

A  
S E R M O N  
On G A L A T. III. X.

*For as many as are of the Works of the Law, Are under the Curse: For it is written. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all Things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.*

**T**HE Law consists of Two Parts; a Systeme of Precepts; and the Sanction and Enforcement of those Precepts, by Promises and Threatnings. According to the First, it is the Rule of our Obedience, and shews what we ought to render unto God: According to the Second, it is the Rule of Divine Justice, and shews what God will render unto us. I have already considered the Precepts of the Law, and in part treated of those important Duties, both of Piety towards God, and of Love and Equity towards Men, that are summarily comprehended in them.

The Sanction of this Law is twofold.

*First, A Promise of Life and Happiness to the Observers of it. Rom. 10. 5. Moses describeth the Righteousness which is of the Law, that the Man that doth those things, shall live by them.*

And

And again, Gal. 3. 12. *The Man that doth them, shall live in them, i. e. by them.* Which we have once more confirmed to us, Ezek. 20. 21. *I gave them my Statutes and my Judgments; which if a Man do, he shall even live in them.* All which Places are transcribed from that of Moses, Levit. 18. 5. *Ye shall keep my Statutes and my Judgments, which if a Man do, he shall live in them, or by them.* But because our Natures are woefully degenerated from their primitive Excellency, and we have contracted such an Impotency, that the same Obedience which in our upright estate was both easie and delightful, is now become irksome and impossible, (as I have demonstrated to you in the last Subject I treated of;) therefore we can receive no Consolation from this Promise, not entertain any hopes of Life and Salvation, according to the Tenour of this Covenant of Works: *For all have sinned, and are come short of the Glory of God.* The Precepts of the Law convince us of Sin, and our Sins convince us that we have no right to the Promise of the Law.

And therefore as I have endeavoured to promote the Conviction of Sin, by representing to you the infinite Defects, Irregularities, and Contrarieties of our Actions compared with the Divine Commands; so now likewise I shall endeavour to convince of that Wrath which is due unto the Transgressors of the Law.

For there is a Second Sanction of the Law, by the threatenings of a most heavy and tremendous Curse against all that transgress it; a Curse that will blast and wither their Souls for ever. And this we have in the Words of my Text; *Cursed is every one, who, &c.*

The great Design of the Apostle in this Chapter, and indeed in this whole Epistle, is to demonstrate, that Justification cannot possibly be obtained by the Righteousness of the

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Law, nor according to the Terms of the First Covenant, *Do this and live.* And among many others, one of the strongest Arguments he makes use of, to prove this his Assertion, lies couch'd in these Words which we are now considering.

Wherein we have these Two Parts :

*First, A Thesis, or Position. As many as are of the Works of the Law are under the Curse.*

*Secondly, A Proof of this Position by an irrefragable Testimony of Scripture: For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.*

The Words are plain and obvious : Only I shall briefly enquire,

*First, What the Apostle means by these who are of the Works of the Law. And,*

*Secondly, What it is to be Accursed.*

To the former, I answer, To be of the Works of the Law, signifies no other than to expect Justification and Eternal Happiness by Legal Works ; to depend wholly on our Obedience unto, and Observation of the Law, to render us acceptable to God, and worthy of Eternal Life. Those who thus rely on a Legal Righteousness, are said to be of the Works of the Law ; ( as Persons are said to be of such or such a Party, ) because they stily defended the Cause of the Law, and stood for Justification by the Observance of it, in opposition to the Grace of the Gospel, and the Way of obtaining Justification and Eternal Life by believing. But, saith the Apostle, As many as are of this Party and Faction are accursed, even by the Sentence of that Law which they hope will justify them. *For it is written in the Law, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, &c.* Now, *Secondly,*

