

Do Not Frustrate the Grace of God

by Robert Traill

Seeking righteousness by the works of the law frustrates the grace of God and makes Christ's death in vain.

Scripture: Acts 10:43, Romans 7:10, Romans 10:3, 2 Corinthians 6:1, Galatians 2:21, Hebrews 2:3, Hebrews 3:12, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "Faith Alone", "Gods Grace"

Description

Robert Traill preaches on the sin of frustrating the grace of God by seeking righteousness through works of the law, which makes Christ's death in vain. He emphasizes the importance of receiving the grace of God through faith alone, highlighting the sacredness of God's grace and Christ's death. Traill warns against committing the great and horrible sin of frustrating God's grace by not receiving it when offered or seeking other ways for righteousness. He explains how this sin is committed through ignorance, pride, indifference, and unbelief, leading to fancies and devices to please God, reliance on works of the law, and struggles even among those being saved.

Transcript

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

I told you the last day (what you may learn by your own reading), that the end in view of the apostle in this epistle is, to teach and defend the doctrine of the justification of a sinner by the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith alone. In the text the apostle hath two arguments for this truth, against the contrary error, with which the Galatians were plagued; and both arguments are taken from the absurdities that follow upon the contrary doctrine.

1st, That seeking righteousness by the works of law, doth frustrate and make void the grace of God.

2dly, That it makes Christ's death to be in vain: and there is nothing revealed by the Lord, in his word, more sacred, and more solemnly majestic than these two -- the grace of God, and the death of Christ; and therefore it must needs be a great wickedness to enervate, and overthrow both these. From the first part of these words I observed four things, and have already spoken to the first of them, and would speak to the next at this time.

1st, The grace of God shines gloriously in the justifying of a sinner through Christ's righteousness alone. All the revelations that are made of this great way of God's justifying a sinner, are all made with a high deference to the grace of God, as the original thereof.

2dly, I am now to speak to this point -- that frustrating the grace of God is a great and horrible sin: the apostle here brings it in as such, and denies his concern in it; "I do not frustrate the grace of God." The scope of his discourse leads me to this head: "If I seek righteousness by the works of the law, I should frustrate the grace of God; but I do not seek righteousness that way, therefore I do not frustrate the grace of God." Frustrating the grace of God is a great and horrible sin: there are two things I would speak to upon this head -- to shew you how this sin is committed -- and then, wherein its greatness doth appear; for there are many that commit this sin, and when they have done, think nothing of it.

1st, How is this sin committed that the apostle here vindicates himself from? "I do not frustrate the grace of God." This sin is committed two ways: 1st, By not receiving the grace of God when it is tendered. 2dly, By seeking other ways and expedients for righteousness than the grace of God.

First, Frustrating the grace of God is not receiving it; the grace of God is frustrated when it is not received: the right entertaining of it is by receiving it. The apostle exhorts the Corinthians, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that you receive not the grace of God in vain," (2 Cor. 6:1). I have told you in what sense the grace of God might be received in vain, and in what sense it could not. The doctrine of the grace of God, the offer of the grace of God, may be received in vain, and rejected, as many times it is; but the grace of God itself cannot be received in vain, for it always worketh its effect wheresoever it lights. The grace of God is an irresistible principle of salvation: never man had one mite of the grace of God, but he was saved by it. Christ Jesus hath two quivers, if I may so say: there is a common quiver, out of which he draws some arrows, and shoots them at sinners, and they can fence against these well enough, and never be hurt by them; but then he hath other arrows, that are marked with his love, and sent by his power, and there is no guarding against them. As there are arrows of destruction, so there are arrows of salvation: "Let thine arrows be sharp in the heart of the king's enemies," is the prayer, Psalm 45. My work then is to shew how it is that the grace of God is not received.

