

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

A Biblical Response to the Teachings of Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow, and the Grace Evangelical Society (Called the "Free Grace Movement")

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a critical evaluation of what has been termed (by its proponents) the "Free Grace" movement. I should begin by stating at the outset that this is a paper I did not want to write. It is borne out of much sorrow and heaviness of heart. For twenty years, ever since I had become a Christian, I had attended a particular church. When John MacArthur wrote, *The Gospel According to Jesus* in 1988, a line was drawn in the sand regarding the doctrine that came to be known as the "lordship salvation" doctrine (a regrettable term, coined by its critics, but one which is now necessary to identify the doctrine). My church chose to side with the critics of "lordship salvation", with such stalwarts as Zane Hodges, Charles Ryrie, and many from Dallas Theological Seminary leading the way.

Personally, I was torn. On the one hand I had heroes such as Dr. MacArthur and R.C. Sproul defending the lordship position; on the other hand, other heroes, such as my pastor and Dr. Ryrie, were teaching against it.

I launched into a study, reading books and articles by men from both sides, including MacArthur, Sproul, Michael Horton, J.I. Packer, Ryrie, Michael Cocoris, Charles Bing, Earl Radmacher, and Zane Hodges. I did this to make sure I understood fully both positions. Since I felt both sides had convincing arguments, I began to study the Scriptures for myself regarding this matter. My study took nearly eight years. A breakthrough came when I decided to jot down all the relevant Scripture texts which speak to the debate. As I did this, I compiled a list of over 100 Scripture texts. Looking over the list, I realized that what I largely had was a list of verses which seemed to support the lordship viewpoint, which would need to be "explained away" by its critics (or reinterpreted so as to contradict the plain meaning of these texts— over 100 of them!). It is from this list of Scripture texts that this article was formed.

At this point, I realized that if I am going to need someone else to explain to me the meaning of the most of the New Testament, and that the plain meaning is so little to be

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trusted, I would have to rely on the no-lordship proponents to serve as "priests" to tell me how to understand the Bible — it may as well have been written in Latin. For me, the hermeneutic rule known as "Cooper's Rule" speaks well to this issue: "If the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense". I came to the conclusion that the lordship people are probably closer to the truth on this issue (though there are some, admittedly, who teach an extreme position on this doctrine, emphasizing submission over grace and confusing sanctification with justification).

Though hard to describe this doctrine in a nutshell, here goes: Lordship salvation proponents teach that, when one receives Christ, he receives Him as both Savior and Lord. "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). In other words, implicit in the salvation process is an understanding, however rudimentary, that Christ is Lord and has the right to call the shots.

I say that this is implicit in the salvation process for this reason: Anyone who is saved is saved from something, and that something is sin. The "free grace" teachers love the Reformation teaching of "faith alone" (although they teach a distorted understanding of it). Yet what does it mean to believe? To believe that Jesus historically existed? Yes, but more must be affirmed: I must, in the process of conversion, understand that I need to be saved. That is, I must understand my lostness; I must agree with God that I am a sinner deserving hell, and that my sin is wrong. If I attempt to be saved, but deny that my sin is wrong, I have no need to be saved from anything. But if I agree with God that my sin is wrong, I understand that, logically, the converse must be true: what He has said about what my life should be like must be right. Even if I don't conform to that immediately (which we don't), I still have acknowledged that He is the Lord.

This may sound strange to modern ears, because modern evangelistic methods have ingrained the idea into our thinking that we can accept Christ as Savior now, and later "make Him Lord" by some decision (or not, if we so opt); but nowhere do the Scriptures teach this. As A.W. Tozer has said, "we do not teach a divided Christ!" We receive a whole person when we receive Him, not just a part of Him. He is Lord; we do not make Him Lord.

