

FRUSTRATING THE GRACE OF GOD

TEXT: GAL. 2:11-21

Introduction:

1. We saw in chapter 1 that certain people (often referred to as Judaizers or legalists) pervert the Gospel by adding works to grace (cf. 1:7).
2. According to Galatians 2:21, they not only pervert the Gospel, they "frustrate the grace of God."
3. Paul is not speaking here of drunkards or thieves or prostitutes. These sinners may ignore the grace of God, but they are not guilty of frustrating the grace of God.
4. Paul is speaking here of religious people. In fact, some of them were not only religious, they were saved (cf. 2:11-13).

I. COMPROMISING THE GOSPEL

II. TRYING TO PUT PEOPLE UNDER THE LAW

III. NOT DEPENDING UPON CHRIST

I. COMPROMISING THE GOSPEL (2:11-13).

1. Paul had to rebuke Peter because Peter was guilty of compromising the Gospel (2:11-13).
2. These Scriptures certainly prove that Peter was not an "infallible pope." There were no popes until hundreds of years after Peter.
3. In his first epistle, Peter identified himself as an "elder," not as a priest or pope (I Peter 5:1-4).
4. In the Bible there are no popes, cardinals, Monsignors, archbishops, or any kind of priestly hierarchy.
5. When Peter first arrived in Antioch, he ate with the Gentiles in full enjoyment of Christian liberty, and in obedience to the Lord, who said to him in Acts 10:15, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."
6. Peter said in Acts 10:28, "God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."
7. God had broken down the middle wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile. It was a new dispensation. The Lord Himself taught Peter to sit and eat with Gentiles.
8. However, some time later a group of Judaizers came for a visit and influenced Peter to separate from Gentile believers (Gal. 2:12).
9. Proverbs 29:25 says, "The fear of man bringeth a snare." Galatians 2:12 says Peter "withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision."

10. He caved in to the "false brethren" (2:4). By compromising with them, Peter was in effect saying that our Lord's substitutionary death on the cross wasn't enough. Peter went along with the false teachers who added the Mosaic Law to the Gospel of grace.
11. Unfortunately, others were following Peter's example, including Barnabas, Paul's faithful partner in the ministry (2:13).
12. Prominent preachers can influence many people -- some for good, and some for bad. We see this all the time (e.g., Billy Graham).
13. Peter was influencing other pastors to compromise the Gospel so Paul needed to confront him (2:11-13).

II. TRYING TO PUT PEOPLE UNDER THE LAW (2:14-19).

1. After the Lord showed Peter he was no longer under the Mosaic Law, "he did eat with the Gentiles" (2:12).
2. Acts 11:2, 3 says, "And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."
3. Peter defended himself then, but then he wavered, and so Paul asked him, "If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" (2:14).
4. In other words, Peter was attempting to put Gentiles under the law of Moses. This contradicted what Peter knew to be the truth (cf. Acts 15:7-11).
5. Why should Gentiles be forced to live as Jews, when Peter, being a Jew, had lived as the Gentiles?
6. Jews that had left Judaism and had been saved by faith in Christ knew that salvation could not come by keeping the law (2:15, 16).
7. The law does not save sinners. The law condemns sinners.
8. Paul asked: what was the point of putting Gentiles under the law? The law told sinners what to do but it gave them no power to do it.
9. The law could only reveal sin, and expose sin. It could never forgive sin or remove sin. Paul says in Romans 7:7, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."
10. The Scofield Study Bible has a paraphrase for Romans 2:17 but it doesn't help much. "If we Jews, in seeking to be justified by faith in Christ, take our places as mere sinners, like the Gentiles, is it therefore Christ who makes us sinners? By no means. It is by putting ourselves again under law after seeking justification through Christ, that we act as if we were still unjustified sinners, seeking to become righteous through law-works" (p. 1243).

11. Trying to be justified by the law is a denial of Christ's work on the cross (cf. 2:21).
12. If one needs the law in addition to faith in Christ, then to him Christ is not a perfect and all-sufficient Saviour. He would then be "the minister of sin" (2:17).
13. To this Paul says, "God forbid" (2:17). In other words, to promote a system of salvation by law-keeping is to make our Lord a "minister of sin." Paul uses strong language in this epistle because he is emphasizing the danger of a false gospel (cf. 1:6-9; 5:12).
14. Paul had already left Judaism to follow Christ. For him to go back to the law would make him a "transgressor" (2:18).
15. We are transgressors. The wages of sin is death. The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross in order to pay the penalty for our sins.
16. We were guilty and condemned, but thank God the Lord Jesus took our place on the cross and died as our Substitute.
17. Therefore we are "dead to the law" (Gal. 2:19).
18. When our Lord died on the cross, He died to the law in the sense that He met all of its righteous demands. Therefore, because of our position in Christ, we too have died to the law (2:19, 20).
19. Romans 7:6 says, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

III. PEOPLE FRUSTRATE THE GRACE OF GOD BY NOT DEPENDING UPON CHRIST

1. If you are depending upon your good works to get you to heaven, then you are not depending upon Christ.
2. One of the most important teachings in Scripture is our union with Christ (2:20).
3. We have been crucified with Christ, we are risen with Christ, and Christ is now living in us. Our Lord said in John 14:20, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."
4. Colossians 1:27 says, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."
5. We are to depend on Christ, not on ourselves. Our Lord said in John 15:4, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."
6. Our Lord said, "For without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).
7. The death of Christ has not only set us free from the guilt of sins, and delivered us from the penalty of sin; the death of Christ has also put to death the old man and delivered us from the power of sin in the flesh.

8. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6).
9. Christ died in vain if there is some other way (keeping the law, baptism, good works, etc.) to obtain righteousness than by faith in Him and through the grace of God (Gal. 2:21).

CONCLUSION:

1. Many years ago, HA Ironside was preaching the Gospel on a street corner, and a man walked up to him and said, "I detest this idea that through the death and righteousness of another I should be saved. I do not want to be indebted to anybody for my salvation. I am not coming to God as a beggar, but I believe that if a man lives up to the Ten Commandments, God does not require any more of him."
2. Ironside asked the man, "My friend, have you lived up to the Sermon on the Mount and have you kept the Ten Commandments?"
3. The man answered, "Oh, perhaps not perfectly; but I am doing the best I can."
4. Ironside then quoted James 2:10, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."
5. Then Ironside quoted Galatians 3:10, "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."
6. Ironside explained to the man that because he had failed to keep the whole law, he was under God's curse.