

## Free Grace

Free Grace has captured the evangelical church. It's the "Gospel" that's preached in almost every local church and taught in almost every Bible college and seminary in the West. Here's the free grace idea in its bare essence: "I believe in Jesus. So I have forgiveness of all my sins. And so I'm assured that I'll be forever in heaven when I die." But let's think carefully about this. If the "Free Grace" idea is true, what implications necessarily result?

Free Grace says the following: God's grace is the most important aspect of salvation, and it's free. The "grace" part is because God is love. He loves all His human creatures and wants them all to be saved. No one gets what they deserve, rather, they get God's boundless love. "Free" means we don't have to do anything. We're free from sin, free from the guilt of sin, free to live as we please; no demands, no expectations, no *anything*. Grace is free—or it isn't grace. And freedom is necessarily an act of grace—or there's no freedom. This is the "good news" of Christianity. This is what the Free Grace people say Free Grace is.

The Free Grace idea incorporates several slogans that have long characterized evangelicalism. One is, We're under Grace, not Law. Another is, We must avoid all appearances of Legalism. Another is, Jesus has set us Free. Another is, The Gospel offer is Unconditional. And yet one more is, God is Love. "Free Grace" puts all these together into one neat package. No wonder it's so pervasive.

According to Free Grace, belief in Jesus is agreeing with the biblical proposition that a certain person, Jesus, existed and that He gives eternal life. Some Free Grace leaders add that that he died for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead. It's mental assent to that statement about Jesus that, they claim, saves anyone. There's no personal relationship with Jesus. And there doesn't need to be one, Free Grace leaders claim. There's no need to know or believe that Jesus is deity or King or anything. Believing that that statement, a promise that Scripture says Jesus made about eternal life, is true is what saves. If one wants to go deeper into sanctification and discipleship, that's an option for individuals who so desire. So they say. But, can all this be right? Well, who knows? If Scripture is no standard of truth, their assertion is . . . just that, the words of men. Fallible men. Possibly self-deceived men. So people all over the Western world are hoping their ultimate destiny is secure is based on nothing more than the claims of certain men. Bizarre!

Now, if Free Grace is true, let me ask, Why do we have the Bible? People who've bought into Free Grace really believe that they don't need to know Scripture. And so they don't need to read it, except for a sense or feeling of transcendency that it provides. They don't need to obey anything that's in it. They don't need to do *anything* that's in it. Scripture doesn't change the way they live or think.

And this, Why do we need to do evangelism? Well, they say, we don't! God is love. Let Him take care of getting people saved. But if God is really love, and as grace is His attitude toward us, then . . . well, probably everyone will eventually somehow be saved. A God of love and grace cannot *—must not—*exclude anyone from His grace. Jesus took care of the sin problem for all humanity. If we realize that. . . great! If we don't know that, so what? Free Grace must result in universalism. Evangelistic outreach (and missions) is precluded, unnecessary, and irrelevant—except as a religious exercise.

This too: What's God really like? (i) In Free Grace, God is not just. Justice means that people get what they deserve. Grace means that people get what they don't deserve. If Grace is freely available, without conditions, then Election is unjust. Condemnation is likewise unjust. God is love and only love. The very concept of Justice is imaginary. (ii) And in Free Grace, God is not Truth. The "warnings" in Scripture are all God bluffing us. All Scripture contains warning—dire warnings!—so all Scripture is bluff. The Scriptures also reveal that God makes demands of us. Those aren't really true either. The Scriptures simply aren't literally true. So God has lied to us. The very concept of Truth is imaginary. (iii) And in Free Grace, God isn't all that holy. He can't be! If God accepts people into heaven solely on the basis of having sins forgiven, then holiness isn't anything special other than simply not sinning. So when we're asleep (or comatose or dead), we're like God. The concept of holy is also imaginary.

