

SALVATION BY WORKS, A CRIMINAL DOCTRINE-- GAL. 2:21

SERMON TEXT: GAL. 2:21

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."-- <Galatians 2:21>.

The idea of salvation by the merit of our own works is exceedingly insinuating. It matters not how often it is refuted, it asserts itself again and again; and when it gains the least foothold it soon makes great advances. Hence Paul, who was determined to show it no quarter, opposed everything which bore its likeness. He was determined not to permit the thin end of the wedge to be introduced into the church, for well he knew that willing hands would soon be driving it home: hence when Peter sided with the Judaizing party, and seemed to favour those who demanded that the Gentiles should be circumcised, our brave apostle withstood him to the face. He fought always for salvation by grace through faith, and contended strenuously against all thought of righteousness by obedience to the precepts of the ceremonial or the moral law. No one could be more explicit than he upon the doctrine that we are not justified or saved by works in any degree, but solely by the grace of God. His trumpet gave forth no uncertain sound, but gave forth the clear note, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" <Eph 2:8>. Grace meant grace with Him, and he could not endure any tampering with the matter, or any frittering away of its meaning.

So fascinating is the doctrine of legal righteousness that the only way to deal with it is Paul's way. Stamp it out. Cry war to the knife against it. Never yield to it; but remember the apostle's firmness, and how stoutly he held his ground: "To whom," saith he, "we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour" <Gal 2:5>.

The error of salvation by works is exceedingly plausible. You will constantly hear it stated as a self-evident truth, and vindicated on account of its suppose practical usefulness, while the gospel doctrine of salvation by faith is railed at and accused of evil consequences. It is affirmed that if we preach salvation by good works we shall encourage virtue; and so it might seem in theory, but history proves by many instances that as a matter of fact where such doctrine has been preached virtue has become singularly uncommon, and that in proportion as the merit of works has been cried up, morality has gone down. On the other hand, where justification by faith has been preached, conversions have followed, and purity of life has been produced even in the worst of men. Those who lead godly and gracious lives are ready to confess that the cause of their zeal for holiness lies in their faith in Christ Jesus; but where will you meet with a devout and upright man who glories in his own works?

Self-righteousness is natural to our fallen humanity. Hence it is the essence of all false religions. Be they what they may, they all agree in seeking salvation by our own deeds. He who worships his idols will torture his body, will fast, will perform long pilgrimages, and do or endure anything in order to merit salvation. The Romish Church holds up continually before the eyes of its votaries the prize to be earned by self-denial, by penance, by prayers, or by sacraments, or by some other performances of man. Go where you may, the natural religion of fallen man is salvation by his own merits. An old divine has well said, every man is born a heretic upon this point, and he naturally gravitates towards this heresy in one form or another. Self-salvation, either by his personal worthiness, or by his repentance, or by his resolves, is a hope ingrained in human nature, and very hard to remove. This foolishness is bound up in the heart of every child, and who shall get it out of him?

This erroneous idea arises partly from ignorance, for men are ignorant of the law of God, and of what holiness really is. If they knew that even an evil thought is a breach of the law, and that the law once broken in any point is altogether violated, they would be at once convinced that there can be no righteousness by the law to those who have already offended against it. They are also in great ignorance

concerning themselves, for those very persons who talk about self-righteousness are as a rule openly chargeable with fault; and if not, were they to sit down and really look at their own lives, they would soon perceive event in their best works such impurity of motive beforehand, or such pride and self-congratulation afterwards, that they would see the gloss taken off from all their performances, and they would be utterly ashamed of them. Nor is it ignorance alone which leads men to self-righteousness, they are also deceived by pride.

Man cannot endure to be saved on the footing of mercy; he loves not to plead guilty and throw himself on the favour of the great King; he cannot brook to be treated as a pauper, and blessed as a matter of charity; he desires to have a finger in his own salvation, and claim at least a little credit for it. Proud man will not have heaven itself upon terms of grace; but so long as he can he sets up one plea or another, and holds to his own righteousness as though it were his life. This self-confidence also arises from wicked unbelief, for through his self-conceit man will not believe God. Nothing is more plainly revealed in Scripture than this,-- that by the works of the law shall no man be justified, yet men in some shape or other stick to the hope of legal righteousness; they will have it that they must prepare for grace, or assist mercy, or in some degree deserve eternal life. They prefer their own flattering prejudices to the declaration of the heart-searching God.

The testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning the deceitfulness of the heart is east aside, and the declaration of God that there is none that doeth good, no, not one, is altogether denied. Is not this a great evil? Self-righteousness is also much promoted by the almost universal spirit of trifling which is now abroad. Only while men trifle with themselves can they entertain the idea of personal merit before God. He who comes to serious thought, and begins to understand the character of God, before whom the heavens are not pure, and the angels are charged with folly,-- he, I say, that comes to serious thought and beholds a true vision of God, abhors himself in dust and ashes, and is for ever silenced as to any thought of self-justification. It is because we do not seriously examine our condition that we think ourselves rich and increased in goods. A man may fancy that he is prospering in business, and yet he may be going back in the world. If he does not face his books or take stock, he may be living in a fool's paradise, spending largely when on the verge of bankruptcy. Many think well of themselves because they never think seriously. They do not look below the surface, and hence they are deceived by appearances. The most troublesome business to many men is thought; and the last thing they will do is to weigh their actions, or test their motives, or ponder their ways, to see whether things be right with them. Self-righteousness being supported by ignorance, by pride, by unbelief, and by the natural superficiality of the human mind, is strongly entrenched and cannot readily be driven out of men.

Yet self-righteousness is evidently evil, for it makes light of sin. It talks of merit in the case of one who has already transgressed, and boasts of excellence in reference to a fallen and depraved creature. It prattles of little faults, small failures, and slight omissions, and so makes sin to be a venial error which may be readily overlooked. Not so faith in God, for though it recognises pardon, yet that pardon is seen to come in a way which proves sin to be exceeding sinful. On the other hand, the doctrine of salvation by works has not a word of comfort in it for the fallen. It gives to the elder son all that his proud heart can claim, but for the prodigal it has no welcome. The law has no invitation for the sinner, for it knows nothing of mercy. If salvation be by the works of the law, what must become of the guilty, and the fallen, and the abandoned? By what hopes can these be recalled? This unmerciful doctrine bars the door of hope, and hands over the lost ones to the executioner, in order that the proud Pharisee may air his boastful righteousness, and thank God that he is not as other men are.

It is the intense selfishness of this doctrine which condemns it as an evil thing. It naturally exalts self. If a man conceives that he will be saved by his own works he thinks himself somewhat, and glories in the dignity of human nature: when he has been attentive to religious exercises he rubs his hands and feels that he deserves well of his Maker; he goes home to repeat his prayers, and ere he falls asleep he wonders how he can have grown to be so good and so much superior to those around him. When he walks abroad

he feels as if he dwelt apart in native excellence, a person much distinguished from "the vulgar herd," a being whom to know is to admire. All the while he considers himself to be very humble, and is often amazed at his own condescension. What is this but a most hateful spirit? God, who sees the heart, loathes it. He will accept the humble and the contrite, but he puts far from him those who glory in themselves. Indeed, my brethren, what have we to glory in? Is not every boast a lie? What is this self-hood but a peacock feather, fit only for the cap of a fool? May God deliver us from exalting self; and yet we cannot be delivered from so doing if we hold in any degree the doctrine of salvation by our own good works.

At this time I desire to shoot at the very heart of that soul-destroying doctrine, while I show you, in the first place, that two great crimes are contained in the idea of self-justification. When I have brought forth that indictment, I shall further endeavor to show that these two great crimes are committed by many, and then, thirdly, it will be a delight to assert that the true believer does not fall into these crimes. May God, the Holy Spirit, help us while meditating upon this impotent theme.

I. First, then, TWO GREAT CRIMES ARE CONTAINED IN SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. These high crimes and misdemeanours are frustrating the grace of God, and making Christ to have died in vain.

The first is the frustration of the grace of God. The word here translated "frustrate" means to make void, to reject, to refuse, to regard as needless. Now, he that hopes to be saved by his own righteousness rejects the grace or free favour of God, regards it as useless, and in that sense frustrates it. It is clear, first, that if righteousness come by the law, the grace of God is no longer required. If we can be saved by our own merits we need justice, but we certainly do not want mercy. If we can keep the law, and claim to be accepted as a matter of debt, it is plain that we need not turn suppliants, and crave for mercy. Grace is a superfluity where merit can be proved. A man who can go into court with a clear case and a bold countenance asks not for mercy of the judge, and the offer of it would insult him. "Give me justice," he says; "give me my rights"; and he stands up for them as a brave Englishman should do. It is only when a man feels that the law condemns him that he puts in a plea for mercy. Nobody ever dreamed of recommending an innocent man to mercy. I say, then, that the man who believes that by keeping the law, or by practising ceremonies, or by undergoing religious performances, he can make himself acceptable before God, most decidedly puts the grace of God on one side as a superfluous thing as far as he is concerned. Is it not clearly so? And is not this a crimson crime-- this frustration of the grace of God?