Now from this first point springs several other points pertinent to the Lordship position. Many of these are proven below from Scripture, but the reader is referred to MacArthur's book (and its sequel, *The Gospel According to the Apostles*) for a more thorough description and defense. Some of these points are as follows:

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- The call to faith is also a call to repentance. Repentance from sin is part of the gospel message.
- All Christians are disciples. All are learners and followers, to varying degrees. Someone who claims to be a Christian but expresses no desire to follow Christ may not be a Christian at all.
- True saving faith will necessarily evidence itself by works (or "fruit") in the believer's life.
- All believers will possess a fundamental (though imperfect) love for the Lord Jesus.
- True believers will be preserved in the faith; their perseverance is secured by God, so that they will never ultimately and utterly deny or repudiate Christ; they will never fall away.

Though my church embraced the no-lordship position, I attempted to stay in that church in the interest of Christian unity (though I later came to understand that New Testament unity is grounded in the gospel of Christ—that is the basis of our unity {Ephesians 4:11-15}. Unfortunately, since the "free grace" view of the gospel is very different from my own, the basis for unity was very limited).

As time went on, my pastor began to be influenced personally by Earl Radmacher, and by the writings of Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow, Bob Wilkin and the "Grace Evangelical Society" (an organization which seems to exist largely to debunk the doctrine of Lordship salvation), and others who identify themselves with that they call the "free grace" movement. (Please don't misunderstand me—I believe God has given His grace to us freely in Christ, and His grace is in no way given to us based on anything meritorious we have done. I believe in God's free, unearned grace given to sinners; I just don't believe in "free grace" as these men define it. I mention this because the movement has chosen its terms carefully. To say I'm against the "free grace" movement puts the idea into people's heads that I don't believe in the biblical concept of free grace; that couldn't be further from the truth).

I mentioned earlier that I did not want to write this article. I say that because, on a personal level, I've been saddened to see the church I care about subscribe to this strange new doctrine. It's a doctrine which, I feel, underemphasizes God's work in salvation, and places an undue overemphasis on such things as human decisions and rewards.

"Free Grace" Theology: An Overview

The "free grace" movement is not synonymous with no-lordship teaching. There are many no-lordship teachers who do not fall into the "free grace" camp. However, all "free

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grace" teachers do hold fundamentally to a no-lordship viewpoint. But their teaching goes much further than that. Having started with the tenet that one may receive Christ as Savior and not as Lord, they then interpret the whole New Testament in that light. This has led to an interpretation of many New Testament passages which departs from the historic understanding of these texts. Among their beliefs are the following:

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- Repentance is never to be included as part of the gospel message.
- One may receive Christ as Savior, yet reject Him as Lord. That is, one may receive Christ by faith alone ("intellectual assent" is the definition some of them affirm), yet do so with ongoing rebellion—accepting the gift while shaking a fist at the giver. God does not necessarily change the heart (to grant a love for Christ, or even a receptivity to Him) when He saves someone.
- True Christians will not necessarily evidence their faith by works (or "fruit"). In fact, a true Christian may never show any evidence of the new birth.
- True Christians will not necessarily persevere in the faith. In fact, a true Christian may receive Jesus as Savior, later become intellectually unconvinced of the gospel, denounce Christ and become an atheist; however, because of that one human decision made at one point in time, he is still considered to be saved. For instance, Joseph Dillow, in *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, says, "It is possible for a truly born-again person to fall away from the faith and cease believing." (p.199). True Christians may fall away completely from the faith and still be saved. God in no way grants them perseverance, or sustains them in their faith.
- At the Bema seat, Christ will divide believers into two distinct and separate groups: the faithful, "overcoming" Christians will be allowed to reign with Him in the millennial kingdom; they are the "heirs" of the kingdom. Unfaithful, carnal believers, however, will get into the kingdom, but will not be allowed to reign with Christ. They enter the kingdom but do not inherit it. In fact, they will be barred from the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, and will be cast outside of the wedding banquet, where they will weep and gnash their teeth (just as unbelievers will do in hell). The millennium will therefore be a time of sorrow and weeping for these children of God.