*Secomdly*, To be accursed, or to be under the Curse, is no other than to be liable unto, or actually under that Wrath and Punishment which the Law threatens shall be inflicted on the Transgressors, as a Satisfaction to Divine Justice for their Offences, so that the true and proper Notion of a Curse is this; That it is the Denunciation, or Execution of the Punishment contained in the Law, in order to the satisfaction of Divine Justice for transgressing the Precepts of it. Some therefore are only under the Curse denounced; and so are all wicked men, whose state is prosperous in this Life: Though they flourish in Wealth and Honour, and float in Ease and Pleasure, yet are they liable to all that Woe and Wrath with which the Threatnings of the Law stand charged against them. Some are under the Curse already executed: And so are all wicked Men, on whom God begins to take vengeance, and exact Satisfaction in the Miseries and Punishments which he inflicts on them in this Life. He sometimes puts the Cup of Fury and Trembling into their Hands while they are on Earth, and gives them some Fore-tastes of that bitter Draught, the Dregs of which they must for ever drink off in Hell; and there they are accursed ~~completely & eternally~~. For the Curse of the Law contains in it all the direful Ingredients of God's Wrath what soever we can suffer, either in this World, or in the World to come, all Plagues, Woes, and Miseries being comprehended in that death threatned in the Covenant of Works; *In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*, Gen. 2. 17. 'Tis true, many Godly Men suffer fore Afflictions in this Life; Pains, Diseases, Losses, Persecutions from Men, and Chastisements from God: Yet these are not Curses to them, because not inflicted for the Satisfaction of Divine Justice; but for the exercise of their Graces, and the manifestation of his Holiness, (as I shall hereafter shew you more at large;) But whatsoever Evil any wicked Man suffers, it is from the Malignity of the Curse, which will at last pour all its Venom into their Cup in Hell.

And:

And thus you have seen what it is to be of *the Works of the Law*; and what it is to be of the *Curse of the Law*.

Suffer me only to Paraphrase the Words, and I shall add no more for Explication. It is impossible, saith the Apostle, that any should be now justified by the observation of the Law; for as many as relie upon their Works only, to justify them, and endeavour to uphold the Faction of a Legal Righteousness, against the Grace of the Gospel, and the Way of Justification by Faith, they are under a Curse, and stand liable to all the Punishments which the Law threatens. *For even in the Law it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.* Which because no meer Man hath done, therefore all lie under the Doom of this Curse. And those who expect Justification by no other way, must for ever lie under the execution of it. And this I take to be the clear scope of the Apostle's Argument.

Now, whereas he saith, *It is written*, he certainly refers us to *Deut. 27. 26.* *Cursed is he that confirmeth not all the Words of this Law to do them.* In the Original it is, *לֹא יִקַּח* *Non stabilet*, doth not establish, or ratifie. In the *Septuagint*, *ἔν ἐμμένει*, *non permanet*; doth not continue, And according to that Translation, the Apostle both read, and used them. However, the Sense is the same in both.

You see then what an universal Curse these Words denounce: A Curse that sets its Mouth, and dischargeth its Thunder against all the sinful Sons of *Adam*: A Curse it is, which as *Zachary* speaks, *Chap. 5. 3.* goes forth over the Face of the whole Earth, and will, if Mercy rebate not the Edge of it, cut off on every side, all those that stand in its way; that is, all that are Sinners; and all are so; for the Characters

rafters which the Apostle doth here give to those, who are under the Curse of the Law, are so general and comprehensive, that no Man living could possibly escape, if God should judge him according to the Conditions of the Covenant of Works. For,

*First*, It is said, that every one is accursed that doth not those Things which are written in the Book of the Law. And this is a Curse that cuts off on both sides: On this side it cuts off those who are but negatively righteous; who ground all their Hopes for Heaven and Happiness upon what they have not done, and put into the Inventory of their Vertues, that they have not been Vicious, no Extortioners, no unjust Persons, no Adulterers, &c. But alas! this Account will not pass in the day of Reckoning. The Law requires thee not only to forbear the gross Acts of Sin, but to perform the Duties of Obedience: And it cuts off on that side all those who have done contrary to what is written in the Law; and that not only scandalous and outrageous Sinners, but even those who have been least peccant, and rather Sinners in Thought and Imagination, than in Practice; yet these also fall under the Curse of the Law.