Next, he makes the grace of God to be at least a secondary thing, which is only a lower degree of the same error. Many think that they are to merit as much as they can by their own exertions, and then the grace of God will make up for the rest. The theory seems to be that we are to keep the law as far as we can, and this imperfect obedience is to stand good, as a sort of composition, say a shilling in the pound, or fifteen shillings in the pound, according as man judges of his own excellence; and then what is required over and above our own hard-earned money the grace of God will supply: in short, the plan is every man his own Saviour, and Jesus Christ and his grace make-weights for our deficiencies. Whether men see it or not, this admixture of law and grace is most dishonouring to the salvation of Jesus Christ. It makes the Saviour's work to be incomplete, though on the cross he cried, "It is finished." Yea, it even treats it as being utterly ineffectual, since it appears to be of no avail till man's works are added to it. According to this notion, we are redeemed as much by our own doings as by the ransom price of Jesus' blood, and man and Christ go shares, both in the work and in the glory. This is an intense form of arrogant treason against the majesty of divine mercy: a capital crime, which will condemn all who continue in it. May God deliver us from thus insulting the throne of grace by bringing a purchase-price in our hand, as if we could deserve such peerless gifts of love.

More than that, he who trusts in himself, his feelings, his works, his prayers, or in anything except the grace of God, virtually gives up trusting in the grace of God altogether: for be it known unto you, that God's grace will never share the work with man's merit. As oil will not combine with water, so neither will human merit and heavenly mercy mix together. The apostle saith in <Romans 11:6>, "If by grace, then it is 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." You must either have salvation wholly because you deserve it, or wholly because God graciously bestows it though you do not deserve it. You must receive salvation at the Lord's hand either as a debt or as a charity, there can be no mingling of the ideas. That which is a pure donation of favour cannot also be a reward of personal deserving. A combination of the two principles of law and grace is utterly impossible. Trust in our own works in any degree effectually shuts us out from all hope of salvation by grace; and so it frustrates the grace of God.

This is another form of this crime, that when men preach up human doings, sufferings, feelings, or emotions as the ground of salvation, they take off the sinner from confidence in Christ, for as long as a man can maintain any hope in himself he will never look to the Redeemer. We may preach for ever and ever, but as long as there remains latent in any one bosom a hope that he can effectually clear himself from sin and win the favour of God by his own works, that man will never accept the proclamation of free pardon through the blood of Christ. we know that we cannot frustrate the grace of God: it will have its way, and the eternal purpose shall be fulfilled; but as the tendency of all teaching which mixes up works with grace is to take men off from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, its tendency is to frustrate the grace of God, and every act is to be judged by its tendency even if the Lord's divine power prevents its working out its natural result. No man can lay another foundation than that which is laid, but inasmuch as they try to do so they are guilty of despising the foundation of God as much as those builders of the olden time who rejected the stone which God had chosen to be the head of the corner. May the grace of God keep us from such a crime as this, lest the blood of other men's souls should crimson our garments.

This hoping to be saved by our own righteousness robs God of his glory. It as good as says, "We want no grace; we need no free favour," It reads of the new covenant which infinite love has made, but by clinging to the old covenant it puts dishonour upon it. In its heart it murmurs, "What need of this covenant of grace? The covenant of works answers every purpose for us." It reads of the great gift of grace in the person of Jesus Christ, and it does despite thereto by the secret thought that human doings are as good as the life and death of the Son of God. It cries, "We will not have this man to save us." A self-righteous hope casts a slur upon the glory of God, since it is clear that if a man could be saved by his own works, he would naturally have the honour of it; but if a man be saved by the free grace of God, then God is glorified. Woe unto those who teach a doctrine which would pluck the crown royal from the head of our sovereign Lord and disgrace the throne of His glory. God help us to be clear of this rank offence against high heaven.

