THE BOOK OF GALATIANS
"The Great Error of Law-Keeping"
Gal. 2:19-21

Introduction

1. Ritual of any sort is in opposition to the grace of God. Grace marks out Christianity from any other form of worship throughout the world. It must be defended and asserted always.

2. Grace to one is defined by one as: "The Gospel is a prepared feast for unprepared guests." It certainly is without any kind of argument that which men receive from God albeit they are sinful and undeserving.

3. The great error of law-keeping or ritualistic approach to God is that God's grace is denied and made something which is unnecessary. How does this come about? Remember: Paul is dealing with people who add to the work of Christ. To do this is to call in question God's grace. Follow his argument and you will see the point he makes:

1. **AFFIRMATION. v. 19.**

   The previous verse is really a strike out against Peter (cf. vv. 12-14). In contrast to this display of Peter, Paul affirms that "I" (emphatic pronoun in Greek) have taken a different position with the law. This is his personal experience. What happened? It's simple. The law could not justify, hence he gave up on it in order that (purpose) he might live to God (be justified before HIM). In other words, Paul adopted another mode of justification other than the law.

2. **EXPLANATION. v. 20.**

   How did it happen that Paul died to the law and was enabled to live unto God? This verse tells the story:

   a. **A crucifixion.**
The figure used here is one of intense agony and conflict. It was a crushing load of shame and bitter remorse which came in to bring an end to law (ritual) effort for justification. The whole point of this mystical "joint crucifixion" is that one is "made dead to the law through the body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4).

b. A vivification.

Dead but alive. There is no appeal to the senses here for the text is operating in the sphere of faith. The life in this present embodied state is that of Another, even Christ. Individuality is not lost, yet the life pulsating within is that of the very Son of God upon Whom one has buttressed his eternal destiny. Here is the ultimate in spiritual dynamics—Christ living in me!

c. A devotion.

The reasoning behind the above experiences of the apostle is that Christ was willing to go to Calvary. There He loved (aorist) and there He delivered Himself (aorist) up. The height of this devotion is that His work was done for "me." Nowhere else in the N.T. is such a statement made—that His love and death were earmarked for individuals.

3. PERSUASION. v. 21.

To "frustrate" the grace of God is really to act in such a manner as to suggest that the death of Christ was neither necessary nor sufficient. If ritualism or any effort performed by men were sufficient for their justification, Christ's death is entirely needless (Greek for "in vain" without purpose or result!).