1st, The grace of God tendered in the gospel, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, is not received when it is not minded. There is little hope of that man's salvation that doth not think of salvation, or when the matter is neglected. "How shall we escape," saith the apostle, "if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3). The true sense of the original word lies mainly in this, not so much in a stated formal enmity to it, but only in a careless indifferency about it: the grace of God is not received when it is not minded. Therefore, would you know when you profit by the gospel, know it this way: if what you hear from the word doth not occasion many thoughts in your hearts, you get no good at all. If the matter of salvation do not become the matter of your serious meditation, you receive the grace of God in vain. God may say concerning such men, "They will not so much as think of my proposals to them."

2dly, People do not receive the grace of God when they do not see their need of it, when they do not see their absolute need of it. As long as a man hath this dream -- and every natural man falls into such a dream -- as long as a man thinks in his vain mind that any thing else but the sovereign grace of God can save him, this man will never receive the grace of God. It is impossible that a man can receive it till he see that nothing else will do his business. Woe be to them that think any thing but grace can save them: they are in a forlorn state indeed!

3dly, They that do not believe that the grace of God alone can save them, therefore they do not receive it; for as the grace of God is sent to men as that which they do simply stand in need of, and as that which nothing can supply the lack of, so it is sent as a sovereign remedy, that whatsoever ails the root creature it will cure them. So much for this first thing: They that do not receive the grace of God, are guilty of this great sin of frustrating the grace of God.

Secondly, This sin is also committed by men's taking other methods and shifts to obtain the favour of God than this grace alone; they frustrate the grace of God. I would speak a little to this under two heads: 1st, I would shew you the cause of it. 2dly, I would shew the effects that proceed from those causes.

I. Of the cause of it. The world is full of it: this heresy, if I may so say, runs through the whole earth; no man is quite free from it but only the sound believer. A man may be orthodox in his judgment, and subscribe to the orthodox doctrine, and Protestant truth; but every natural man is a heretic in this matter: he hath secretly something else in his eye to recommend him to God, and to make his state safe before God, besides the righteousness of Christ. Now the cause of this universal hankering after ways of people's own devising to do their business with God, without this grace of God through Christ, is what I would speak a little to.

It flows from nature: now nature is so strong a spring, that nothing but the mighty grace of God can turn it, it is so strong a principle. I would shew this in a little.

1st, The grace of God in saving sinners by Christ Jesus is above nature in its best state; it is above sinless nature. If you could suppose such a thing as this, that there was a man as holy as the first Adam was; if God should create another man as holy as the first Adam was, and bring to this man the doctrine of the righteousness of Christ, and of the grace of God in him, it would be above his nature. It is above sinless nature; it is that which Adam did not know, neither was he bound to know it, for it was not revealed to him; nor did he need to know it, for there was another way provided for his standing, that he might have kept.

2dly, This way is not only above sinless nature, but it is quite contrary to corrupt nature. If it be above sinless nature, it must needs be far above corrupt nature; but not only is it so, but it is also cross and contrary to it. There are in this corrupt nature four things that are its strength, and from that strength comes this enmity to this way of salvation.

1. There is in this corrupt nature dismal darkness and ignorance, expressed by the apostle in the abstract, (Eph. 5:8). "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." Not only are they dark and blind, but they are darkness and blindness. Now in this darkness, as to this matter, I will name two or three things: 1st, There is ignorance of the righteousness and holiness of God, (Rom. 10:3). 2dly, There is ignorance of the holy law of God, (Rom. 7:10). 3dly, There is utter ignorance of God's righteousness in Christ Jesus. A little to each of these:

1st, In every natural man there is an ignorance of the righteousness and holiness of God. I know that in man's nature there is a knowledge that there is a God, and that this God is a righteous and a just God. The greatest heathens, by the mere light of nature, have arrived at some competent knowledge of this; but the exactness of this righteousness of God never did any natural men know. They do not know the unspottedness of His righteousness, nor how unsufferable to him the least impurity is. Would any bold sinners venture to present to God their rottenness and vileness, if they knew God's righteousness? The righteousness of God is such an sublimely magestic thing, that no natural man can understand it, but he must be presently confounded.

