

For Such a Time as This

A Daily Devotional

Friday, March 24, 2023

From Galatians 3:

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 man is justified before God by the law; for “He who through faith is righteous shall live”; but the law does not rest on faith, for “He who does them shall live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree”— that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The passage above is controversial in some circles; so much so that it is not once included in the common lectionary of readings for a three period in worship. It is even not mentioned as an option for Good Friday. Yet, here, in Paul’s Letter to Galatians, is a clear interpretation of the meaning of God’s work in Christ’s crucifixion.

Fleming Rutledge, who has been my reading-partner during Lent, offers significant commentary on this portion of scripture:

God must therefore do the rectifying himself. He has done so through Jesus Christ, who actually took the full force of the curse of the Law into himself on the cross. Our identity is now derived not from observance of the Law but from the gift of the Spirit through faith in Christ. The important thing for our discussion here is Paul’s announcement that God, in the person of his sinless Son, put himself voluntarily and deliberately into the condition of greatest accursedness – on our behalf and in our place. This mind-crushing paradox lies at the heart of the Christian message.

And then, Rutledge helpfully clarifies actions and motivations in the crucifixion: **To be sure, there is much opportunity for misunderstanding. Sometimes it is objected that a father who would allow his own to be cursed and abandoned must be monstrous. Trinitarian thinking is of the essence here, however. The Son and the Father are doing this in concert, by the power of the Spirit. This interposition of the Son between human beings and the curse of God upon Sin is a project of the three persons.**

This is not a case of somehow the Son acting against the Father or the Father’s wishes; there is no division in God’s will to accomplish our redemption. Nor is it an example of some form of divine child abuse, the Father forcing the Son to be condemned on our behalf; the Trinity is not divided in the crucifixion ... the Trinity produces the redemptive actions through it. Bottom line, Rutledge and Paul agree; the crucifixion is the work of God on our behalf.

Prayer for the Day: (From *The Book of Common Prayer – 1662 edition*)

Almighty and everlasting God, who, of thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon a cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility. Mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



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