

# **Frustrating the Grace of God**

or

The Mistakes of the  
Eternal Security People



C. W. Butler

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RETURN TO MAIN MENU

## Foreword

Your pamphlet is excellent. In no place have you overstated their doctrine. The answer to their premises is clear and convincing because it is thoroughly Scriptural. May I say this as well, the whole book is couched in language that is not too technically theological and consequently you have made it possible for everyone to clearly understand what you are saying.

By all means I must have a finished copy when they are ready. It will doubtless be employed in many controversies that I will again face this year. Your approach is such' as to not invoke their wrath but invite their reason, and consequently I hope to be able to advantageously invite my friends to read it.

Thank you for the privilege of reading it.

*Wm. Wiseman*

# FRUSTRATING THE GRACE OF GOD

C. W. Butler

## CHAPTER ONE

Paul in the Galatian letter, chapter two, verse twenty-one, declares: "I do not frustrate the grace of God." This statement has a setting in the letter to the churches of Galatia which clearly indicates that they have been misled after knowing the Gospel and grace of Christ into adopting certain practices of the Levitical law as a basis for their justification. The clear teaching of the Epistle is that all penitent, believing persons are immediately justified in the sight of God and in their own consciousness by their acceptance of the provision of Calvary on their behalf.

The sense in which we are not under the law is that we do not obey the precepts of any part of the law, either Levitical or moral as the basis of our salvation. To put the yoke of circumcision upon the Gentiles as essential to their justification instead of by faith in Christ, was to frustrate the

grace of God. The nearest parallel to the error in our day is that water baptism is an absolute necessity before one can be born of God and justified freely.

There are, however, in our midst today, and evidently there were in Paul's day, those who frustrated the grace of God from an entirely different standpoint from that of obedience to the law as a basis for salvation.

We discover in the sixth chapter of Romans those who in their embrace of the truth of salvation through grace, by faith, excuse themselves from obedience to the law after they are saved, making such a use of the truth of divine grace as that grace would cover all sins, past, present, and future, without regard to the continued choices or conduct of them that believe. This is grave error. We are not saved by works or the keeping of the law, but having been saved by divine grace, we are under obligation to obey all the moral precepts and all the holy principles of the moral law of God. The only law from which the believer is freed in his practice is the ceremonial law which consisted of types and shadows now fulfilled by our Lord.

To those who frustrate the grace of God as though grace were a license to continue in sin rather than salvation from it, Paul raises the question and says, "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?" In the fervor of his holy soul, he cries out the answer to this question: "God forbid!" He then proceeds to discover to his readers that continued right choices must be made in order to continue in the grace of God, and he further warns that if we turn in disobedience to God, and yield ourselves in obedience to sin, our sin will be unto death. He states it thus, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; either of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness?" He continues to show that their having been servants of sin is something to be reckoned as in the past. He declares, "But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness,"

His further teaching is very plain; namely, that if we at any time in our present probationary life make wrong choices and thus yield our members servants to unclean

ness, that such a procedure will cause us to reap the wages of sin, which is death. On the other hand we, having been made free from sin, are to continue in our renewed state and right relationship with God by yielding our members "servants of righteousness unto holiness." Again he climaxes this tremendous teaching in language which is unmistakable: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The true believer no longer depends upon the works of the law for his justification or for his sanctification. He received these precious works of divine grace through faith in Christ. They become our immediate possession as both of these experiences are instantly received. He recognizes, however, that the full salvation which he now possesses by the grace of God has so wrought in and for him as to save him inwardly and outwardly unto obedience to the perfect law of God. Jesus, in speaking of the perils of these last days, declared that because of "abounding in iniquity," the love of many should wax cold.

Eternal security folks always shelter in the thought that if one really fails, it is evidence that he has never been truly saved. This, however, is not true to facts in experience. Jesus did not say, "If those who profess the grace of divine love in salvation but do not possess it fail...", but His reference is to those who are truly saved. He follows His statement immediately with a further statement, the grammar of which compels the conclusion which I am contending for—that those whose love waxes cold are truly saved, but He adds, those that endure unto the end shall be saved; that is, he who continues in the experience and state of present salvation shall be saved ultimately and eternally. He writes in antithesis to this-if, because of abounding iniquity, they get their eyes off Christ and their love waxes cold, they will as surely fail to be finally and eternally saved as Peter began to sink in the water when he took his eyes off Christ.