*Secondly*, Those also who have not done all that is written in the Law, are struck with this *Anathema* or Curse: And where's the Man that dares lift up his Face to justify himself against this Charge? Is there no one Duty, either of the First or Second Table, respecting either God or Man, that thou hast utterly neglected? Is there no one Sin that thou hast committed, either ignorantly or knowingly, either out of Weakness or Willfulness, by Surprize, or upon Deliberation? Certainly the Law of God is so vastly large and comprehensive, that we can scarcely know all that is contained in it: And our Impotence and Corruption so great, that much less can we perform it; and yet in a Case of

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of the least Failure in any one Particular, we become obnoxious to the Curse and Malediction. But suppose that at some time or other thou shouldest have performed every particular Duty ; yet,

*Thirdly*, Hast thou continued in all Things that are written in the Law to do them? Hast thou spun an even Thread of Obedience? Are there no Flaws, no Breaks, no Breaches in it? Hast thou been always constant in the highest Fervour of thy Zeal for God? Hast thou been in the Fear of the Lord all the Days of thy Life? Have thy Affections never languish'd; thy Thoughts never turned aside, so much as to glance upon Vanity? Did'st thou never drop one unflavoury Word, nor do any one Action, which both for the matter and manner of it was not perfectly agreeable to the Law? If otherwise, (as indeed such an absolute Perfection of Holiness is to be found in no Creatures but the glorified Spirits,) thou art still expos'd to the Curse of the Law: For curst is every one that continueth not in all Things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.

Now this Curse is most dreadful, if we consider that it is universal, and extends it self not only over all Persons, but unto all things; every thing which a Sinner either doth, or hath, is accursed to him: Let us a little rip up the Bowels of this Curse, that you may see how much Rancour and Venom is contained in it.

*First*, He is accursed in all his Temporal Enjoyments: His Bread is kneaded, and his Drink mingled with a Curse; his Table becomes a Snare to him; and every Morfel he eats, is dipp'd in the Bitterness of God's Wrath and Curse. In his Health, his Food is poisoned with this Curse; and in his Sicknes, his Physick. He is curst in every Place where he comes; and the Place curst for his sake: *Curst in the City,*

City, and cursed in the Field; cursed in his Basket and Store; cursed in the Fruit of his Body, and in the Fruit of his Land; in the Increase of his Kine, and of his Flocks; cursed when he cometh in, and when he goeth out; as we find this Bed-roll of Curses denounced against him, Deut. 28. from the 15th to the 20th Verse. His very Mercies are Curses unto him; as on the contrary, a true Believer's Afflictions are Blessings. He is blessed in Poverty, in Sickness, in Persecution, yea in Death it self: So Unbelievers Mercies are all turned into Plagues and Curses: For as in an unsound and corrupted Body, the wholesomest Food converts to Putrefaction and peccant Humours, and nourisherh the Disease more than the Man; So to a corrupt and sinful Soul, the best of God's Temporal Favours turn to the Nourishment of his Disease. His Plenty and Prosperity do but purvey for his Lusts; and Abundance that God gives him, doth but lay in Provision for the Flesh; and through the secret, but righteous Judgment of God, proves only a stronger Temptation unto Sin, and makes him the more fit to promote the Devil's Service, and his own Damnation.

Secondly, He is accursed in all his spiritual Enjoyments. The sacred Ordinances of Jesus Christ, which are the only ordinary Means which God hath appointed to make us eternally blessed; yet even these are all cursed to him; for they do but the more harden and confirm him in his Sins, and ripen him the sooner for Everlasting Destruction. For as the Rain which falls upon the Earth makes a living Tree, whose Sap is in it, to bud and flourish, and bring forth its seasonable Fruits; but only serves the sooner to rot a dead and withered Tree: So those very Ordinances and Dispensations of the Means of Grace, which distil alike both upon Believers and Unbelievers, have a far different Influence upon them. Into the one, they kindly insinuate, and call forth their latent Graces; and where they find the Root of the