"Free Grace" and Scholasticism

I need to mention that the Free Grace arguments can be quite convincing. This is because many of their arguments rely on heavy scholasticism (especially logical arguments, and Greek word definitions and tense analysis). It is hard for laymen to argue with this, so many in the congregations where these men preach simply buy into the doctrine, reasoning that "these men must know what they're talking about". However, in my studies I have found significant holes in their logic. Additionally, their Greek studies

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often lead to interpretations of texts that are far removed from the way these texts have historically been understood, as well as the plain and obvious meanings of the texts. One should also remember that, for every "free grace" Greek scholar, there are many other Greek scholars who do not agree with the "free grace" definitions of Greek terms.

An example of flawed logic is found by examining the "free grace" position on the interpretation of James 2:14-26. This passage is troubling to the "free grace" teachers, because its meaning is clear: faith without works cannot save; it is a dead faith. This is in opposition to the "free grace" doctrine (which states that works can never be an indicator of one's salvation status). So these teachers have had to depart from the plain understanding of the passage (and the historical interpretation), and supply an altogether different understanding of the passage.

Especially troubling for them is verse 14, which says, "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?" To rectify the problem, it is common for "free grace" teachers to change the meaning of the word "save". For example, Bob Wilkin, in the Sept./Oct. 1994 issue of the Grace in Focus newsletter, says the following:

There is no question but that James is asserting that faith without works can't save. The form of the Greek question expects a negative answer. Yet there is a question about the nature of the salvation under consideration.

About half of the NT uses of the words save and salvation refer to salvation from physical death, from disease, and from various temporal difficulties. That means that you are just as likely to find a given occurrence refer to deliverance from some problem in this life as to eternal salvation.

The word save occurs five times in James (1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:15, 20). In none of the four uses outside of our passage is eternal salvation in view. In his epistle James uses the word save to refer to deliverance from the death-dealing consequences of sin (cf. 1:15,21). A believer whose faith is not accompanied by works will not be saved from the consequences of his sinful behavior. He or she will experience difficulties which God sends. The purpose of these difficulties is to turn the believer back to the Lord.

On the surface, this argument can seem convincing. However, a study of the passages in which "save" or "salvation" is said to refer to temporal deliverance from sin's consequences (both in James and in the whole of the New Testament) reveals that, in fact, they more often than not do refer to eternal salvation (though the "free grace" teachers

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deny this). In other words, they are padding their own statistics. Their logic goes somewhat like this:

1. James can't mean eternal salvation, since he always uses the word "save" to refer to temporal deliverance from sin's consequences.
2. How do I know that the other passages in which James uses the word "save" refers to temporal deliverance from sin's consequences? Because I say they do.

This is common in "free grace" writings; such statements as "the context clearly shows", or "though the lordship interpretation may be such and such, there is nothing in the passage which demands such an interpretation" occur often. So, circular reasoning and arguments from silence should be looked for when reading articles or books from "free grace" teachers (or in any scholarly writings, including those from the "lordship salvation" proponents as well!).

Another example of flawed logic is in James' use of the term, "dead faith". James 2:17 says, "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead". James 2:26 says, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead". Since the phrase "faith without works is dead" seems to indicate that someone whose life is devoid of works is unsaved, and that that contradicts "free grace" doctrine, such teachers have had to develop another interpretation of this passage. Their interpretation (generally speaking) is represented by Bob Wilkin in the same issue of *Grace in Focus*. Speaking of the Lordship position on this passage, Dr. Wilkin says

If this argument holds, then what James is saying is that faith without works is not faith at all since it is dead. That doesn't make sense. Are things which are dead unreal? Certainly not. The fact that something is dead indicates that the animating power is gone from it.