2dly, Every natural man is ignorant of the strictness of the law of God; the severity of God's law in forbidding every sin, and in condemning every sinner, without any respect to any sin, or to any man that commits it. The law of God is an impartial rule of righteousness, that condemns every transgression; and it cannot do otherwise: it is the glory of the law so to do; its strictness makes it judge all sin; and its righteousness makes it condemn all sinners; and therefore, when this righteousness of God's law is once revealed, it presently breaks all the confidence of a natural man. "I was alive without the law once," saith the apostle Paul, Rom. 7:9, "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." How could the apostle Paul be said to be without the law? I believe that the apostle Paul, even in his natural state, was better acquainted with the law, and the Old Testament, than any man in London now is; for the Jews, even to this day, teach their children with great carefulness: now the apostle Paul was one of the best Jews in all that country. How then could this man be said to be without the law? He had the law in his mind, and in his memory, and in his hands, and was exceeding zealous for it -- "I was," saith he, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless," (Phil. 3:6). Aye, but the man only thought so, when he did not know the law of God; but when the commandment came, it made another manner of discovery. It condemned those things in him that he never thought to be sin before, and it made other things in him to be exceeding sinful. All natural men are under utter darkness about this; and therefore it is no wonder that they betake themselves to other ways than the grace of God in Christ.

3dly, All natural men are ignorant of the righteousness of God in Christ.

2. In every natural man there is pride. Every natural man is a proud man; proud towards God. That which goes under the name of pride amongst men is greatly mistaken. Pride towards man is a base thing; but it is pride towards God that I am speaking of. The poor sinner thinks that he is not quite so bare and empty, but that he hath something of his own wherein he may stand accepted before God. Every natural man doth think so. It fares with a natural man as it doth with some poor men that are born of great families, whose fathers left them, as we use to say, a high birth, but a poor purse. Now this proud gentleman chooses a great deal rather to wear his own thread-bare coat, than another man's livery. Just so it is with sinners: their father Adam was a great lord, -- lord of this world, heir of righteousness, rich in stock -- enough to have made all his posterity rich before God; but he broke and failed, and turned us all beggars into the world. But there comes another person, God's own Son, and he offers to clothe the poor beggar; but the poor proud man had rather go to hell in the rags that his father Adam left him, than go to heaven in the robe that Christ offers him, dyed in his own blood.

3. In every natural man there is awful trifling about the great concerns of salvation. The truth is, people are not thoroughly awakened, nor in good earnest about the matters of salvation. It lies not near their heart as a weighty question, "What shall I do to be saved?" These thoughts do not press them, "I am a poor man that must shortly die, and this sickly carcass of mine will shortly moulder into the dust of the grave; but my soul must live for ever in, and enter upon an eternal state, as soon as the last breath of my body expires; and what shall become of me then?" The greatest part of the world trifle about this great question, "What shall I do to be saved, to be secure to eternity?" What a shameful thing is it to think of this! I have often told them that I have spoken to, -- and it is to be told till it be mended, -- that it were a happy thing if people would but spend half that time, nay a quarter of that time, in secret thoughts about salvation, that they spend in hearing the word of salvation; and it is a hard matter if people cannot be prevailed with about this. I can well assure you, that all the solid soul-thriving of the hearers of the gospel is not so much in what they hear, in the preaching of the word, as in what they digest in their secret thoughts and meditations about it. Now, is it any wonder that people take to any courses about their salvation, when they thus trifle

about it? For if the end be not precious in a man's eyes, you can never expect to have him thoughtful about the means.

4. In all natural men there is unbelief of God's word. It is a hard question to resolve, What was the first sin? Any child can tell you, that the first sin of mankind was eating the forbidden fruit: it is true, the first sin was ripe in that action; but what was the first wandering thought from God? Whether it was the man's discontent with the state that he was made in; or aspiring after a higher state than that in which he was made; or a jealousy of God; or unbelief of the word of God: that unbelief was in it is most certain.