No, brother, our not being under law does not mean that we are not obligated to obey the law, nor that we are in any way excused from continuance in righteousness and faith as the conditions for abiding in

Christ and winning the crown of life. It does mean we are not depending on our own righteousness for acceptance with God, nor as the basis of our cleansing from inherited sin.

## CHAPTER TWO

Another mistake our eternal security people make is the supposition that because the life in Christ as the gift of God is referred to as eternal life, it cannot be forfeited. Many of them teach that Adam was not a son of God, that he did not sustain a filial relationship in his original creation. They teach that his was created life, and that he was placed on probation for sonship with God. In the Luke record we have it set forth in Chapter 3, verse 38, that Adam was the son of God. The term "the son" is supplied, but it is necessarily supplied in the Genealogical record by Luke. Adam was both the creature and the son of God and was placed here originally on probation for a fixed and eternal state of character. It was necessary that he should unite his moral choices with the will of his Father in order to make the character with which he was endowed his own.

When we are born of the Spirit and come into new life in Christ, we receive this gift on probationary tenure. No one has the crown of life in this world. This new life imparted is the gift of God. We however, in continuing faithful unto death, Win the crown of life. This crown is a fixed state of character, past the boundaries of probationary tenure. It is a great mistake to think of eternal life as though it were some literal or material entity incapable of change, implanted in them that believe. The only Bible definition of eternal life of which I am aware is recorded in John 17:3. Here our Lord declares: "And this is life eternal, that they might know The-, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." While in possession of this gift we are in the spiritual department of our nature God conscious.

This God consciousness involves a reconciled relationship to, and harmony with the will of God. It may be forfeited, just as Adam used his free will to rebel against the will of God and, by so doing, lost God consciousness, and harmony with his Maker, and by rebellion was alienated so that his self-will and sin related him to the devil, as his child. So sin, if turned to and practiced on the part of one who has been a

Christian will change his relationship to God and to the devil, and as in the case of Adam, the likeness of God may be despoiled in human personality, and anyone may become a child of the devil, giving him his allegiance and service. In other words, while no Christian will ever be lost, sin will kill a Christian and make of him a sinner. While he cannot be lost as a Christian, he may lose the character of Christianhood, and be lost as a sinner. This teaching harmonizes with a true and intelligent interpretation of the whole Word of God.

The old prophet warned along this line, declaring, "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.... The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression." Ezek. 33. Such statements are too plain to admit of any dodging the issue. Again the logic of the error that moral conditions may not be changed in an individual would close the door against those who are children of the wicked one ever becoming

children of God or being saved. God's offer to the wicked is that they may, on condition of turning from their wickedness, be saved: "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he hath robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die." Ezek. 33. Those who now bear the very image of Satan in self-will may be so changed as to be recreated in righteousness and true holiness after the image of God. For this we give glory to our Redeemer.

Another clear way to correct the error of eternal security is for us to recognize that Christianhood, symbolized in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel by the character of sheep, is not to be identified with individual personalities regardless of the character they bear. The sheep nature is symbolical of real Christianhood. This in turn is not descriptive of any personality unconditionally or without regard to the character possessed by an individual. The same personality may undergo a change of character in either direction while living in this present world.

Peter describes the basis for eternal security when in chapter 2, verse 10, he states: "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." The security is conditioned upon certain things which are essential to the character of Christianhood. The question, can a Christian be lost, ought always to be answered in the negative. We say, no, a Christian will not be lost, but we recognize that it is essential that one should die in possession of the faith and the character of Christianhood in order to meet the condition. No one will be lost as a Christian, but if we forfeit Christianhood and become sinners we will be lost as sinners.

As indicated above, sonship is descriptive of a relationship which we bear to God and is conditional and subject to change. The entered comparison of a physical sonship, saying "once a son, always a son" is to carry the figure of sonship beyond the limits of its true use in Holy Writ. Sonship involves the realm of our moral and spiritual relationship to God.

### CHAPTER THREE

I am a firm believer in the possibility of the security of God's people. There are

many promises which assure us of grace sufficient for each recurring test. The Scriptures clearly reveal a life of abiding and of victory.

However, all this is conditional. We must avail ourselves of the provision of grace and live in victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Yea, we are to endure temptation if we are to win the crown of life. We not only accept the possibility of abiding and victory with gratitude, but we record our praise to God that we are privileged to enjoy the blessing of such an experience. I am sure if we continue to walk in faith and obedience, we shall be made more than conquerors to the very last.

