

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. 17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. 18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20 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. 21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. Gal. 2:16-21

Verses 19-21 draw a very stark contrast. We have set before us two very different mindsets. Let me review the setting for verse 21:

One the one hand

Under the Law	Alive in Christ
Alive toward the law: Thinking I can do it: Seeking righteousness through obedience to commandments.	Alive toward God: through faith: Receiving the righteousness of faith, through Christ’s obedience.
Dead to God: in unbelief under the curse of sin and death.	Dead to the Law: through the crucifixion of Christ—by faith in Christ
Living in the flesh—in bondage to sin through unbelief	Christ living in Me through faith in the Son of God.
Self-Confidence; Rationalistic; Unrest; Deep anxiety; Fear of Death; Guilt; Resentment toward the God of the Bible.	No confidence in the flesh; Faithful; Peace with God; Deep trust in the heart; No fear of death. Love for God.
Condemnation of Others; Agitation and seeking control of others.	Love and mercy to men. Doing good to all men, especially the household of God.
Frustrating the Grace of God	Magnifying the Grace of God

- I. What is the Grace of God? Let me explain it to you in the simplest of terms. It is that God has provided a way for the salvation of His elect from the foundation of the world, and that their works have nothing to do with it. The great elements of this salvation are as follows:
 - a. There was an eternal agreement in the Holy Trinity from the foundation of the world to provide eternal life to men, some of the fallen sons of Adam—a number known only to God, but of every kindred, tribe and nation in the world.
 - b. The foundation of this salvation is in the mysterious love of God—mysterious because God finds nothing in these people that is worthy of salvation.
 - c. This is true because all men are under the curse of sin and death because of Adam’s sin. The curse of sin and death came upon all men, because of the righteous judgment of God.
 - d. Because it was utterly beyond the strength of man to do anything about his miserable condition, God took upon Himself the salvation of His people. Hence, the eternal agreement: that the Son of God would take upon Himself to fulfill the requirements of God’s righteousness:
 - i. The law required punishment for transgression: Christ did this.
 - ii. The law required perfect obedience in order to merit eternal life: Christ did this.
 - e. Having fulfilled the law, two things are provided for God’s people:

- i. The elect can never be punished for sin: Christ has been punished. God will not impute sin to His people forever. There is no condemnation.
 - ii. The elect receive eternal life. Paul: “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” There is a power that works in the people of God. As I said last week, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit come to live with you. “Abide” with you, is the way Jesus puts it. This power of God changes and transforms you, as life works in you, not death.
 - iii. Your life is now by the Spirit of God through the Gospel, not by the works of the flesh which are by the law. This is what eternal life is: new life in Christ through the goodness and free gift of God.
 - iv. This life is hidden in Christ, and cannot be understood by those who do not believe. A man must be born again to see the kingdom of God.
 - f. Do you have to understand all this? Of course not. What is necessary is that you see eternal life as a gift of God through the grace of God and that you receive it by faith, faith that Jesus died for sinners and that you are a sinner. This is what is necessary: that you renounce your own righteousness and trust Christ for salvation.
- II. What is frustrating the grace of God? Paul makes it clear in this passage.
 - a. Frustrating the grace of God is introducing the works of the law into the grace.
 - b. If righteousness is by grace then it cannot be by works; if it is by works, then it cannot be by grace.
 - c. Either: it is a gift without works; or it is earned in some way. You cannot have it both ways, and that is exactly what Paul says in Romans 11:6 *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*
 - d. To frustrate the grace of God is to replace the grace of God by anything earned. You spoil the righteousness of Christ, when you mix your own with it.
 - e. To frustrate the grace of God is to seek God in any way except by faith. Faith alone. The writer of Hebrews put it this way: 11: 6 *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*
 - f. Seeking God by faith is the way we honor God truly:
 - i. We magnify the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins.
 - ii. We magnify the love and mercy of God.
 - iii. We confess our own sins, and agree with God’s verdict about ourselves.
 - iv. We seek the God who IS, not who is a figment of our imaginations, or the imagination of someone else.
 - v. We accept the reality that God has presented to us; not the dreams of idolatry and imagination.
- III. What are the characteristics of this eternal life, which we possess now by faith in Jesus Christ?
 - a. It is a life of thankfulness. I no longer chaff against reality but seek to conform it to my dreams and imagination. I see the hand of God in all things, and it is a good and perfect hand. “All things work together for good...”
 - i. Those who do not live thankful lives of faith will scoff at this, and begin to raise all sorts of objections. If God is good what about Hitler and the Nazis; what about terrorism, war death, etc.?
 - ii. If you want to be bitter and angry, there is sufficient material in the world as grist for your bitter mill.

- iii. It is true that the way of the wicked is hard. He is cursed in his family, in his work, as he goes and comes; He lashes out against the curse, and feels that he does not deserve it, for he does not consider that he is a member of a fallen race; he is bitter toward God and all that God represents. He shows himself to be under the curse of God by his cursing and bitterness. He refuses to accept grace and mercy, for he desires to be treated fairly, according to his own standards. He goes in the way of Cain, “My punishment is greater than I can bear!”
- b. It is a life of love for Jesus Christ. Jesus said that those who have been forgiven much will love much. Those who do not feel forgiven are bitter, angry, and defensive. Those who know that their sins are forgiven love and honor Jesus Christ. We do not want to disgrace Him, but to honor Him. We rejoice when those we love are honored and esteemed. We rejoice and those who have received the grace of God have been arrested by the love of God in Christ, are drawn by that love, and rejoice in that love.
- c. It is a life that is defined by love and grace toward others. We measure by the measure that we are measured by. In this we fulfill the law, Romans 10:4 *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* And Romans 13:8 *“He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. Again: Romans 13:9, 10: For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law* This is not a “higher law” than the Ten Commandments, but the very requirement of that law itself and is fulfilled only by faith in Christ.
- d. It is a life in which all good things that we do are the work of God in us, and not our own works according to the flesh:
 - i. Paul was confident of the Philippian that “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” [1:6]
 - ii. Paul believed it was God that worked “in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.”
 - iii. Paul believed that we have been predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Romans 8.
 - iv. Paul believed that we are God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10

Do you receive this grace? Pray this prayer. “Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. I thank you that you died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive my sins and take control of my life, that I might live by faith. I accept what you have said, that you love me and gave your life for me. I do believe, O Lord, and want to live a life of thankfulness for all your love and grace to me.”

May God bless you.