

Title: **GALATIANS**
 “I do not Frustrate the Grace of God.”

Text: Galatians 2:21

Date: Tuesday Evening — April 6, 2004

Tape # Y-13a

Readings: *Bob Duff and Larry Brown*

Introduction:

If I had opportunity to address all the preachers, religious leaders, theologians, and religious people of this world at one time, who believe and teach that salvation is in any way, to any degree dependent upon or determined by the will or work of man, I would lay this solemn charge, this horrible indictment against them — You frustrate the grace of God and make the death of the Lord Jesus Christ an insignificant, meaningless, useless thing. That is precisely the charge Paul laid against who taught such heresy in Galatia. Then, he declared, as spokesman for all who believe and preach the gospel of God’s free, sovereign, saving grace in Christ, *“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain”* (Gal. 2:21). That is just how serious the book of Galatians is.

When Paul sat down to write this Epistle, he was clearly provoked and angry. This book was intended (intended by Paul and by God the Holy Spirit who inspired it) to be a deliberate, forceful confrontation. There are no friendly greetings, no gentle salutations, no kind, soothing reflections in this book. Everything in these six chapters is “in your face” confrontation.

AN ANGRY APOSTLE

To say the least, the apostle was a little hot under the collar. Why? What provoked Paul and stirred his anger? The Galatians churches, churches God raised up under the influence of Paul's ministry among them, were being led away from Christ and his gospel by false teachers in their midst. These men, professing to be the servants of Christ, were slandering Paul, accusing him of being a false prophet, and denying the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ, while pretending to promote and defend it. They were trying to make Christianity an extension of Judaism, just as multitudes do today.

They did not openly deny that salvation is by the grace of God in Christ. They did not openly state that Christ is not enough, that Christ is not sufficient, or even that works must be mixed with faith. The messengers of Satan are far more subtle than that. They were teaching salvation by grace through works; but they did not state it quite that way. The Galatian heretics taught that true faith is a faith that expresses itself in the observance of the Mosaic law, that any faith that did not express itself in law obedience was a false faith. These men and their heresy were being embraced by the Galatian churches.

Paul was shocked. How could they be confused about this? If salvation is by grace, it cannot be by works. If salvation is by works, it cannot be by grace (Rom. 11:6). There can be no mixture of the two.

(Rom 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.”

The issue at Galatia, unlike the issues at Corinth (horrible as they were), was the gospel of God, the glory of God, the finished work of Christ, and the souls of men. Therefore, Paul jumped in, as one writer put it, “with both fists flying.” Paul had reason to be provoked. His anger was completely justified.

KEY VERSES

There are two key verses in this Epistle. These two verses summarize the things at stake in Galatia and the things at stake in our day (2:21 and 6:14).

(Gal 2:21) “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

(Gal 6:14) “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

ONE GOSPEL

It is ever the practice of those who oppose the gospel of God’s free grace to slander the men who preach it. The

legalists at Galatia knew they could not refute Paul's doctrine by Scripture. If they were to turn men away from Paul's message, they must turn them away from him. Therefore, they sought to discredit Paul as God's messenger.

For this reason, the opening verses of Galatians 1 identify Paul decisively as an apostle of God, not an apostle of men, or an apostle by the authority of men, but of and by the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father. With that as his authority, Paul denounces as false every rival gospel. He tells us that every "gospel" that teaches the sinner to look for righteousness and salvation anywhere except in Christ alone is no gospel at all, but a frustration of the grace of God; and with regard to those who preach another "gospel" he says, "*let him be accursed*" — "Let him be damned forever" (1:6-9).

(Gal 1:6-9) "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: (7) Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. (8) 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. (9) 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."

The gospel of God is good news about something done, not good advice about something you must do. The

gospel is the good news of redemption obtained, righteousness brought in, sin put away, and salvation secured by obedience and death of Christ as the sinner's Substitute (Dan. 9:24; John 19:30; Heb. 1:1-3; 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10-14). Anyone who asserts that something must be done by the sinner before these things can be accomplished is a false prophet, preaching a false gospel, and those who follow him follow him to hell.

That is just how serious this matter is. And that is exactly what Paul asserts in Galatians 1:6-9. **Having said that, the fat was in the fire.** In verses 10-24 Paul asserts that, contrary to the accusations of his detractors at Galatia, he had no desire to please men and made no effort to do so. The gospel of God was not something he learned from men. He learned it by divine revelation. His authority as an apostle and preacher, though confirmed by the other apostles (2:1-10), was not derived from them, but from Christ himself.

