religious laws. Don't make yourselves slaves to religious laws. And to Gentiles Paul was saying they became Christians by placing their faith and trust in Christ alone. Don't mess that up by trying to make yourself right with God by doing Jewish religious stuff. You were once slaves to sin. Don't make yourself slaves to religion.

However, what Paul is not saying is that they were now free to do whatever they wanted to do. In fact, since they have received the Holy Spirit, they are now no longer slaves to sin or religious rules, but they are clearly commanded to live according to the Spirit.

We will see later that living by the Spirit is much more demanding than living by law. For example, the law said that we should not kill or steal or be jealous. Living by the Spirit of Christ demands that we actively love our neighbors and do good to our enemies. Paul will define this concept more clearly later on in this letter. But the point here is that when we

receive Christ, He gives us His Holy Spirit to live inside of us. **RECEIVING CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR LEADS TO A LIFE OF FREEDOM.**

I think this is a very important concept. We all understand the concept of cause and effect. If we place our faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, we will be saved. When we are saved, Jesus sends His Holy Spirit to live inside of us. When the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives, He causes us to desire levels of holiness we never would have thought of on our own. He causes us to live way beyond the law and He brings to us the holiness and the righteousness of Jesus. The Bible portrays the Holy Spirit causing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to live in us and empower us.

On the other hand, if we want to ever think of ourselves as being good and deserving of salvation, that will lead to eternally disastrous consequences, namely that we will fall way short of Gods standards and spend eternity separated from God in hell. **WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF CAUSE AND EFFECT. CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAUSE LEADS TO A GOOD END; CHOOSING THE WRONG CAUSE LEADS TO A DISASTROUS END.**

So why do we try to live holy lives? We don't live holy lives in order to impress God or earn salvation. We try and live holy lives because God has already saved us and made us His children. Pursuing holiness is our love response to God granting us salvation. Albert Edward Day explains what obedience and the pursuit of holiness is all about in his book The Captivating Presence:

"Obedience is indispensable. Not to a static code, however helpful it may be at times. But obedience to God, Who is present with us in every situation and is speaking to us all the time. Every obedience, however small (if any obedience is ever small) quickens our sensitivity to Him and our capacity to understand Him and so makes more real our sense of His presence."

We are not trying to obey rules and regulations in order to make ourselves worthy of Gods love and salvation. We obey a person, God, because we love Him. Living by the Spirit is a response to Gods love in giving us His Spirit. Living in Gods presence is a real privilege.