I grow warm upon such a subject as this, for my indignation rises against that which does dishonour to my Lord, and frustrates His grace. This is a sin so gross that even the heathen cannot commit it. They have never heard of the grace of God, and therefore they cannot put a slight upon it: when they perish it will be with a far lighter doom than those who have been told that God is gracious and ready to pardon, and yet turn on their heel and wickedly boast of innocence, and pretend to be clean in the sight of God. This is a sin which devils cannot commit. With all the obstinacy of their rebellion, they can never reach to this. They have never had the sweet notes of free grace and dying love ringing in their ears, and therefore they have never refused the heavenly invitation. What has never been presented to their acceptance cannot be the object of their rejection. Thus, then, my hearer, if you should fall into this deep ditch you will sink lower than the heathen, lower than Sodom and Gomorrah, and lower than the devil himself. Wake up, I pray, and do not dare to frustrate the grace of God.

The second great crime which self-justification commits is making Christ to be dead in vain. This is plain enough. If salvation can be by the works of the law, why did our Lord Jesus die to save us? O, thou bleeding Lamb of God, thine incarnation is a marvel, but thy death upon the accursed tree is such a miracle of mercy as fills all heaven with astonishment. Will any dare to say that thy death, O incarnate God, was a superfluity, a wanton waste of suffering? Do they dare think thee a generous but unwise enthusiast whose death was needless? Can there be any who think thy cross a vain thing? Yes, thousands

virtually do this, and, in fact, all do so who make it out that men might have been saved in some other way, or may now be saved by their own willings and doings.

They who say that the death of Christ goes only part of the way, but that man must do something in order to merit eternal life,- these, I say, make this death of Christ to be only partially effective, and, in yet clearer terms, ineffectual in and of itself. If it be even hinted that the blood of Jesus is not price enough till man adds his silver or his gold, then his blood is not our redemption at all, and Christ is no Redeemer! If it be taught that our Lord's bearing of sin for us did not make a perfect atonement, and that it is ineffectual till we either do or suffer something to complete it, then in the supplemental work lies the real virtue, and Christ's work is in itself insufficient. His death cry of "It is finished," must have been all a mistake, if still it is not finished; and if a believer in Christ is not completely saved by what Christ has done, but must do something himself to complete it, then salvation was not finished, and the Saviour's work remains imperfect till we, poor sinners, lend a hand to make up for his deficiencies. What blasphemy lies in such a supposition! Christ on Calvary made a needless, and a useless offering of himself if any man among you can be saved by the works of the law.

This spirit also rejects the covenant which was sealed with Christ's death. For if we can be saved by the old covenant of works, then the new covenant was not required. In God's wisdom the new covenant was brought in because the first had grown old, and was void by transgression, but if it be not void, then the new covenant is an idle innovation, and the sacrifice of Jesus ratified a foolish transaction. I loathe the words while I pronounce them. No one ever was saved under the covenant of works, nor ever will be, and the new covenant is introduced for that reason; but if there be salvation by the first, then what need was there of the second? Self-righteousness, as far as it can, disannuls the covenant, breaks its seal, and does despite to the blood of Jesus Christ which is the substance, the certificate, and the seal of that covenant. If you hold that a man can be saved by his own good works, you pour contempt upon the testament of love which the death of Jesus has put in force, for there is no need to receive as a legacy of love that which can be earned as the wage of work.

O sirs, this is a sin against each person of the sacred Trinity. It is a sin against the Father. How could He be wise and good, and yet give His only Son to die on yonder tree in anguish, if man's salvation could be wrought by some other means? It is a sin against the Son of God: you dare to say that our redemption price could have been paid somehow else, and that therefore his death was not absolutely needful for the redemption of the world; or if needful, yet not effectual, for it requires something to be added to it before it can effect its purpose. It is a sin against the Holy Ghost, and beware how you sin against him, for such sins are fatal. The Holy Ghost bears witness to the glorious perfection and unconquerable power of the Redeemer's work, and woe to those who reject that witness. He has come into the world on purpose that he may convince men of the sin of not believing in Jesus Christ: and therefore if we think that we can be saved apart from Christ we do despite to the Spirit of his grace.

The doctrine of salvation by works is a sin against all the fallen sons of Adam, for if men cannot be saved except by their own works what hope is left for any transgressor? You shut the gates of mercy on mankind; you condemn the guilty to die without the possibility of remission. You deny all hope of welcome to the returning prodigal, all prospect of Paradise to the dying thief. If heaven be by works, thousands of us will never see its gates. I know that I never shall. You fine fellows may rejoice in your prospects, but what is to become of us? You ruin us all by your boastful scheme.