The serpent began his temptation this way, "Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden? Hath God said you shall surely die? Ye shall not surely die," (Gen. 3:1,4). The scope of his temptation was this, to bring in sin and ruin upon the world, by making sinless Adam to doubt of the truth of God's threatening; and he well knew that if once the majestic faith of the truth of God's threatening was weakened in their minds, that they would soon make bold on the sin.

God's threatening was as a kind of fence against the sin: "In the day that thou eatest, thou shalt surely die." "Assure thyself of death if ever thou meddle with the forbidden fruit." Satan knew that death was terrible to man, and that he would not easily rush upon it; "aye, but," saith he, "God hath not said ye shall surely die, but you shall live, and be as gods, if you transgress." Sirs, the devil brought in the first sin and ruin upon mankind, by the unbelief of God's word of threatening.

And he brings in the eternal ruin of men under the gospel by unbelief of God's word of promise: every natural man hath an evil heart of unbelief in him, as the apostle warns all to take heed of, (Heb. 3:12), "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." This matter of unbelief is many ways spoken of in the word: the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and his righteousness, stands all in the word of God. If you ask the last question concerning a man's faith, you must resolve it into the word of God: there are, indeed, many questions that go before it, but this must be the last.

If you ask, How may a sinner be saved? The answer is, By the righteousness of Christ. If you ask again, Who is this Jesus Christ, whose righteousness will be the salvation of all them that have it? He is the great Son of God, that took our sins on him. Well, but how shall this righteousness be mine? By faith alone: if I lay hold of it, and venture my soul on it, it is mine? Aye, but the last question is, How do you know that it shall be so? God hath said it in his word, Acts 10:43, "To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

Now, every natural man having unbelief in him, God's word hath no weight on him. We find they proclaim their unbelief in every thing. When God commands, they proclaim their unbelief in disobeying; when God corrects them, they proclaim their unbelief in rushing again upon the same courses that God punishes them for; when God threatens and warns the sinner of his danger in such a sin, the man proclaims his unbelief by staying still in it: and what are all these but acts of gross unbelief?

When God commands, the man thinks that God means not as he speaks: when God threatens, the unbeliever thinks God will not do as he threatens: when God promises, saith the same unbelief, "Though God speaks fair, he will not be as good as his word."

Now, is it any wonder that every natural man takes another way of salvation besides the righteousness of Christ, when every natural man hath these four woeful things in him? And, indeed, none can do otherwise

till these four things are overthrown in him -- till the darkness is removed by the illumination of the Spirit of God -- and the pride be brought down by humbling grace -- and the security of the conscience be brought down by awakening grace -- and till the power of unbelief be broke by the Spirit's working faith. So much for the causes of this.

II. I am now to shew what the effects are that flow from these causes; or, what flows from this woful natural aversion in all men from the grace of God, and from their inclinations to frustrate it.

1st, Hence it comes to pass that the world is filled with fancies and devices of men to please God.

This runs through the whole earth: the religion (if I may call it by that name) of the Pagans, the religion of the Turks and the Mahometans, and of the Papists, however they may differ in a great many points of doctrine, and particular circumstances of worship, yet they all agree in this; all these religions, and all religions in the world, except the true, are filled with many devices of men to render themselves acceptable to God. The Lord brings them in (Micah 6:6), making this inquiry, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Pray take notice here: one of the grossest idolatries that ever was in the world, and the most abominable act of it, is this, when parents, to pacify God for their sins, have offered their children in sacrifice to their idols: this hath been frequently practised in the world, and, it may be, is at this day in some parts of the world. Whence can this be, that there should be so strange a violation of one of the strongest bonds of nature? It is not to be supposed that these people did so because they did not love their children: no doubt but they loved them as well as you do yours; but only, here lay the matter: they were under a strong conviction of sin, and under strong desires to please God; and they were ignorant of the true sacrifice, and therefore they offer to God what they think best, and what they love best; and that they hope God will accept most kindly from them. Sirs, you think there are many fopperies in Popery, fit only to be laughed at, and so indeed there are: their whipping themselves about that time of the year they call Lent; and great persons do this, kings, and queens, and lords, and great men. One would think it strange that so many great people should play the fool so: the true reason of it lies here, -- they have a conscience of sin, and they know they are sinners, and they do not know the true way of peace with God through the righteousness of Christ, and they are taught these foolish ways, and therefore they pursue them. And truly, if the light of the gospel should be darkened yet much more in England, I cannot tell how many poor, helpless professors amongst us might be drawn even into this foppery. It is natural for all men ignorant of the righteousness of God in Christ, to devise ways of their own to render themselves acceptable in the sight of God.

