

FRUSTRATING THE GRACE OF GOD.

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"I do not frustrate the grace of God."—Galatians ii. 21.

Without entering upon the consideration of many interesting matters suggested by the context and the circumstances in which these words were written by the apostle, let us think of the doctrine involved in his statement which is, *that the grace of God may be frustrated.*

We are accustomed to think of Divine Grace as being potent and irresistible; and so it is, almighty and undying as its Author. But that is to be understood of Grace as existing in Him, as an attribute of the Sovereign Lord, the free, unmerited love and favor of God, the source of all the benefits men receive from Him;—or of Grace as the express, saving work of the Holy Spirit on the human understanding and heart,—convincing the sinner of sin because he believes not on Christ, leading him then a penitent to Jesus, and purifying his defiled and corrupt nature by faith in the truth of the Son of God. This work of the Spirit may be resisted, always is at one time or other and frequently, by the sinfulness and ignorance of the subject on whom the gracious influence is exerted; but it is never frustrated, or rendered vain.—The sinner called by grace, who is in truth seeking God's mercy, and yielding to the Spirit's persuasion, may in his blindness and proneness to evil, fight against the leading of the Spirit, and thus retard his own enjoyment of peace with God;—but God has him in gracious hands—the God whom he fears and whose favor he desires, though thus he turns and strains "as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke"—and he is led; and when he withstands the

drawing, and the discipline and chastisement designed for his soul's good, he is driven from one position of resistance after another, and out of every lying refuge, till he reaches the shelter in Christ, and there adores the shepherd of Israel for what he hath done for his soul.

But by the expression "Grace of God," as intended by the apostle in this place, we are to understand the revelation and overtures of truth and mercy in the gospel, which, coming to us in our sinful, lost condition, proclaims God's love for our guilty race and salvation as His free gift to us in Christ Jesus, makes offer of Christ and all his benefits upon the condition of faith in Him, and asks from us the fruits of righteousness—the glorifying of God with our bodies and our spirits which are His—as the return He seeks, and as the result and evidence of our believing to the saving of the soul.

The Grace of God may be frustrated, received in vain, rendered useless in the special case for any salutary purpose.—Grace is thus frustrated by every hearer of the Gospel who does not gratefully receive the glad tidings and yield the heart to the Saviour. Hence we are warned of the danger of "neglecting the great salvation,"—besought to "take heed that we receive not the grace of God in vain,"—and exhorted to a "looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

The grace of God may be frustrated in various ways:—as