Nor is this all. It is a sin against the saints, for none of them have any other hope except in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Remove the doctrine of the atoning blood, and you have taken all away; our foundation is gone. If you speak thus you offend the whole generation of godly men. I go further: work-mongering is a sin against the perfect ones above. The doctrine of salvation by works would silence the hallelujahs of heaven. Hush, ye choristers, what meaning is there in your song? You are chanting, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" <Rev 1:5>. But why sing ye so? If salvation be by works, your ascriptions of praise are empty flatteries. You ought to sing, "Unto ourselves

who kept our garments clean, to us be glory for ever and ever"; or at least "unto ourselves whose acts made the Redeemer's work effectual be a full share of praise." But a self-lauding note was never heard in heaven, and therefore we feel sure that the doctrine of self-justification is not of God. I charge you, renounce it as the foe of God and man. This proud system is a sin of deepest dye against the Well-beloved. I cannot endure to think of the insult which it puts upon our dying Lord. If you have made Christ to live in vain, that is bad enough; but to represent him as having died in vain! What shall be said of this? That Christ came to earth for nothing is a statement most horrible; but that he became obedient to the death of the cross without result is profanity at its worst.

II. I will say no more concerning the nature of these sins, but in the second place proceed to the solemn fact that THESE TWO GREAT CRIMES ARE COMMITTED BY MANY PEOPLE. I am afraid they are committed by some who hear me this day. Let everyone search himself and see if these accursed things be not hidden in his heart, and if they be, let him cry unto God for deliverance from them.

Assuredly these crimes are chargeable on those who trifle with the gospel. Here is the greatest discovery that was ever made, the most wonderful piece of knowledge that ever was revealed, and yet you do not think it worth a thought. You come now and then to hear a sermon, but you hear without heart; you read the Scriptures occasionally, but you do not search them as for hid treasure. It is not your first object in life thoroughly to understand and heartily to receive the gospel which God has proclaimed: yet such ought to be the case. What, my friend, does your indifference say that the grace of God is of no great value in your esteem? You do not think it worth the trouble of prayer, of Bible-reading, and attention. The death of Christ is nothing to you-- a very beautiful fact, no doubt; you know the story well, but you do not care enough about it to wish to be a partaker in its benefits. His blood may have power to cleanse from sin, but you do not want remission; his death may be the life of men, but you do not long to live by him. To be saved by the atoning blood does not strike you as being half so important as to carry on your business at a profit and acquire a fortune for your family. By thus trifling with these precious things you do, as far as you can, frustrate the grace of God and make Christ to die in vain.

Another set of people who do this are those who have no sense of guilt. Perhaps they are naturally amiable, civil, honest, and generous people, and they think that these natural virtues are all that is needed. We have many such, in whom there is much that is lovely, but the one thing needful is lacking. They are not conscious that they ever did anything very wrong, they think themselves certainly as good as others, and in some respects rather better. It is highly probable that you are as good as others, and even better than others, but still do you not see, my dear friend, if I am addressing one such person, that, if you are so good that you are to be saved by your goodness, you put the grace of God out of court, and make it vain? The whole have no need of the physician, only they that are sick require his skill, and therefore it was needless that Christ should die for such as you, because you, in your own opinion, had done nothing worthy of death. You claim that you have done nothing very bad; and yet there is one thing in which you have grievously transgressed, and I beg you not to be angry when I charge you with it. You are very bad, because you are so proud as to think yourself righteous, though God hath said that there is none righteous, no, not one. You tell your God that he is a liar. His Word accuses you, and his law condemns you; but you will not believe him, and actually boast of having a righteousness of your own. This is high presumption and arrogant pride, and may the Lord purge you from it. Will you lay this to heart, and remember that if you have never been guilty of anything else this is sin enough to make you mourn before the Lord day and night? You have as far as you could by your proud opinion of yourself made void the grace of God, and declared that Christ died in vain. Hide your face for shame, and entreat for mercy for this glaring offence.

Another sort of people may fancy that they shall escape, but we must now come home to them. Those who despair will often cry, "I know I cannot be saved except by grace, for I am such a great sinner; but, alas, I am too great a sinner to be saved at all. I am too black for Christ to wash out my sins." Ah, my dear friend, though you know it not, you are making void the grace of God, by denying its power and limiting its might. You doubt the efficacy of the Redeemer's blood, and the power of the Father's grace.

