

## Grace To Live With Christ

*"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. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."*

Galatians 2:20-21 (KJV)

Paul had a tremendous understanding of grace, its work through redemption and his receiving its benefit as a believer in Jesus Christ. He understood the importance of not invalidating its force through falling into the performance trap that many of us do. Often we measure our faith by all that we do rather than who we are, *i.e.* sons and daughters of God possessing personal rights of ongoing fellowship with the Father. So Paul is seeking to caution us to maintain a proper perspective on grace.

He indicates it is possible to remove grace from its place in our lives. The word, "*frustrate*" meaning to set aside is "*atheteo*" meaning to make void, to put as of no value, do away with something laid down, presented or established, to act towards anything as though it were annulled. This is a very strong statement. Paul is saying to us, it is possible to nullify and make void the work of grace in our lives that has been established by the Father. The Apostle follows this by saying that if righteousness comes by the law then Christ died in vain. The Law here speaks of the act of placing ourselves, through our own efforts, in a position of worth by living according to a set standard, in his context, the Law of Moses. In ours, a cultural norm of living in a Christian country according to an acceptable moral standard.

The Law of Moses was just exactly that, a standard for behavior intended to qualify mankind to either stand before God righteous or nullify that right through identifying personal unrighteous. What is wonderful to learn the grace of God does what the Law tried to do and could not. It places man in a position before the Father, one of righteousness, worth, with no past record of sinfulness!! One of the reasons for this letter was to refute the teaching by Jewish believers that it was necessary to continue to keep the Law in addition to what Jesus had done for them in salvation and the work of grace. Paul made the case that our righteousness, or attempt at righteous conduct, fell so far short of God's grace that it wasn't even close to satisfying God's demand for righteousness. Therefore, his understanding was that we entered into Christ's death on the cross which was the basis for experiencing grace.

Through the Holy Spirit, the life of Christ was now alive in the believer and provided supernatural strength to live for God. In no way could man hope to accomplish this great challenge in his own strength and abilities. Paul says he was crucified with Christ and thereby opened a door into his life for Jesus Christ to come in and live through him. He was dead to the world, dead to that person who lived under the Law, and Christ is living in him. To behave in any manner which would attempt to bring a world-consciousness kind of thinking or worse yet, the deception of religious motivated living in order to gain acceptance with God to work in his life, would be to frustrate the grace of God. He understood very well that the just were to live by faith.

To believe that through our personal conduct we are going to establish a basis for a qualified acceptance with God is to deny the power and work of grace in our lives. It is to nullify, make void, and deprive grace of its power to bring us into right relationship with the Father. No matter how hard we try, we cannot add to what Jesus did nor the power of the Holy Spirit to change our lives. As important as Bible study, prayer, church attendance, giving, loving, godly living...all the important instructions found in the Word, they cannot and do not make grace effective in our lives. These things certainly are the *fruit* of grace in our lives, but not the *source* of it. And more importantly, they do not serve as the foundation for it. God *alone* is the Source of the grace that fills our hearts and the Foundation of our lives that motivates us to live godly lives.