2dly, The next effect of this woeful aversion from the grace of God, in justifying us by the righteousness of Christ, is in men's going to the law, and the works of it. I do but name this, because I shall speak more largely to it by itself, under the third and next doctrine.

3dly, I would speak something to the sad effects of this, that are found even in them whom God saves. This aversion from the grace of God is so natural, that it puts forth itself strongly in them that the Lord is at work savingly upon; and I will name a few things about this, that some here can witness to, and I am sure that many more can witness to them than are here.

1. Hence it comes to pass that, in many who are saved in the issue, there is a long sorrowful trouble of mind that they live under, and all the world shall not persuade them what the true cause of it is. They are

full of sorrow and complainings; no other language to be heard to God or man, but many sorrowful complaints; their corruptions are strong, their souls dead and dark, their consciences disquieted. And what is the true reason of all this? They are yet averse from giving glory to the sovereign grace of God in saving them by Christ. Many sorrowful hours many of the elect of God have gone through in the strength of this corruption, and they have never seen it till a long while after. It is a shame and reproach to professors, and a dishonour to our Lord Jesus Christ, that so many in whom the root of the matter is, have their hearts sinking within them when relief is so plainly provided for them. The true reason is, because they are averse, and not willing, nor inclined to be indebted solely to grace, and to have all their supplies singly from it.

2. From hence it also comes to pass, that there are so many outbreakings of sin, or at least the working of it in the hearts of many that the Lord hath a mind to save, and doth work savingly upon. How many poor creatures are there that know this? That from the time that the Lord first began to deal with them, and made them serious about salvation, their corruptions have grown more strong, and Satan more formidable and vexing; and, it may be, they are left of God to commit some gross sin, that they were never guilty of before. Whence comes this? It is not only from the strength of temptation, nor is corruption grown stronger; but here lies the reason: Now God hath begun to awaken them, and they are not yet disposed kindly to yield themselves up unto the entire conduct of grace; not willing to give the grace of God its proper employment: but this is the way people generally take whensoever they are awakened, and made serious about salvation; then they fall to work, and set about duty -- they pray, and hear, and read, and repent, and labour to reform their conversation, and in the mean time they are utterly unacquainted with employing Christ; and, therefore, the Lord in his righteous judgment leaves them to themselves, and lets them see that they must stand upon another bottom, or they will surely totter and fall; that they must be quite weaned from themselves, and all things made new in Christ, or nothing will be done rightly.

3. And thus some, as they live sorrowfully all their days, so they also die sadly: they have been leaning on their own righteousness as far as they could all their life long; sometimes hanging upon one twig, and sometimes upon another; and one breaks, and the other breaks, and here they get a fall, and there they get a fall; but at last, if the Lord hath mercy upon them, they are made to see the vanity of all these shifts, and then they betake themselves in earnest to that which is without them, to a righteousness that they have no hand in, that is wrought out by Christ alone, and given by pure grace. So much for this first head, How this sin of frustrating the grace of God is committed.

2dly, I am now to shew the sinfulness, and the greatness, of this sin of frustrating the grace of God. The apostle is here vindicating himself from it: "I do not," saith he, "frustrate the grace of God." Now, there are two things especially that aggravate all sins, and the more of them there be in any sin, the more sinfulness is there in that sin. 1st, The direct tendency of any sin to damnation. 2dly, The direct enmity that there is in any sin to the grace of God; and wheresoever there is a sin that is especially framed both these ways, that sin must needs be a great one.

