

## Preached on 12/31/23 at GBC - Ruston

### "Righteousness IN Christ ALONE"

Gal.2:21

Before we can discuss Paul's statement at the beginning of vs.21 - "**I DO NOT frustrate the GRACE OF GOD**", we need to do something the religious world **WILL NEVER DO**: define the "GRACE OF GOD". Listen to the words recorded concerning the "*grace of God*" by the writer of Acts regarding Paul's ministry of the Gospel in Ephesus: "*And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, **to testify the gospel of the grace of God.**"(Acts 20:18-24) Paul tells us the ministry he received and was charged with by our Lord was "**to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.**" The word translated "*testify*" means 'to attest to or solemnly affirm'. The word translated "*gospel*" means 'good news or glad tidings'. The words translated "*of the grace*" means 'goodwill, lovingkindness, or favor'. So Paul's ministry, **and our ministry**, is to attest or solemnly affirm the good news or glad tidings of God's goodwill, loving-kindness, and favor to **EVERY OBJECT OF HIS LOVE**, accomplished and grounded in Christ's **PERSON** and **WORK** as His people's Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Savior. That goodwill, lovingkindness and favor is "**freely given**" to each and every one of those He redeemed **IN TIME** by God the Holy Spirit in regeneration and conversion - "**Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given** (charis - grace) **to us of God.**"(I Cor.2:12) So the "*grace of God*" is the Gospel message concerning the "**RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD**" established through the doing and dying of the God sent Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, that "**RIGHTEOUSNESS**" imputed to God's elect, with absolutely **NO CONDITIONS placed ON** the recipients of God's mercy - **IS THAT CLEAR ENOUGH? LISTEN TO ME**: To those who has been taught of God and know themselves to be **SINNERS**, that is **GOOD NEWS**, actually **THE BEST OF NEWS**.*

Notice Paul's words - "**I do not frustrate the grace of God.**" **Imagine that**: the greatest and most active of all the Apostles in declaring and standing dogmatically for the "*grace of God*" declaring to these Galatian believers - "**I DO NOT frustrate the grace of God**". Keep in mind, the Apostle Paul was falsely attacked from **TWO DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS**. From **ONE DIRECTION**, he was attacked by those who hated the message of full and free salvation based exclusively on **a righteousness** the sinner has no part in producing or maintaining, telling people that Paul was **preaching the lie** - "**Let us do evil that good may come.**" Like our Lord, they accused Paul of being against the law or subverting God's law. That's the same charge the natural mind places on all those who unapologetically declare salvation by God's **FREE GRACE** through the accomplished work of Christ **ALONE**. Paul didn't even seek to try to deny or denounce this erroneous charge which **EVERY UNREGENERATE MIND** brings against the "*grace of God*". He simply declared - "**And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let**

*us do evil, that good may come? **WHOSE DAMNATION IS JUST.***"(Rom.3:8) From the **other direction** the Judaizers **attacked** Paul and his ministry by trying to portray Paul as being in agreement with them on this matter of the **importance and necessity of circumcision** in order for one to be saved. Unlike the other attack brought against the Gospel of God's free grace, **this attack was much more subtle**, incorporating a lot of the same language Paul and the Apostles used, but then denying the reality of justification exclusively through Christ's accomplished work. We know they had tried to paint Paul as being in agreement with them because of his words in **Gal.5:11** - "*And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.*" Therefore Paul declared to these Galatians who were in danger of going along with the Judaizers on this damnable heresy - "*I do not frustrate the grace of God*". What was this "*grace of God*"? He stated it in Vss.19,20 - "*For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" Paul stated dogmatically: "I will not despise, deny, reject, **OR MAKE VOID** the "*faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*" by teaching or even **IMPLYING** that a sinner can be justified in any way other than by the "*righteousness of Christ*", freely imputed and rested in by God-given faith. **THIS IS SUCH A CRITICAL LIVE OR DEATH ISSUE.** **Let me state this clearly and dogmatically** - Believers, justified saints, those born again and indwelt by God the Holy Spirit **WILL NOT** and **DO NOT** "*frustrate the grace of God*". Paul wouldn't, and **NEITHER WILL WE!**

