REST FROM YOUR LABORS AND TRUST CHRIST

3 10 All those who rely on their observance of the law are under a curse, because it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by everything that is written in the book of the law, [being faithful] to do them.” 11 Now [the fact] that no one is justified before God by the law is evident, because “The just shall live by faith.” 12 But the law does not belong to faith; on the contrary, “The one who does these things shall live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”—14 so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles by Christ Jesus, [and] so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Gal. 3:10-14)

Introduction

Back in 1882 a labor organization, the Knights of Labor, advocated the idea that there should be a special holiday for the common laborer so that he might rest from his labor. In 1882, 1883 and again in 1884, the Knights took off from work on the first Monday of September in order to parade down the streets of New York, promoting their idea of a new holiday to honor the common laborer. In 1884 they adopted a resolution that the first Monday of September be designated as an official holiday. Workers from many other organizations supported the Knights of Labor in this endeavor.

On March 15, 1887, the state of Colorado passed a law that designated the first Monday of September as an official holiday—the states of New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts soon followed in passing similar laws. On June 28, 1894, a bill finally passed the United States Congress making the day a legal holiday throughout the nation. Thus there came into being a special holiday for the common laborer; a day for him to rest from his labors.

The United States Congress passed a law permitting laborers to rest from their physical labors on the first Monday of September; the Lord our God issues us a divine invitation to rest from our spiritual labors and trust in Christ.

Each of us has within himself the inclination, the urge, the compulsion to work our way to God: to seek to earn our way to heaven by good works (religious observances, moral living, etc.), and to win back or retain God’s favor by good works. The message contained in this present passage of Scripture is this: the Lord our God invites us to rest from our labors and trust in His Son Jesus Christ.

I. Rest from Your Labors and Trust in Christ,
...Because You Cannot Save Yourself by Works (3:10)

In verse 10 the Apostle Paul declares, “All those who rely on their observance of the law are under a curse.” That is to say, all who rely upon their personal observance of the law as the means of their salvation are under the law’s just sentence of
condemnation. Paul is speaking of all those who seek to save themselves by means of their own good works and their personal efforts to meet the holy requirements of the moral law of God. He is referring to all those who take the position, “I will try my best to make myself pleasing to God and trust that He will accept me.” Paul declares that all such persons, despite their sincerity, despite their effort, are “under a curse.”

Why is this the case? Why are "all those who rely on their observance of the law are under a curse"? This is so because all such people are insisting that God judge them on the basis of their own personal performance in seeking to comply with the absolute demands of His holy law, but their efforts do not measure up to God’s perfect standard. By way of illustration: A sign on the back of tractor-trailer trucks asks the question, “How is my driving?” The sign invites motorists to call the special telephone number provided in order to report on how well the truck driver is performing. Suppose a near-sighted, incompetent driver was driving the big eighteen-wheel tractor-trailer. Motorists from all over the country, who happened to share the road with him, were now calling that special phone number to report his performance to his boss. The result is that the incompetent driver is fired for failing to comply with the standards of good driving. Do you think he would get his job back if he appealed to the fact that he was sincerely doing his best? As a motorist, how would you react if you reported such a driver and the boss informed you that he would not be taken off the road because he was sincerely trying his best? The point is that sincerity of effort is not the criterion that renders a man acceptable; the criterion is performance, the ability to meet the required standard. In the same way, by His very nature of absolute justice and holiness, the Lord must judge a man on the basis of his performance. Indeed, even on the basis of sincerity, no man can declare that he is perfectly sincere, that he loves the Lord his God with all his heart.

At this point the apostle quotes Deuteronomy 27:26, a passage that reveals God’s divine standard—a standard of moral excellence: "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by everything that is written in the book of the law, [being faithful] to do them."

"Cursed is everyone." There is the demand for universal obedience; there are no exceptions, no excuses for mitigating circumstances; everyone is held accountable before God for his non-compliance to the moral law. The same people who are quick to blame their wrong doing on mitigating circumstances, (circumstances that allegedly render them less responsible for their conduct or excuse their conduct, such as their family background or their neighborhood,) are quick to take credit for whatever good deeds they may have done. They seek to devise a “selective responsibility,” taking credit for the good and excusing the bad. But the Lord requires a complete responsibility—the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Representative, was required to assume complete responsibility for His behavior and render complete obedience even under the most trying of circumstances, note Matthew 4:1-2, "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the
desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry."

"Cursed is everyone who does not abide by [the moral law of God.]" There is the demand for continuous obedience. The Lord God requires that we render obedience to His holy law on every occasion and with constant commitment, note Ezekiel 33:12-13,18,

Therefore, son of man, say to your countrymen, The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him when he disobeys ... The righteous man, if he sins, will not be allowed to live because of his former righteousness. 13 If I tell the righteous man that he will surely live, but then he trusts in his righteousness and does evil, none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered; he will die for the evil he has done. ... 18 If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, he will die for it. (Ezek. 33:12-13,18)

"Cursed is everyone who does not abide by everything [the law demands.]" There is the demand for complete obedience. We are not permitted to be selective in our obedience; we may not choose those commandments we are “good at keeping” and ignore those that especially address the sinful tendencies that are dominant in our lives. By way of example, the Apostle Paul found that the commandment against coveting proved to be the commandment that exposed him as a sinner and law breaker. By his actions he had at least superficially complied with the other commandments, but the commandment, “You shall not covet,” exposed the sinfulness of his heart:

... I would not have known what sin was except through the law; for I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. (Rom. 7:7-8)

"Cursed is everyone who does not abide by everything that is written in the book of the law." There is the demand for objective obedience. As men who are accountable to our Creator and Judge, we do not have the liberty to devise our own moral standards based upon subjective human emotions (“I just feel that what I am doing is right.”) On the contrary, we are obligated to submit to the objective standard of God’s holy law. When a young man approached Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus pointed him to the objective commandments of God:

As [Jesus] started on his way, a man ran up to him, and kneeled before him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? ... 19 You know the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother. (Mk. 10:17,19)
The moral law of God is a standard that is not only revealed in the Ten Commandments delivered to Moses on Mt Sinai, but is written on every human heart:

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the [written] law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the [written] law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. (Rom. 2:14-15)

"Cursed is everyone who does not abide by everything that is written in the book of the law [being faithful] to do them." There is the demand for active obedience. It is not enough to consent to the law of God, that it is good and should be obeyed, nor is it enough to have good intentions of rendering obedience. What is required is actual, active compliance with the holy demands of the law. In addressing the Pharisees, the Lord Jesus rebukes them for not rendering active obedience to the totality of the law: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and integrity. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former" (Matt. 23:23.)

Let us be sure to accept God’s invitation to cease from our labors and trust in Christ for our salvation, because we cannot save ourselves by our works—we do not measure up to the standard of divine righteousness that the LORD our God demands by His very nature of holiness. As Paul writes, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23.) The Psalmist prays: "Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you" (Psl. 143:2.)

II. Rest from Your Labors and Trust in Christ,
...Because God Intends for You to Be Saved by Faith (3:11-12)

So many people set out to save themselves by taking the road marked “Salvation by Good Works.” Their attitude may be described as follows: ‘God, give me Your law! I will take it and get myself shaped up to it without much trouble!”

Then comes their surprise and disappointment: “Hey! The law of God is holy! This law is very demanding! This law reveals a lot about myself that I was unaware of!”

Their surprise and disappointment turns into panic and their panic gives way to bitterness: “Why did God give such a hard and demanding law? How does He ever expect me to measure up to such an absolute standard? How does He expect me to save myself by means of such a demanding and perfect standard? God must be a cruel tyrant!”
At this point God Himself may well confront the man who expresses such an attitude: “Listen to Me! Let Me tell you something! First, this law is not just some arbitrary rule I have made up; on the contrary, it is the perfect and inescapable reflection of who I am: I AM light (1 Jn. 1:5) I AM holy (Isa. 6:3) I AM pure (Hab. 1:13a.)

\textit{God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.} (1 Jn. 1:5)

When Isaiah is given a revelation of the \textsc{LORD} seated upon His throne, he hears the angels proclaim, \textit{“Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts”} (Isa. 6:3)

\textit{Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.} (Hab. 1:13a)

“Furthermore, I never intended for you, as a sinner, to seek to save yourself by means of My holy law. My intention is for you to come to My Son Jesus Christ and trust in Him to save you.”

This precisely the point the Apostle Paul is making in verses 11-12. God’s Word teaches that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the way of salvation; trying to save yourself by God’s law does not belong to the way of Salvation by Faith, it belongs to the way of Salvation by Works.

By way of illustration: You are confronted with two roads in your journey to find peace with God and a place in His heavenly kingdom: The one road is marked “Salvation by Works.” In choosing this road you commit yourself to rely upon yourself in an effort to present a righteousness to God, which you seek to produce by your own obedience to God’s law. The other road is marked “Salvation by Faith.” In choosing this road you rely upon God to receive the perfect righteousness from God, which Christ Himself produced by His perfect obedience to God’s law, and to receive the forgiveness of sins by virtue of Christ’s atoning death on the cross of Calvary.

If you are traveling the road marked, “Salvation by Works,” God comes to you and says, “You are traveling the wrong road! This is the road that will lead you to hell, because it forces Me to judge you on the basis of your performance—a performance that does not measure up to My requirements of holiness. Take the road marked, “Salvation by Faith,” so that I may receive you into My heavenly kingdom based upon the perfect performance of obedience and atoning sacrifice provided by My Son Jesus Christ.”

Let us be sure to accept God’s invitation to cease from our labors and trust in Christ for our salvation, because God intends for us to be saved by faith in Christ, not by works of obedience we might futilely seek to produce.

\textbf{III. Rest from Your Labors and Trust in Christ,}
\textbf{...Because Christ Did the Necessary Work (3:13-14)}
Jesus did the work that was necessary for our salvation: He became a curse for us.

Under the Old Testament law, if a man committed a crime worthy of death, after his execution his dead body was to be hung upon a tree—testifying to the fact that he was cursed by God:

> If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse. You must not desecrate the land Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance. (Deut. 21:22-23)

The very way in which Christ died—being crucified—and then hanging upon the wooden cross after His death, marked Him as being cursed by God.

The Old Testament requirement recorded in Deuteronomy 21 and Christ’s crucifixion confront us with two fundamental facts: First, there is an actual divine curse that must be fulfilled—a sentence of condemnation that divine justice has pronounced against each one of us who have broken God’s commandments. Second, the Lord Jesus Christ suffered that curse upon the cross of Calvary on behalf of each one who receives Him as their Savior. Speaking for all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the prophet Isaiah writes, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but Jehovah has laid upon him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6.)

Let us be sure to accept God’s invitation to cease from our labors and trust in Christ, because Jesus has done the work necessary for our salvation—having offered His perfect obedience unto God on our behalf, He then proceeded to suffer the righteous curse of God on our behalf so that we might receive the forgiveness of our sins and a place in the heavenly kingdom of God.

**Conclusion**

In 1894 the United States Congress passed a law permitting laborers to rest from their physical labors on the first Monday of September.

Today, the Lord our God issues a divine invitation to us to cease from our spiritual labors and trust in Christ. Addressing the people who are laboring to produce good works—futilely laboring to earn their own salvation and entrance into the kingdom of heaven—Jesus declares, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28.)