What! The grace of God, is not that able to save? Is not the Father of our Lord Jesus able to forgive sin? We joyfully sing:

"Who is a pardoning God like thee?
Or who hath grace so rich and free?"

And you say He cannot forgive you, and this in the teeth of His many promises of mercy. He says, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men" <Mt 12:31>. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" <Isa 1:18>. You say that this is not true. Thus you frustrate the grace of God, and you make out that Christ died in vain, at least for you, for you say that He cannot cleanse you. Oh say not so: let not thine unbelief give the lie to God. Oh, believe that He is able to save even thee, and freely, at this very moment, to put all thy sin away, and to accept thee in Christ Jesus. Take heed of despondency, for if thou dost not trust him thou wilt make void His grace.

And those, I think, commit this sin in a large measure, who make a mingle-mangle of the gospel. I mean this: when we preach the gospel we have only to say, "Sinners, you are guilty; you never can be anything else but guilty in and of yourselves: if that sin of yours be pardoned it must be through an act of sovereign grace, and not because of anything in you, or that can be done by you. Grace must be given to you because Jesus died, and for no other reason; and the way by which you can have that grace is simply by trusting Christ. By faith in Jesus Christ you shall obtain full forgiveness." This is pure gospel. If the man turns round and enquires, "How are I warranted to believe in Christ?" If I tell him that he is warranted to believe in Christ because he feels a law-work within, or because he has holy desires, I have made a mess of it: I have put something of the man into the question and marred the glory of grace. My answer is, "Man, your right to believe in Christ lies not in what you are or feel, but in God's command to you to believe, and in God's promise which is made to every creature under heaven, that whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ shall be saved." This is our commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" <Mk 16:15>. If you are a creature, we preach that gospel to you. Trust Christ and you are saved. Not because you are a sensible sinner, or a penitent sinner, or anything else, but simply because God, of His free grace, with no consideration rendered to him on your part, but gratis and for nothing, freely forgives all your debts for the sake of Jesus Christ. Now I have not mangled the gospel; there it is, with nothing of the creature about it but the man's faith, and even that is the Holy Spirit's gift. Those who mingle their "ifs," and "buts," and insist upon it "you must do this, and feel that, before you may accept Christ," frustrate the grace of God in a measure, and do damage to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

And so, once more, do those also who apostatise. Do I speak to any here who were once professors of religion, who once used to offer prayer in the assembly, who once walked as saints, but now have gone back, breaking the Sabbath, forsaking the house of God, and living in sin? You, my friend, say by your course of life,-- "I had the grace of God, but I do not care about it: it is worth nothing. I have rejected it, I have given it up: I have made it void: I have gone back to the world." You do as good as say, "I did once trust in Jesus Christ, but he is not worth trusting." You have denied Him, you have sold your Lord and Master. I will not now go into the question as to whether you ever were sincere, though I believe you never were, but on your own showing such is your case. Take heed last these two terrible crimes should rest upon you, that you do frustrate the grace of God, and make Christ to be dead in vain.

III. On my third point I shall carry with me the deep convictions, and the joyful confidences, of all true believers. It is this, that NO TRUE BELIEVER WILL BE GUILTY OF THESE CRIMES. In his very soul he loathes these infamous sins.

First of all, no believer in Christ can bear to think of the frustrating of the grace of God or the making of it void. Come, now, honest hearts, I speak to you. Do you trust in grace alone, or do you in

some measure rest in yourselves? Do you even in a small degree depend upon your own feelings, your own faithfulness, your own repentance? I know you abhor the very thought. You have not even the shadow of a hope nor the semblance of a confidence in anything you ever were, or ever can be, or ever hope to be. You fling this away as a foul rag full of contagion, which you would hurl out of the universe if you could. I do avow that though I have preached the gospel with all my heart, and glory in it, yet I cast my preachings away as dross and dung if I think of them as a ground of reliance, and though I have brought many souls to Christ, blessed be his name, I never dare for one moment put the slightest confidence in that fact as to my own salvation, for I now that I, after having preached to others, may yet be a castaway. I cannot rest in a successful ministry, or an edified church, but I repose alone in my Redeemer. What I say of myself I know that each one of you will say for himself. Your almsgivings, your prayers, your tears, your suffering persecution, your gifts to the church, your earnest work in the Sunday-school or elsewhere-- did you ever think of putting these side by side with the blood of Christ as your hope? No, you never dreamed of it; I am sure you never did, and the mention of it is utterly loathsome to you: is it not? Grace, grace, grace is your sole hope.