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Matter, make them sprout and blossom into a beautiful Profession, and make them bring forth plentiful Fruits unto Holiness. But to the other, that are dead Trunks, these Showers of Heaven, and Droppings of the Sanctuary which fall upon them, tend only to rot them, and to make them the sooner fit Fuel for Hell, and Everlasting Burnings. And, oh, what a sad and dreadful Curse is this; that thou who comest to hear the same Word preached, which to others proves the *Savour of Life unto Life Eternal*, to thee, through the Corruption and Wickedness of thine own Heart, it should prove the *Savour of Death thro' Death Eternal*; and instead of humbling thee under the Power and Evidence of the Truth, should only exasperate thy Heart against the Truth, and those who dispense it, that the Sound of the Gospel should only deafen thine Ears, and the Light of the Glorious Truth only blind thine Eyes! That thou who perhaps partakest of the Sacrament shouldst eat thine own Damnation, when thou eatest the Body of a Saviour; and drink a deep Curse to thy self, when thou drinkest the Cup of Blessing! Thy Sins are of so baneful a Nature, that they poison even the Blood of Christ unto thee; and whilst the Heavenly Meat is in thy Mouth, even the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is Meat indeed to a believing Soul, the Curse of God cometh upon thee! And yet how many such Spiders have we, who suck Poison out of the sweetest Flowers? Clayey and Earthy Souls, that are but hardened by the Sunshine of the Gospel, and made the more incapable of any Impressions to be wrought upon them: And what a dreadful Curse is this, when the Means of Grace shall be turned into the Occasion of Sin? How deplorable is their Estate, when Mercy it self shall ruine them, and Salvation it self shall destroy them?

*Thirdly*, If all the Favours of God's Providence, and all the Dispensations of his Grace, then certainly much more are

are all their Chastisements and Afflictions turned into Curses. If there be Poison in the Honey, much more certainly is there in the Sting. If God be wroth with them when he smiles, much more when he frowns upon them. Indeed true Believers may with a great deal of Peace and Calmness, undergo all their Afflictions; for though they be sore and heavy, yet there is nothing of the Curse in them. That was all received into the Body of Christ when he hung upon the Cross; and their Father corrects them, not to satisfy his Justice upon them; but only by such a sharp Medicine to purge them from their Sins, and to make them partakers of his Holiness, though the Potion may be bitter and irksome in the taking, yet the Effects of it are salutary and healthful; it is not the Evils we suffer that are Curses; but the ordination of those Evils to the satisfying of Divine Vengeance upon us. And therefore sad and dreadful is the condition of guilty Sinners, who are out of Christ; for there is not the least Affliction that befalls them, nor the least Gripe of any Pain, nor the least Loss in their Estates, the most slight and inconsiderable Cross that is, but it is a Curse inflicted upon them by the Justice of God for the Guilt of their Sins. God is beginning to satisfy his Justice upon them; he is beginning to take them by the Throat, and to exact from them what they owe him. Every Affliction is to them but part of payment of that vast and infinite Summ of Plagues which God will most severely require from them in Hell. And there,

*Fourthly,* They shall be cursed to purpose, and lie for ever under the revenging Wrath of God. Their Sentence is, *Depart from me, ye Cursed.* Matth. 25. 41. Hell indeed is the general Assembly of all Curses and Plagues. All the Curses they have undergone in this present Life, are but the Curses and Preparations to this fatal and final Curse. They are eternally cursed.

*First*, In their separation from the Sight and Presence of God. They have indeed the Presence of his Wrath, to torment them, and of his Power, to uphold them under their Torments, and to enlarge their Souls to contain all those Vials of pure Wrath and Fury which he will pour into them; but they are for ever cut off from the Presence of his Grace, and of his Glory. The enjoyment of God is the sole Blessedness of a Rational Creature: And therefore to be cut off from those ineffable Communications of himself, which he vouchsafes to the Blessed Spirits, is such a Curse as is as ineffable as are the Joys and Happinesses which they lose.

*Secondly*, They are cursed in the Society of Devils and damned Spirits; hideous Company, who both upbraid and torture them for their Sins.