1. This sin of frustrating the grace of God is directly against man's salvation, and tends directly to damnation. All sin against the law tends to damnation by its desert; every sin deserves hell. Every sin against the law of God works out wrath by deserving; but sin against the gospel works out wrath by special activity, by its apt acting; and there is a great difference between these two: a man that commits a sin against the law, he commits a sin that deserves death; but he that sins against the grace of the gospel, in that very sin he works out his own death. Other sins expose a man to the wrath of God as a judge, but this sin is like self-murder, the man executes the law upon himself. Every man by nature is under a sentence

of condemnation; but rejecting the grace of God leaves and binds a man under that condemnation: there is no other remedy for it, but only the grace of God through Christ; therefore rejecting that, is rejecting the only remedy.

2. This sin is directly against the glory of God. There is a great deal of the glory of God concerned in his grace. This grace of God tendered to us through Jesus Christ, is God's great plot and contrivance for his own glory; and frustrating of it is all that man can do to frustrate God, and to disappoint him in his main design. Blessed be God, no creature can do this; but woe be to them that do all they can against it. The Pharisees "rejected the counsel of God against themselves," (Luke 7:30). Sirs, God would never have suffered the first Adam to have fallen, unless he had had a greater contrivance for his own glory in raising him up again. God would never have suffered the dishonour that sin's entrance brought upon him in the world, unless he had designed the bringing about of greater glory to himself by the manifestation of his grace. Therefore, "where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded;" and that brings a great deal more honour to God than sin brings dishonour. The grace of God is the very heart and the inmost character of God; and to frustrate this, is to kick against the very heart of God. The grace of God is all through Jesus Christ; it flows through him, and therefore all reflections upon the grace of God reflect upon him. The grace of God is offered to men by the Holy Ghost; and, therefore, refusing and frustrating the grace of God is rejecting of the Holy Ghost. In a word, this grace of God is the great scope of the whole Bible; and to frustrate the grace of God, is to make the whole Bible in vain, both Old and New Testament too. The Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, but it is through faith that is in Christ Jesus, (2 Tim. 3:15).

APPLICATION. -- There are only two words that I would speak to for the improving of this doctrine. Is frustrating the grace of God such a horrible sin? Then, 1st, Do you all beware of it. 2dly, Receive this grace of God; for there is no other way to avoid the frustrating of the grace of God, but only by receiving it.

1st, I would have you all beware of this sin of frustrating the grace of God; but, more especially, I would direct a warning of fear against this sin unto several sorts of persons.

1. Unto moral, civil, well-natured people, good livers, as we use to call them. Through the mercy of God, some are born of a better nature, as we call it, than others; of a sweet easy temper; and it is a great mercy to have a well-tempered mind, by a natural constitution, as well as it is to have a well-framed body. Now, when this virtuous natural temper hath the advantage of a godly education, these sort of people come quickly to look very well; and, therefore, they ought to take great heed. You civil, well-natured people, do you have a great care of frustrating the grace of God, for it is a sin that you are especially tempted to. There are some people so ill-natured, and of so bad a temper, that they need, as we use to say, a great deal of the grace of God to save them. And are there any that do not need the grace of God? The Lord save any of you from thinking so! He is in a woeful case indeed that thinks he doth not need the grace of God. Moral, civil people are in great danger of this sin: they think they have a good stock of their own to set up with, and therefore they do not borrow of Christ.

2. People that have taken upon them the profession of religion, had need to take heed of this sin of frustrating the grace of God. They have taken upon them a profession, it may be they know not how, nor wherefore; but it is come upon them. If you be clothed with the garment of profession, have great care of this sin. There are many that profess the grace of God, that yet are strangers to the thing itself, and they are in a very dangerous case.

3. They that boast of outward privileges should have a care of this sin of frustrating the grace of God: they were baptized when they were children, and have heard the word, and attended upon ordinances, and they begin to think themselves fair before God for the hope of eternal life. They are blameless in their walk and conversation. Let such people, in an especial manner, take heed of this sin. I can assure you that a blameless conversation hath been a great temptation to a great many too undervalue the grace of God, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. These sort of people were never sick at heart.