Moreover, you have not only renounced all confidence in works, but you renounce it this day more heartily than ever you did. The older you are, and the more holy you become, the less do you think of trusting in yourself. The more we grow in grace the more we grow in love with grace; the more we search into our hearts, and the more we know of the holy law of God, the deeper is our sense of unworthiness, and consequently the higher is our delight in rich, free, unmerited mercy, the free gift of the royal heart of God. Tell me, does not your heart leap within you when you hear the doctrines of grace? I know there are some who never felt themselves to be sinners, who shift about as it they were sitting on thorns when I am preaching grace and nothing else but grace; but it is not so with you who are resting in Christ. "Oh, no," you say, "ring that bell again, sir! Ring that bell again; there is no music like it. Touch that string again, it is our favourite note." When you get down in spirits and depressed what sort of book do you like to read? Is it not a book about the grace of God? What do you turn to in the Scriptures? Do you not turn to the promises made to the guilty, the ungodly, the sinner, and do you not find that only in the grace of God, only at the cross foot is there any rest for you? I know it is so. Then you can rise up and say with Paul, "I do not frustrate the grace of God. Some may, if they like, but God forbid that I should ever make it void, for it is all my salvation and all my desire" <Gal 2:21>.

The true believer is also free from the second crime; he does not make Christ to be dead in vain. No, no, no, he trusts in the death of Christ; he puts his sole and entire reliance upon the great Substitute who loved and lived and died for him. He does not dare to associate with the bleeding sacrifice, his poor, bleeding heart, or his prayers, or his sanctification, or anything else. "None but Christ, none but Christ," is his soul's cry. He detests every proposal to mix anything of ceremony or of legal action with the finished work of Jesus Christ. The longer we live, I trust, dear brethren, the more we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We are struck with admiration at the wisdom of the way by which a substitute was introduced,-- that God might smite sin and yet spare the sinner; we are lost in admiration at the matchless love of God, that He spared not His own Son; we are filled with reverent adoration at the love of Christ, that when he knew the price of pardon was his blood his pity ne'er withdrew. What is more, we not only joy in Christ, but we feel an increasing oneness with him. We did not know it at first, but we know it now, that we were crucified with him, that we were buried with him, that we rose again with him. We are not going to have Moses for a ruler, or Aaron for a priest, for Jesus is both king and priest to us. Christ is in us, and we are in Christ, and we are complete in him, and nothing can be tolerated as an aid to the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord. We are one with him, and being one with him we realize more every day that he did not die in vain. His death has bought us real life: his death has already set us free from the bondage of sin, and has even now brought us deliverance from the fear of eternal wrath. His death has bought us life eternal, has bought us sonship and all the blessings that go with it, which the Fatherhood of God takes care to bestow; the death of Christ has shut the gates of hell for us, and opened

the gates of heaven; the death of Christ has wrought for us mercies, not visionary or imaginary, but real and true, which this very day we do enjoy, and so we are in no danger of thinking that Christ died in vain.

It is our joy to hold two great principles which I will leave with you, hoping that you will suck marrow and fatness out of them. These are the two principles. The grace of God cannot be frustrated, and Jesus Christ died not in vain. These two principles I think lie at the bottom of all sound doctrine. The grace of God cannot be frustrated after all. Its eternal purpose will be fulfilled, its sacrifice and seal shall be effectual: the chosen ones of grace shall be brought to glory. There shall be no failures as to God's plan in any point whatever: at the last when all shall be summed up it shall be seen that grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life, and the topstone shall be brought out with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." And as grace cannot be frustrated, so Christ did not die in vain. Some seem to think that there were purposes in Christ's heart which will never be accomplished. We have not so learned Christ. What he died to do shall be done; those he bought he will have; those he redeemed shall be free; there shall be no failure of reward for Christ's wondrous work: he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. On these two principles I throw back my soul to rest. Believing in his grace that grace shall never fail me. "My grace is sufficient for thee" <2 Cor 12:9>, saith the Lord, and so shall it be. Believing, in Jesus Christ, his death must save me. It cannot be, O Calvary, that thou shouldst fail; O Gethsemane, that thy bloody sweat should be in vain. Through divine grace, resting in our Saviour's precious blood, we must be saved. Joy and rejoice with me, and go your way to tell it out to others. God bless you in so doing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

(from Spurgeon's Encyclopedia of Sermons)