*Thirdly*, They are accursed in the Work of Hell. For their whole Employment shall be blaspheming and Cursing, and in the Anguish and Horror of their Spirits roaring out, and exclaiming both against God and themselves. Then, *as they loved Cursing, and cloathed themselves with it as with a Garment; so it shall come into their Bowels like Water, and like Oyl into their Bones; as the Psalmist speaks, Psal. 109. 18.*

*Fourthly*, They shall be cursed in the Pains and Torments they must eternally suffer. Every Limb shall drop with Flakes of unquenchable Fire; and the Worm of Conscience shall prey upon them, and sting them with unsupportable Anguish; and in this unspeakable Torture shall they ever live a never dying Death. This is their final Curse: *Upon the Wicked God shall rain Fire, Snarcs and Brimstone, and an horrible Tempest; this shall be the Portion of their Cap.*

And

And thus you see what Malignity and Venom the Curse contains which the Law threatens against all the Transgressors of it.

Now briefly to apply this.

*First*, See here what an accursed thing Sin is, that carries wrapt up in its Bowels Woe, Wrath, and Eternal Death. To this it is that you owe all the Miseries you have already felt; and to this are due all that God hath threatned to inflict hereafter. The Law is not to be condemned for condemning the Transgressors of it. The Justice of God is not to be censured for taking the Forfeiture of our Lives and Souls. But all our Misery is to be charged upon our selves, upon our corrupt Natures, and our sinful Lives. We our selves breed those Vipers that gnaw our very Bowels: And as putrified Bodies breed those filthy Worms and Insects which devour them; so do we breed those filthy Lusts in our Hearts which are continually preying upon our Vitals, and will at last fatally destroy us. As God is an holy God; so he infinitely hates Sin; and as he is a just God; so he will assuredly punish it. Not a Soul of Man shall escape, not a Sin pass by without having its due Curse; yea, we find God so hates Sin, that when he found but the Imputation of it upon his own Son, Divine Vengeance would not suffer him to escape, but loads him with Sorrows, and fills his Soul with Darkness and Agonies, nails him to the Cross, and there exacts from him a dreadful Recompence, which he was fain to make good to the utmost Demand of his Father's Justice, before he could be discharged. One drop of this Poison being let fall upon the once glorious Angels, turn'd them into Devils, made all their Rays of Light and Lustre fall off from them; and being once tainted with this Venom, God could no longer endure them in his Presence, but hurls them down  
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all flaming into Hell. It is Sin that is the Fuel of those unquenchable Flames, and lays in all those Stores of Fire and Brimstone, which shall there burn for ever. It is Sin that disrobed Man of his Innocence, turned him out of Paradise, and will certainly, if not repented of, and forsaken, turn him into Hell. And therefore as ye love God, or your own Souls, be sure that ye hate Iniquity; entertain not any kind thoughts of it, however it tempt and solicit you. Remember the Curse of God is affix'd inseparably unto it; and if you will suffer the accursed thing to cleave unto you, you must for ever be accursed with it.

*Secondly*, If every Transgressor of the Law be accursed, see then the desperate Folly of those Wretches who make slight of Sin, and account the Commission of it a matter of small, or no concern to them. They play with Death, and dally with Woes and Curses; and so stupid and infensate are they, that they think that to be of no great moment, which yet can everlastingly damn them. Did we but seriously consider with what a weighty Curse every Sin is burthened, how much Fire and Sulphur, and deadly Materials are contained within the Bowels of it, we should be as fearful to touch or come near it, as to take up a lighted Granado when it is just ready to break about us, and tear us in piécs; and certainly they are most justly to be condemned of Madnes and Folly, that will rashly venture upon their own everlasting Destruction, and hurl Firebrands, Arrows, and Death, which will assuredly light upon themselves, and yet say, *Am I not in sport?*

*Thirdly*, If every Transgression exposeth us to the Curse, beware then that you never encourage your selves to commit any sin, because perhaps the World accounts it but small and little. For the least is as much a Transgression of the Law, and makes thee as liable to the Curse of God, and eternal  
eternal

eternal Damnation, as the greatest and most flagitious. They are all mortal and deadly; and thou maist as well suffer a little Stab at the Heart, as allow thy self in the commission of any Sin because it is little.

*Fourthly,* See here what Reason we have to bless God for Jesus Christ, who hath delivered us from the Curse of the Law; but so much for this Time.

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