However, James is not making an *allegory* between a dead body and faith without works. An allegory would analyze all parts of the illustration, and make every aspect of it symbolic of some abstract truth. (This is often done when "free grace" teachers teach on the parables of Christ). James' readers would not likely have understood that "dead faith" referred to a faith in which "the animating power is gone from it". Rather, dead faith means, simply, a faith without life. And just as a dead body may have the external appearance of a living body, yet by its lack of vitality demonstrates it is completely void of life, so a faith that is devoid of works is a faith without life. In James' language, a dead faith may be orthodox, but has no more power to save someone than the orthodox faith of demons (James 2:19).

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If we were to make an allegory of dead faith, even the "free grace" position does not stand up to the test, because it would mean "carnal Christians" could go from "dead faith" to a "living faith"—and possibly in and out from dead to living. James' words would have been a poorly chosen analogy indeed!

It seems to me that scholasticism which arrives at conclusions which so significantly depart from historic interpretations and plain, obvious meanings should cause us all to see red flags.

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Antinomians?

The "free grace" teachers have been charged by some in the Lordship camp as being antinomians (that is, promoting lawlessness). Do I think this charge is true? Yes and no. Let me explain what I mean. From my experience, these people do care about holiness of life and honoring God by our actions and thoughts. I can't think of one of them who would advocate "loose living". However, I'm afraid that the unintended consequence of their teaching is a generation of many who believe that, because of a decision made years ago, their salvation is secure, even though "by their works they deny Him" (Titus 1:6).

Further, believers are encouraged in this system to not seriously confront unbelievers with their sin when evangelizing them (that is, to call them to repentance). Jesus certainly confronted the rich young ruler (for his greed), the Samaritan woman (with divorce and immorality), Simon the Pharisee (for lack of love for Him), and the Pharisees (for hypocrisy).

By contrast, the "free grace" gospel seems to be "believe that God will take you to heaven if you ask Him; simply believe His promise". But the gospel is only good news to me if I understand the desperation of my plight: that I have personally offended a God (who is thrice Holy!) with my sin (and I sin a thousand times over again each day). My only hope lies in fleeing to the One Who can bear the punishment I cannot bear, and Who alone can live the righteous life God requires in my stead. By contrast, if one does respond to the "free grace" gospel, the holiness of God and the terribleness of his sin have not, in my view, been sufficiently addressed. This is breeding ground for casual Christianity.

Finally, I'm afraid that the teaching that one may evidence no spiritual fruit and yet be convinced he is a believer is a dangerous teaching. (This teaching will be critiqued in detail later on.) It will lead unbelievers to be convinced they are quite all right, and the consequences will be damning. It will also fill our churches with worldly people who are largely unconcerned with their sin, thus polluting the purity of the church.

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Is This Just an Argument Between Dispensational and Reformed Theology?

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Finally, it is worth mentioning that this is not a classical "Dispensationalism vs. Reformed Theology" debate. In my readings, I found articles critical of the free grace movement which were written by dispensationalists, Arminians, and Calvinists. (Interestingly, there were very few articles from the Calvinist camp.) For further study of these doctrines, the reader is encouraged to begin by perusing the Grace Evangelical Society's website (<http://www.faithalone.org/>) for a supportive overview, and Middletown Bible church's website (a dispensational church), at <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/doctrine/theology.htm> for a critical review.

Having introduced the doctrine of the "free grace" movement, I would like to now move toward several Scriptures which, I believe, will plainly show that doctrine to be unbiblical. The reader is encouraged to look up the verses, and study the surrounding verses, to make sure none of these verses are taken out of context.

