

How legalism is so subtle

"Those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them'" (Galatians 3:9,10).

Note the sharp contrast in verses 9 and 10, "Those who are of faith are blessed," but "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Faith brings the blessing. Works bring the curse, or, rather, leave one under the curse. The curse is on all, for "he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). Faith removes the curse.

Who are under the curse? "As many as are of the works of the law." Note that it does not say that those who do the law are under the curse, for that

would be a contradiction of Revelation 22:14: "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city." "Blessed are the undefiled [margin, "blameless"] in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord!" (Psalm 119:1).

So, then, they who are of faith are keepers of the law. Since the gospel is contrary to human nature, we become doers of the law not by doing but by believing.

If we worked for righteousness, we would be exercising only our own sinful human nature, and so would get no nearer to righteousness, but farther from it. But by believing the "exceedingly great and precious promises," we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), and then all our works are wrought in God.

"[The] Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of

righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame" (Rom. 9:30-33). [1]

Note:

1. The Glad Tidings, pp. 55. 56.