On the other hand, however, there are definite statements and many warnings which clearly reveal the probationary character of our present life. There is an if at every turn of the road in successfully meeting the issues of life. "For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Hebrews 3:14. It is clearly evident that the sense in which the apostle refers to our being made partakers of

Christ is in the end-time, or in the final issues of our probationary career. The condition upon which we shall reach that final victory is that we keep the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. That is, there is a principle involved in the very beginning of our knowledge of God and salvation which, if adhered to, will result in our walking in obedience to light every step of our onward march until we win our crown. The conditions upon which we experience the beginning of confidence are an utter renunciation of all known sin, together with a humble embrace of the whole known will of God. If this principle is obeyed as we continue in our walk with God, it will result in final and eternal victory. Such a walk will, however, require a continued renunciation of all kinds and degrees of sin, both inward and outward, as we have light upon our pathway. It will further require an embrace of the whole will of God as that will is revealed to us, both as regards a personal full salvation, and in every other particular of the ordering of our lives unto our journey's end.

Paul still further gives us the key to running the Christian race successfully in the sixth chapter of Romans to which we

have referred in a preceding chapter. After we are in grace, we must continue to use our freedom of choice in "yielding our members instruments of righteousness unto holiness." If we do this, it is unto "eternal life." If, however, at any point in our pilgrimage, we choose otherwise and yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness, we become the servants of sin and Satan, and the end is death.

In John 15:2 we have the illustration from the lips of our Lord which involves the fact that after we are branches, really alive in the true vine, we may by failure to so yield ourselves unto God, and to so walk in the light as to be fruit bearing branches, be severed from the vine, cut off, and destroyed. As Brother Joseph H. Smith has well said, "Sin will kill a Christian." He has further stated, "We will be eternally secure when we are secure in eternity."

Dear readers, let us not trust in the broken reed of false doctrine for our security and be classified with that servant of whom Jesus spoke in the Gospel recorded by Luke at chapter twelve, verses forty five and forty-six, "But and if that servant

shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him asunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." You answer me, yes, but Jesus is talking about a servant and not a son. Nay, but may I remind you that Jesus is here using an illustration, and the servant whom He cuts asunder and appoints with the unbelievers was a son or was one with the believers. In using this illustration He uses the term servant, but the clear implication is that of our own relation to the Christian life in watchfulness, obedience, and faith, in the which we are to continue faithful unto death.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

##### An Illustration

John Doe was a sinner. No, not a sinner above many of his fellows, but a real sinner, nevertheless, who blasphemed the name of God, who soaked in the nicotine of the filthy weed, who drank intoxicating liquor until it was menacing his position in

the business world. He was clearly a lost man. He was without Christ and without hope. But John Doe contacted Christian people, was impressed by their lives and testimonies, and finally gave attendance upon the means of grace where God's Word was faithfully ministered. The Holy Spirit performed His office work. This man was awakened, convicted, and finally led to genuine repentance and to the shelter of Calvary in humble faith for salvation. He found peace with God. He was immediately delivered from the bondage of intoxicating liquor, from blasphemy, and many other sins in his life, and became a devout worshiper of the true God. He was able to look up with the "Abba Father" upon his lips, having become reconciled unto God.

John Doe discovered however that he was not a match for indwelling sin and its fruitage in his life and made a second trip to Calvary. In desperation he cast himself wholly upon God for an inward cleansing and a deliverance from all the trappings of "the old man" which included his slavery in the use of the filthy weed. God delivered him. He came out into the light and blessing of "the life more abundant." John Doe, being a man of fine natural gifts, became very useful in the church of which he became a member. His prayers and his

testimony were a great uplift, and his usefulness in other and larger activities in the church was very marked. He ran well for a period of years. To contact him was to enjoy fellowship in the spirit. He was bright and clean and useful. The fact is, he no longer bore the character of a sinner; he was transformed and now bore the character of Christianhood. He was the same individual who was a sinner and lost in his sinning originally, but who became a true New Testament saint, saved from sin and walking with God in fulfillment of the covenant which He swore to His people "that they should serve him without fear in righteousness and holiness before him all the days of their lives." That is, they should do this. It means that such is the will of God and that the provisions of grace are such that a man saved as John Doe was may continue to walk thus all the days of his life.