God's Definitive Work in Redemption

It is apparent, from the Scriptures, that God's design in salvation is not just to bring people to heaven; His aim is to glorify Himself by calling a particular people to Himself, and sanctifying them so that they will be a light to the world. Though capable of failure (sometimes heinously, like David), these are momentary moral lapses rather than prolonged patterns of unrepentant rebellion. These next seven verses describe the fundamental change wrought by God in the heart of a man when He saves him. Note the definitive character of most of these statements: This is not what one may or may not do in response to God; it is what God effectively *will* do (and does) when saving a man:

Jeremiah 31:33—But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ezekiel 11:19-20—And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezekiel 36:26-27—And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

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Acts 15:8-9—"So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, "and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Romans 7:4—Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

Titus 2:14—"who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

1 Peter 1:1,2—Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"

Ephesians 2:10—"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Repentance

Repentance is not a human work, but is a gift granted from God when He draws a person to Himself. Human repentance has no merit before God, for all human repentance is flawed; our most righteous acts are as filthy rags before a Holy God (Isaiah 64:6). But repentance is an evidence of God's working in a man's heart to convert him. Repentance is not simply, as the "free grace" teachers define it, "changing one's mind about God". This definition says nothing of the recognition of one's own sin against God. Rather, repentance may be defined as that which is borne out of sorrow for sin (see 2 Cor 7:9, 10— repentance is a change of mind, not only with respect to God, but also a change of mind regarding one's sin: no longer loving it, but agreeing with God that it is wrong, and desiring to see the flesh overcome by God's Spirit and the sin defeated). It is, as A.W. Pink has said, "me taking sides with God against myself". It is not the same as fruit or good deeds, though these logically are connected with and follow repentance (Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8; Acts 26:19, 20; Revelation 16:11).

Luke 3:8—"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance" (see also Matthew 3:8)

Acts 26:19,20—"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, "but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region

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of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance."

2 Cor 7:9, 10—"Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."

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The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines repentance in a helpful way: "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after new obedience".

Study the verses below. Note how often the concept of repentance is presented in the verses below. Note the context of these verses, that they are not presented as an admonition to the church, but in the contexts of conversion and presenting the gospel. Contrary to "free grace" teaching, it should appear obvious that Scripture presents repentance as part of the gospel message.

Matthew 3:2—and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Mark 1:14,15—"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Mark 1:4—"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

Luke 5:32—"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Luke 13:3—"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Luke 15:7—"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."

Note **Luke 24:47**—"and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." This is a "Great Commission" passage; if repentance was not part of the gospel message, then Christ would not have commanded us to preach it here. Since faith is not mentioned here and elsewhere {but repentance is}, and repentance is not mentioned in other passages such as John 3:16, repentance and faith

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must be mutually implied within one another; that is, the faith that saves is a repentant faith. It is the publican beating on his breast and saying, "Lord, have mercy on me, the sinner" (Luke 18:13). It is the prodigal saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against You" (Luke 15:18). A man who responds to the gospel is not just intellectually convinced, but "cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37). John Murray describes the relationship between faith and repentance this way:

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The interdependence of faith and repentance can be readily seen when we remember that faith is faith in Christ for salvation from sin. But if faith is directed to salvation from sin, there must be hatred of sin and the desire to be saved from it. Such hatred of sin involves repentance which essentially consists in turning from sin unto God. Again, if we remember that repentance is turning from sin unto God, the turning to God implies faith in the mercy of God as revealed in Christ. It is impossible to disentangle faith and repentance. Saving faith is permeated with repentance and repentance is permeated with faith. (*John Murray, Redemption Accomplished and Applied, p. 113*)

Acts 2:38—Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 3:19—"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord"

Acts 17:30—"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent"

Acts 20:21—"testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

Acts 26:17, 18—delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Romans 2:4—Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

Hebrews 6:1—Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ,

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let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

2 Peter 3:9—The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

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In short, there is a desperation in salvation. Scripture calls this having "fled to Christ for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18). Paul describes the salvation process as a response to the Word of God; this response is that of being convinced, being convicted, having the secrets of one's heart revealed; this leads to one falling on his face (an expression of humility, brokenness, and contrition), and agreeing that God is with believers (1 Corinthians 14:24-25). In Acts 2:37, those who heard the gospel preached by the apostles "were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'".