Paul makes it very clear **HOW** unregenerate sinners, those who are religious, sincere, and dedicated "*frustrate the grace of God*" - "*I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*" Before Paul met our blessed Lord on the road to Damascus, he frustrated the grace of God. **Just like him, we frustrated it as well.** **How did we do that?** By believing and teaching anything other than complete justification through the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The way of salvation is a **way of righteousness.** Our Lord declared - "*Except YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS shall exceed [the righteousness of] Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven.*"(Matt.5:20) **LISTEN TO ME CLOSELY:** Morality **IS NOT RIGHTEOUSNESS** - Sincerity **DOES NOT EQUAL RIGHTEOUSNESS** - Repentance **CAN NOT BRING** or **ESTABLISH RIGHTEOUSNESS** - And even **KEEPING THE LAW** by a sinner **DOES NOT RESULT IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.** The **ONLY RIGHTEOUSNESS** God can, will, and must accept is a righteousness equal to His own. Therefore, in order for God to "*justify the ungodly*", He had to establish a righteousness for them. And thanks be to our God, He did it in the person and work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ - "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*"(Rom.10:4); "*For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God IN HIM.*"(II Cor.5:21); "*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, AND THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS IS OF ME, saith the LORD.*"(Isa.54:17); "*Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.*"(Isa.45:24) Paul told the Roman believers - "*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the*

*charge of God's elect? **IT IS GOD THAT JUSTIFIETH.***"(Rom.9:31-33) **HERE'S THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION:** What is the **BASIS, GROUND, or HOPE** of a righteousness that can justify the ungodly? "*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*"(Acts 13:38,39) If any sinner seeks righteousness and justification **BY THE LAW**, including the most insignificant of laws like circumcision, (**or in our day - a profession; baptism; church attendance; tithing; good works, etc.**) they have frustrated the grace of God, representing God's grace as something that is unnecessary.

**But even worse than that:** If a justifying righteousness can be attained by the works of the law, or if men can be justified by their obedience to God's law, "*then Christ is dead in vain*". **WHAT A THOUGHT!** The original word Paul used translated in the English "*in vain*", means 'without a cause, for nought, or **USELESSLY**'. If righteousness **can come by law obedience performed by the sinner:** 1) There was no necessity for Christ coming, living, or dying; 2) If righteousness can be produced by the sinners obedience to God's holy law, Christ died without any true reason, or just cause; 3) Christ died to bring in a righteousness which could have been established or produced without His death. **In other words,** His blood and life might have been spared, **His sufferings and death being entirely unnecessary.** Or to put it as bluntly as we can - **GOD KILLED HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON NEEDLESSLY.** *Can you as a justified sinner imagine thinking such a thought concerning the person and work of the "**holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners**" Son of God?* For any sinner to seek to establish a righteousness of their own by law obedience, or morality, or sincerity is to cast contempt on the wisdom, love, and grace of God in this matter of justification. Paul declared in **Gal.2:21** - "*Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*" He had already told the Galatians, and even Peter - "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*"(**Gal.2:16**) To imply that anything is necessary to justify God's elect other than Christ's accomplished work as the sinner's Surety is the greatest of indignities to the person, character, works, and death of Christ. Let me again read for you Paul's **CONDEMNATION** of those who do so: "*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*"(**Gal.1:6-9**)

So the conclusion of this matter rests in the elect sinner's justification based solely on the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can strongly conclude that there is absolutely no possibility of righteousness being established by the law of works, **otherwise Christ would have never died.** Our justification is **ACCOMPLISHED** solely **by and through** Christ's righteousness **ALONE**, with absolutely **NO CONDITIONS ON A SINNER** or **ANY CONTRIBUTION** from the sinner in any way, **TO ANY DEGREE**, at any time, - "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his*

*righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."*(Rom.3:23-26)

May we like Paul seek ever and always to **NEVER** frustrate the grace of God. Matter of fact, if we are His, like Paul our **DOGMATIC** stand and statement will be His - "**I DO NOT frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, THEN Christ is dead in vain.**"