The transformation wrought in this man's life did not end his freedom of choice, nor finish his character, nor end his probation for eternal life. Like every other twice born and cleansed Christian, he bore the character of Christianhood by his continuance in a life of obedience and faith. Had he continued thus faithful unto death, he would have received "the crown of life"

which is a fixed state of character for habitation with God forever.

But alas, alas, as time went on, after a number of years of walking with God as described above, John Doe began to yield his members instruments of unrighteousness. He began to compromise his Christian standards in both his social and business life. He began to neglect the house of God and the worship of God. He finally drifted back into the old paths and embraced again the old practices of sin which separate a man from God, and which bring death into his spirit nature by virtue of that separation. John Doe is now living the life of a sinner. He no longer bears the character of Christianhood but again bears the character of a lost man. He is now "without Christ" and "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel." He has lost God out of his life and is without hope. He is the same individual that he was when he bore the character of Christianhood. His character, however, has undergone a change which forfeits Christianhood and classifies him as a sinner.

Our Lord gave us clear notice, "If ye die in your sins, where I am ye cannot come."

Many a John Doe has had just such an experience as described above and has died in his Christless and sinful state. I am now ready to ask and answer an important question, namely, can a Christian be lost? The sense in which I am asking this question is, can he be lost eternally? My reply to this question is, no, a Christian cannot be lost eternally, but if he turns to sin in this life, he may cease to be a Christian and become a sinner, and as a sinner he may be lost, yea, will be if he continues thus in sin, eternally.

The mistake of our eternal security people is in identifying Christianhood with a personality regardless of the character which that personality bears. The character of a Christian is never fitted onto any personality in a way which cannot be forfeited if that person turns again to sin. In other words, in our relationship to both sin and to God, we are all capable of change while in this probationary state. The Scripture is very clear that it is not only possible for one who has known the love of God to backslide, but one may, in the use of his own power of choice, so turn from truth and from Christ as to become an apostate from the faith. He may pass the boundary

line of the realm of grace and place himself in a position from which he will never be recovered. Against such dangers we are clearly warned in Holy Writ.

#### CHAPTER FIVE

John Doe is dead. He died in his sins. According to the Word of our Divine Lord, where Christ is, he, John Doe, can never come. It is a pure begging of the question to say that this man was never really saved. He certainly was a born again man and also sanctified wholly and filled with the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit was evidenced in his life for years. He turned from righteousness to sin, and from Christ to the world. This fact dispoiled the Christian character which he did bear, and changed his character to that of a sinner. He did not die as one of God's people, or as a Christian, or as a son of God. He died in filial relationship with the devil, and according to Holy Writ was thus, by virtue of his moral condition, a child of the devil.

The history of John Doe has been multiplied numberless times in the record of the religious experience of men and women across the path of the Christian centuries.

He who warned others became himself a castaway. He who once was fervent in the possession of divine love made moral choices which caused that love to wax cold and thus failed to endure to the end. In his case, as in the case of all real backsliders, he thwarted "the reign of grace through righteousness unto eternal life" and turned to sin-"the wages of sin is death." In the Roman letter, chapter six, there is a very clear setting forth of the probationary character of our present life in the recognition there made of the fact that one in grace must continue to yield his members as instruments of righteousness, thus continuing the reign of grace; and on the other hand, the danger of failure to do so, in which case the result is death. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." In the reign of grace, sin does not have dominion over us, but when we yield to sin so that it dominates us, we forfeit the reign of divine grace which must always be in righteousness. These facts involve the ethical standards of our living to the end of our probationary career.

We invite our readers to turn to Ezekiel 33 and read the first eighteen verses, making the perfectly clear teaching that one may forfeit righteousness and life, and on the other hand, one may be renewed unto righteousness and life on condition of turning from sin to God.

The saving and keeping power of God in the Gospels is not by the route of a computed righteousness and obedience without regard to the state and conduct of the believing subject. Peter declares of those who are kept by the power of God that it is "through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Readiness for final revelation certainly includes our walking before Him blameless and without spot as to the course of our living and as to our real heart condition.

With this article we are resting the case of our present teaching along this line, with the sincere prayer that many may be saved from the deception which endangers their eternal welfare. Do not, dear reader, trust in the broken reed of commercialized salvation which cannot be forfeited, but reckon with a holy God on the basis of a moral transaction which involves God and

His perfect law on the one hand, and the believer, as to his relation to God and his real condition before God, also his conduct in genuine obedience and righteousness unto the end of our Christian race. Only thus is it possible to obtain the crown.

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