PETER'S COMPROMISE

So far was Paul from being a compromising man-pleaser that when Peter compromised the gospel by his actions at Antioch Paul withstood him to the face (2:11-17). While at Antioch, Peter enjoyed a good pig-picking with the Gentile brethren there, until he saw some of his Jewish brethren approaching. At the sight of these men, Peter got up from the table and separated himself from the Gentiles, as if to say, "Oh, I should not have done that. The law of Moses forbids eating good barbeque."

When he did, by his mere act, he led many into error, even Barnabas. By his mere action, Peter led others to believe that righteousness, justification, salvation and acceptance with God is not totally the work of God's grace, but in some way dependent upon our own obedience to the law of God.

FRUSTRATING GRACE

Peter's actions were far more evil than most imagine. His implied doctrine was a frustration of the grace of God. He implied that justifying righteousness can be obtained by the works of men. Therefore Paul publicly withstood him to the face before both the Jews and the Gentiles at Antioch (2:14-17).

(Gal 2:14-17) “But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, 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? (15) We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, (16) 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.”

JUSTIFICATION

We are justified by the faith of Christ, not by our faith in Christ, but by the faith and faithful obedience of Christ himself unto death as our Substitute. By our faith in Christ we receive and enjoy the blessedness of justification. We are not justified by something we do, but by Christ alone. To suggest, or imply in any way that our works have anything at all to do with making us righteous before God for justification is to deny the gospel altogether. Paul puts it this way — *“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain”* (2:21). If righteousness could be established by something men do, then Christ died for nothing! Paul could not have used stronger language to denounce the heresy of mixing works with grace for justification. Salvation is by grace alone, in Christ alone, received by faith alone, without works of any kind.

ANTINOMIANISM

Paul understood exactly what he was saying, and understood exactly what his detractors would say about his doctrine. He could almost hear them screaming with clinched fists, “Antinomianism! That is antinomianism! If our works have nothing to do with righteousness, if we can be saved without obeying God’s law and doing good works ourselves, you are telling us that we can go

out and live like we want to in lawlessness, licentiousness, and lasciviousness.”

I know that is what they said, both because that is what Paul says they said (2:17) and because I have heard those words countless times. You see, the legalist never really wants to live as he pretends to live. The very language he uses to denounce free grace betrays the fact that if he could be saved without serving God, he would not serve him.

The fact is, any man who preaches salvation by grace alone, without works, will be accused of antinomianism, of promoting licentiousness; but the charge is baseless and false.

(Gal 2:17) “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.”

SANCTIFICATION

In chapter 3 Paul moves from justification to sanctification. He argues with the Galatians and us that their experience of grace forbids the idea that righteousness can be obtained by our works (Gal. 3:1-3).

(Gal 3:1-3) “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? (2) This only would I learn of you,

Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (3) Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”

Sanctification and justification are two distinct works of God’s grace; but the two cannot be separated. Those who are justified are also sanctified. And sanctification as well as justification is a work of grace alone. Once we have received righteousness in justification by faith in Christ, we do not make ourselves more holy, more righteous before God by our works in sanctification. Christ is both our justification and sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30; Heb. 10:10-14). His name is Jehovah-tsidkenu — “*THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*” (Jer. 23:6). We have no righteousness before God but him. To suggest that we make ourselves righteous by our works in sanctification is to mix grace and works; and that is a frustration of 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*” (2:21).

NO MIXTURE

In a word Paul’s doctrine is this — Any mixture of grace and works in the matter of righteousness is a total denial of grace, for it is a frustration of grace. Therefore (3:19-4:31) he tells us that the whole purpose of the law was fulfilled when Christ suffered, died, and rose again as our Substitute. The law was our schoolmaster unto Christ. Once Christ came and fulfilled it, the law’s work

was finished. — “*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth*” (Rom. 10:4).

There is no place for legal bondage in the household of faith. Those who would bring God’s saints under the yoke of the law deny the whole gospel of the grace of God and every believer’s experience of grace. They who attempt to make themselves righteous by the works of the law are still under the curse of the law (3:10-11).

(Gal 3:10-11) “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. (11) But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith.”

- They deny our experience of grace (3:1-5).
- They deny the Old Testament Scriptures, which assert that Abraham was justified by faith without works (3:6-9).
- They deny the efficacy of Christ’s atonement, asserting that Christ died in vain, that he did not actually secure the blessing of grace for God’s elect by his death (3:13-14).
- They deny the whole purpose of the law as a schoolmaster unto Christ (3:15-29).
- They deny the blessed liberty of the gospel and the grace of God, the very liberty Christ obtained for us by his obedience to the law and his death by the law,

by attempting to bring us back under the yoke of bondage (4:1-11).