Free Grace is un-refutable. Yet it's also self-refuting! It's a logical impossibility. It cannot be shown to be false. Neither can it be shown to be true. This is because there's no ultimate standard against which it is compared. There's no

ultimate source of truth from which to derive Free Grace. If Scripture contains bluff, then there's no place in Scripture where truth certainly resides. All evangelical claims that Scripture is inerrant, infallible, etc, are just more imagination. Our systematic and biblical theology is imaginary. Did Jesus *really* die for our sins? Is there really an existence after death? Is there really a heaven to go to? How can we base *anything* on a Bible that's suspect? Why bother with Christianity? If there's something true about the assertions of Free Grace, great! If not, so what?

Free Grace is furthermore dehumanizing. To be human is to bear responsibilities. But Free Grace insists that the only requirement anyone has is to agree with the proposition that Jesus freely offers eternal life. That's no responsibility, it's a gift to be received. Animals have no responsibilities, so Free Grace lowers us to the level of animal-ness. At Creation, God made humans uniquely with responsibilities. Responsibility to God is *creational*; Free Grace cannot void that. Free Grace is not Christianity, it's another of the many dehumanizing ideologies on offer today, along with Marxism, Woke-ism, New Age-ism, atheism, Islam, and others.

Free Grace has nothing to say about how one should live. The belief that we hold for eternal life has nothing to do with our thoughts, values, ideals, behaviors, motives, or worldview. We can live however we please, because our eternal state, that is, being in heaven when we die, is unconditionally and irreversibly secure. That's how wonderful God's grace is! So they say. Oh, we can live according to the precepts that are in the Bible, if we so desire; but it's not necessary for salvation. Dear reader, If this sounds like antinomianism or licentiousness, that's because it is. It's heresy, all of it.

The great tragedy of Free Grace is, so many people in the West have accepted it and are relying on it for their ultimate destiny. Free Grace is not Scripture-based, its Bible references notwithstanding; in fact, it's *anti*-Scripture. Will God be really gracious and accept people who've adopted it into heaven anyway? Who knows? Scripture always states the ideal to be pursued and leaves unanswered the fate of those who reject it. Will that first generation that left Egypt at the Exodus be in heaven? That's not revealed. What happens to the first three of the soils in that parable Jesus told? Not revealed. What happens to those who willfully refuse to be sanctified? Not revealed. God has clearly given us responsibilities, commands and expectations, and only a fool would hope that rejecting them is OK because the consequences of doing that are unknown. God *has* revealed that He is to be feared.

Most of Jesus' parables are downright scary. If we think about them, we must discover that they're convicting, shockingly convicting. They are not superfluous illustrations but barbed warnings, not to unbelievers but to us. Look at, for just one example, the parable in Matthew 18:21ff, subtitled The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. The first servant in this parable deserved justice, but instead he got mercy. As he didn't respond to the compassion that he received as he should have, he got justice after all—terrible justice. Forgiveness is an act of mercy. Mercy shown, indeed, love shown, demands a response of mercy, a response of love. Or else! Do we get it? God takes the initiative in showing love, and in grace He invites us to fellowship with Him. But He absolutely demands that we respond to His love and His grace as He has revealed we're to respond. We're to be transformed into people who reflect His goodness and love and holiness, people who express His perfections in our lives. The response to love is love, "We love Him because He first loved us." Our response to the Gospel must be all that's in Scripture that God expects of us, for it's our response to what God has done that determines our ultimate destiny. This is not legalism or "works salvation," nor "performance" salvation. It's Scripture.

In previous Sunday School lessons, we've stated clearly what the Gospel is and what's expected of believers. We needn't review that here. I'll just say here that salvation is like marriage. It's a complicated personal relationship. It involves privileges and responsibilities, commitments, and self-sacrifices. It requires the submission of wills, the incorporation of another person's interests, values, and ideals into one's own life. There's a new identity. And more. It's a life-changing relationship. Except that in salvation, we're in relationship not with another equal but with a unique Person, the exalted, unique Holy One of Israel, Jesus. Salvation is not by believing a proposition; it's being in love with a Person, Jesus. Salvation, like marriage, defies any attempt to reduce it to something simple and easy, as Free Grace tries to do. So I conclude with this: Beware! False teachers aren't only in 2 Peter. They're here now. We *must* know Scripture to avoid being deceived, because being deceived may be *exceedingly* dangerous to one's soul.