Galatians 3:10 (Frederick George Patterson) 58845

Collected Writings, Galatians 3:10 and Philippians 3:18, 19 (3:10)

Q. “O.M.A.B.,” Boyle asks for replies to the following questions: (1) Tell me the meaning of Galatians 3:10. How can it be said of saints, justified sinners by faith in Jesus, even though they should make the law their “rule of life,” as they say, that they are under a curse? To be sure, such practically deny their oneness with Christ in resurrection; they are rendering themselves incapable of hiving in the power of the risen life, but this does not alter the fact that they are one with Christ — risen, ascended, and seated in the Heavenlies, and that God is looking at them as such. How, then, can it be said they are under a curse?

(2) What class does the apostle speak of in Philippians 3:18, 19?

A. (I) The Apostle, dear friend, is not speaking of the standing of persons, but is showing the effect of the law upon all who put themselves under it, or are striving to live on that principle in their relationships with God. That they are in fact putting themselves in a place to which the curse of the law applies, and consequently putting themselves under the curse, for the simple reason that they do not fulfill it, and it curses all who fail to do so. If a Christian puts himself under the law he must be consciously only in the position to which it refers; that is, he must be “in the flesh” (Rom. 7:5). Whereas the standing of a Christian is “not in the flesh, but in the spirit” (Rom. 8:9), and, as a matter of course, he is not realizing his place as risen with Christ. The law applies to a child of fallen Adam, responsible to God as a sinner, and to none else. It pursues its claim upon him as far as this death of Christ. There, the believer, as having died with Christ, disappears from its pursuit, and it can go no further. It has no claim over one who is dead, and has thus eluded the uncompromising grasp of the law, and is now alive in another state, in Christ risen from the dead. So that, if a Christian puts himself under it, in any way, he practically denies the place where Christianity has placed him, and cannot consciously be in his true position before God. Of course then he breaks the law — (who ever kept it as alive in that state?) — and it curses, without distinction, all who do so.

This is quite a different thing than if Paul was pronouncing upon the standing of a Christian, as God sees him, “in Christ.” Impossible that in such a position he could be under a curse; and, were he realizing it, he would not put himself back into a position to which the curse of the Law applies. When consciously there, he walks, not in the flesh, but in the spirit; and the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in him who does so (Rom. 7:4), but never by being under it.

(2) I believe whenever the Apostle writes such solemn words and warnings as these, that he has his mind upon those who have professed the name of Christ, but who, in their worldly fruitless lives, plainly show that it is a mere profession without reality, and are thus the greater enemies to the Cross of Christ — joining to the name of Christ a life which had the things of earth for its object, instead of that which filled the soul of Paul, that is, a Christ in heavenly glory, who had been rejected by the world.

Doubtless the end of such would be utter “destruction,” not merely the “destruction of the flesh,” of 1 Corinthians 5:5, to which you allude. Such solemn words as these, whole searching to all consciences, have in view the mere lifeless professor in the outward universal Church, and ate never used to stumble the true believer, or to throw the faintest shadow of a doubt on the certitude of his perfect, eternal, unalterable security in Christ. But when the walk is careless and disobedient, and one sees that souls are satisfied with the knowledge of grace, without seeking to grow up to Christ in all things, it is blessed to have such solemn words to search the conscience deeply, and provoke the Christian to make his calling and election sure, by adding to his faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (see 2 Peter 1:5-11), and walking suitably to his high and holy calling. I am daily more deeply impressed — may the impression be deeply engraved upon the hearts of both writer and reader — that in our walk as Christians we should strain every nerve in practical Christianity and obedience to the Lord, as though our souls salvation depended entirely upon ourselves; and yet with the perfect consciousness, at the same time, that it does not depend on ourselves at all. This is so important in a day of much knowledge of the full free grace of the Gospel, and much high-sounding profession, and, alas I but little thorough reality, or true-hearted devotedness to Christ. A yielding up of ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God! and a bringing of every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ!

Words of Truth 1:121, 122.