Note that, in Revelation 22:17, eternal life is offered freely, that is, "without price":

Revelation 22:17—The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price."

According to this verse, the free gift of eternal life is not offered to those satisfied with their current situation; it is offered only to "the one who is thirsty", to "the one who desires". As A.W. Pink has said, "It is also true that salvation is a free gift, but an empty hand must receive it, and not a hand which still tightly grasps the world" ("Signs of the Times", *Studies in the Scriptures*, 16:373-375).

It should be noted that a common objection is that repentance is a human work, and therefore cannot be a part of the gospel message. This is referred to by "free grace" teachers as "front-loading the gospel". I find this incredible, given the above texts. But additional mention should be made of the fact that Scripture speaks of repentance, not as a human work to earn salvation, but as a gift granted by God:

Acts 5:31—"Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

Acts 11:18—When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

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2 Tim 2:25—in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth...

God does something decisive when He saves someone. He gives them a new, soft heart; He opens the eyes of their understanding; He puts His law in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 11:19-20; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Acts 16:14; 2 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 4:6).

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It has been argued that John does not use the word "repent" in his gospel, and never uses the term to apply to unbelievers. This is said to be significant because John's gospel is the only gospel which states explicitly that it was written so that the reader may believe and have eternal life (John 20:31). However, the gospel message is not presented in John's gospel only (it was in Luke 19:10 that Jesus said that the reason He had come was "to seek and save that which was lost"); besides, if we hold to the inerrancy of the Scriptures, we hold that what John teaches cannot contradict the other gospels. Further, it is clear that John described the concept of repentance in his gospel. For example, see how in John 8 Jesus confronts the Pharisees with their sins, such as lying and failing to love Him. He also confronts the Samaritan woman with immorality in John 4. It is also clear that John did use the term "repentance" in relation to non-Christians:

Revelation 2:20-22—"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. "Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. *(Note: To eliminate the dilemma posed by Christ demanding that a false teacher repent of deeds, "free grace" teachers like Zane Hodges have explained this passage by stating that this false prophetess was actually a true believer! {See Grace in Focus, Jul/Aug 98}. How unlike Jesus, who said specifically regarding false teachers that "You will know them by their fruits."!)*

Revelation 9:20-21—But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Revelation 16:9, 11—And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

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Discipleship

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All Christians are disciples (i.e., followers and learners). In the New Testament, the term "disciples" is used synonymously with the term "believers". The book of Acts frequently refers to the activities of "the disciples". In fact, the term "disciples" is used 27 times in the book of Acts, whereas the term "believers" is used only once. When the twelve "summoned the multitude of the disciples" in Acts 6:2, it does not mean that they picked out the truly committed Christians and separated them from the uncommitted!

While not all "disciples" are following for the right reasons (see John 6:66 and Matthew 8:21-22), yet the New Testament knows nothing of a believer who does not, to some degree, follow and learn from Christ. One does not follow Christ in an effort to win His approval and earn eternal life; rather, the Christian, as a new creation, hears the voice of the Shepherd and follows Him (John 10:16, 27). This is not accepted by the "free grace" teacher, but should be obvious from the verses below:

Acts 11:26—"And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." (Note: it is obvious from this verse that "disciples" and "Christians" are synonymous terms.)

John 10:4, 5, 16, 27—"And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice... "Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers... "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd...."My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

John 18:37—Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.

The Inevitability of Spiritual Fruit in the Christian's Life

All Christians will evidence some spiritual fruit if they have truly been converted. This is because a regenerate person has actually become a "new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The "free grace" teaching that denies the necessity of the new creation is refuted by the following passages, which clearly teach that the new creation will certainly demonstrate a new manner of living.

It should be noted that this manner of living ("fruit" or "works") is in no way the *basis* for our acceptance before God (see Ephesians 2:8,9, Titus 3:5, Romans 3:20,28, and Galatians 2:16); they are, however, the birth mark of any who are truly born again, as the verses below demonstrate:

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Matthew 7:16-20—"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. "Therefore by their fruits you will know them."