(Gal 4:4-7) “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (6) And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (7) Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

Christ died for God’s elect (his eternally adopted children) that we might receive the Spirit of adoption in regeneration, giving us faith to look upon God through the blood of our Savior with confidence as our heavenly Father (Heb. 10:19-22). Trusting Christ, we are no longer servants, but sons. The promoters of law righteousness would have us swap sonship for slavery! No wonder Paul was fearful for their souls! No wonder he stood in doubt of them (4:19). These Gentile believers, to whom the law was never given, were being duped by their false teachers to swap the liberty of Christ for the bondage of Moses.

(Gal 4:9-11) “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? (10) Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. (11) I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”

In the latter part of chapter 4 (vv. 21-31) Paul uses Sarah and Hagar and their sons Isaac and Ishmael as an allegory. The allegory teaches us that as Hagar and Ishmael (the fruit of Abraham's shameful works to perform God's righteous promise) had to be cast out of Abraham's house, so all our own righteousness must be cast out as filthy rags. It is written, "*Cast out the bond woman and her son.*" There is no room in the house of grace for the works of the flesh, for legal obedience.

STAND FAST

In the 5th chapter Paul urges us to stand fast in the blessed liberty of the gospel, warning us that if we do anything by which we hope to gain God's favor, improve our standing in God's favor, or keep ourselves in God's favor, we have abandoned the gospel and abandoned grace altogether. He says, Christ is of no value to anyone who attempts to make himself righteous before God (5:1-4).

(Gal 5:1-4) "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (2) Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (3) For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. (4) Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

There is no antinomianism here, no licentiousness, no encouragement to sin. Far from it! The rest of the book of Galatians is a declaration that this liberty of grace is life in the Spirit. As we walk in the Spirit, looking to Christ alone for righteousness and salvation, we will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. It is self-righteousness and legalism that causes men and women to bite and devour one another (in the name of righteousness!). Grace teaches believers to restore their fallen brethren, to bear one another's burdens, to love one another, and so to fulfil the law of Christ. Grace teaches us not to sow to the flesh and reap corruption, but to the Spirit and reap life everlasting. Our only hope is the cross of Christ. Our only motivation, our only rule of life is the cross. And all who have this hope and live by this rule are blessed as "*the Israel of God.*"

(Gal 6:14-16) "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (15) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (16) And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

THE CROSS

The sum and essence of all true doctrine, the essence of all true Christianity, and of all motivation in the lives of

God's elect in this world is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (6:14).

(Gal 6:14) “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

When Paul writes, “*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,*” he is telling us that his only trust, his only hope before God is that which Christ accomplished as our all-sufficient, effectual Redeemer at Calvary.

Throughout the book of Galatians the cross of Christ is central. The cross, as Paul uses it, refers not to the wooden cross upon which Christ died, or the historic fact of the cross, but the doctrine of the cross — Redemption and salvation by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as our sin-atonement Substitute.

1. **The cross is deliverance by blood atonement** (1:3-5).

(Gal 1:3-5) “Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, (4) Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: (5) To whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

2. **The cross is life** (2:19-20).

(Gal 2:19-20) “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.”

3. **The cross is righteousness** (2:21).

(Gal 2:21) “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

4. **The cross is the remove of our curse** (3;13).

(Gal 3:13) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:”

5. **The cross is the certainty of God’s blessing** (3:14).

(Gal 3:14) “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

6. **The cross is the center of our faith** (3:22).

(Gal 3:22) “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

7. **The cross is the ground of our adoption** (4:4-7).

(Gal 4:4-7) “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (6) And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (7) Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

8. **The cross is an offense to the unbelieving** (5:11).

(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.”

9. **The cross is the source of all grace** (5:22-24).

(Gal 5:22-24) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (24) And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

10. **The cross is that by which we are crucified unto the world and the world unto us** (6:14-15).

(Gal 6:14-15) “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (15) For in

Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”

11. **The cross is our rule, our peace, our mercy, our life** (6:16-18).

(Gal 6:16-18) “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. (17) From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. (18) Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.”

“I must needs go home by the way of the cross,
There's no other way but this;
I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light,
If the way of the cross I miss.

I must needs go on in the blood sprinkled way,
The path that the Savior trod,
If I ever climb to the heights sublime,
Where the soul is at home with God.

So I bid farewell to the way of the world,
To walk in it never more;
For the Lord says, "*Come*," and I seek my home,
Where He waits at the open door.

The way of the cross leads home,
The way of the cross leads home,
It is sweet to know as I onward go,

The way of the cross leads home.”

(Gal 6:14) “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

(Phil 3:1-3) “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe. (2) Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. (3) For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”