4. Awakened souls; they whose consciences are awakened, have great need to take heed of this sin of frustrating the grace of God. The Lord sometimes makes both light and fire too to dart in upon the consciences of poor sinners, and they begin to see and feel what they never saw nor felt before; and when it is thus with them, sometimes, they think things are a great deal better with them than they were before; and, sometimes, they think it is a great deal worse with them; and they that in their awakening think it to be a great deal worse with them than it was before, are in a more hopeful state than they that think it is better with them; for it is not a thorough awakening, if the person thinks that awakening to be enough. Such people should take heed of this sin, lest they frustrate the grace of God, for there are two things that they are especially endangered by.

1. By the force of this conviction they set about duty, and that pretty warmly; and these are lovely things in the eyes of poor creatures that never knew before what praying and reading the word of God were; but when once their consciences come to be awakened, they begin to get alone, and cry to the Lord. Now, when the soul is in this ease, it had need take great heed of this sin of frustrating the grace of God. How many poor awakened sinners are there that have made a pillow to sleep to hell upon with their own duties and performances, as if it were by the righteousness of the law! And thus they do not submit to the righteousness of God in Christ, nor do they attain to the rest that remains for the people of God, (Rom. 10:3, Heb. 4:9).

2. If they do not sit down upon their duties, then, on the other hand, they are apt to be quite discouraged, and to give up all for lost. An awakened conscience, if it be thoroughly awakened, is upon the point of despair; and the point of despair is the point of ruin, or the point of salvation, as God pleases to issue it. It is the turning point. When the poor sinner's conscience is awakened to see its lost and undone condition, in that case he is just on the point of winning or losing for evermore. If the man hearkens to God, and gives glory to his grace, by trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, the bargain is made for evermore; but if the poor sinner turns aside, and stops in any thing short of this, then either the disease grows greater, or else a hardness comes in the room of it, that is worse than the disease itself. That is the first exhortation:--Have a great care of this sin of frustrating the grace of God. And, to that end,

2dly, Give the grace of God a hearty welcome. There is no other way to prevent the sin of frustrating the grace of God, but by receiving and welcoming it. Welcome the grace of God for your work, but not for the devil's work. All God's work, that which God craves of you; all that you may give to the grace of God to do for you; all the work that you have to do with God, that you may give to the grace of God to do for you; only do not set the grace of God to do the devil's work; that is sinning, turning the grace of God into wantonness. The grace of God will do every thing for us but the devil's work. And, if I may so say, he hath a great deal of the spirit of the devil in him, that will give so precious a thing as the grace of God to do the devil's work. Aye, but how shall we receive the grace of God? I answer, three ways. 1st, Doubt not your need of it. 2dly, Do not delay your accepting it. 3dly, Do not question your title to it.

1. Doubt not your need of it. If the Lord hath a mind to save you, I know very well there will be no great need of this caution. Every sinner that God saves effectually, is a person that not only thinks he is needy of the grace of God, but he thinks he is more needy of it than any body else in the world; that if there was any such man in the world that could be saved without grace, he was the farthest from such a one; that if there was any man in the world that needed more grace than ordinary, he was the man.

2. Do not delay your accepting of grace whensoever it is revealed to you. Whensoever you have the offer of the grace of God, whensoever you are about the means of grace, labour to get this grace itself, "Therefore the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Heb. 3:7). You may not hear his voice to-morrow; hardness of heart grows mightily by delays.

3. Do not question your title to it. I mean this, -- Make no doubt but that it is as lawful and as allowable in God's sight for you to lay hold on the saving grace of God, as ever it was for any sinner in the world. I do not mean that graceless people should presently think that they have a title to the grace of God; for no man hath a title to it till he receives it. But this I say, the offer of the grace of God, in the gospel, gives fair warning and liberty for every one to embrace it. "He that will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely," (Rev. 22:17). And that which is thus freely offered, and freely given, should be thankfully welcomed, and thankfully received, when it is enjoyed.

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