Matthew 12:33-35—"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things."

Luke 19:27—"But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me." (Note: In this parable, Jesus describes unbelievers as those "who do not want (Him) to reign over them".)

Romans 2:5-9—"But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek"

Romans 6:21—But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. (Note: A Christian, according to this verse, is one who is *ashamed* of the former works of darkness.)

Romans 8:1—"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:4—"in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:7—"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

Romans 8:13-14—For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

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2 Corinthians 3:18—But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." (*Note: Break this sentence down into its simplest Subject/Verb form, and it says, "All...are being transformed"!*)

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Hebrews 5:9— "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him"

Hebrews 6:4-8—For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned."

Hebrews 6:9-10—"But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (*Notice the implication: there is validity to the idea that there are certain things which accompany salvation, and the author of Hebrews mentions specifically "work" and "labor of love" as two of these salvation accompaniments.*)

Hebrews 9:12-14—Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Hebrews 10:14—For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. (*This verse teaches that all Christians are being sanctified.*)

James 2:14, 17, 22, 24, 26—"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ... Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead...You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!...Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?...You see then that a man is justified by works, and not

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by faith only...For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

3 John 11—Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

A description of those without Christ is given in terms of their conduct; this conduct is referred to as previous behavior which no longer characterizes the children of God:

Matthew 3:10—"And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (see also Luke 3:9)

Matthew 7:23—"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

1 Corinthians 6:9-11—Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Ephesians 2:1-5—"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

Colossians 1:21-22—And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him...

Titus 3:3-5—"For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."

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Some charge that, by stating all Christians will inevitably show fruit in their lives, we are requiring works as a condition for salvation. The free grace teachers call this "backloading the gospel". However, as mentioned earlier, those who hold to the inevitable fruit position deny that these works are *meritorious* for salvation, only that they are *evidential* of it. Even our best works are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). If any works are performed by the believer, they are only there because God Himself has done them through us:

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Ephesians 2:10—For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Philippians 2:13—for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Hebrews 13:20-21—Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Interpretation of John's First Epistle

The meaning of the John's first epistle has been fairly uniformly understood throughout the centuries. However, this epistle presents a problem for the "free grace" theologian. The problem is this: John appears to be stating plainly throughout the book that there are tests which reveal whether one is a child of God or not. Some of these tests include: whether we love the brothers (2:10, 3:10, 3:14, 4:7), walk in the light (1:7), keep His commandments (2:3-4), walk in the same way in which he walked (2:6), continue on in fellowship with other believers (2:19), confess the Son (2:23), practice righteousness (2:29; 3:10), confess that Jesus has come in the flesh (4:2), listen to the apostolic teaching (4:6), receive the Spirit (4:13), confess that Jesus is the Son of God (4:15), believe that Jesus is the Christ (5:1), and overcome the world (5:4). Notice how some of these tests are doctrinal, and others are behavioral.

These terms pose two problems for "free grace" teachers. First is the problem of John's behavioral tests to provide one with assurance of salvation. One of the "free grace" tenets is that it is always wrong to point a believer to behavioral tests to determine if they are really believers (whereas 1 John is full of such behavioral tests, as has been pointed out above). In fact, according to these teachers, one may truly believe and be a child of God, yet never pass any of these tests.

The second problem these teachers have to deal with in 1 John pertains to perseverance.

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1 John often refers, not just to the behavior, but the ongoing, habitual practice of it ("practicing righteousness"—a translation based on the Greek verb tense indicating ongoing action; this concept is also presented by the term "abide"). Therefore, if someone accepts Christ, shows initial fruit, but falls away, and never shows any further interest in the things of God, never shows the fruit of the Spirit, and never desires to fellowship with God's people, he is still considered to be saved by these teachers, because of a decision made in one point in time. Therefore, the behavioral tests in 1 John pose these teachers with an interpretive dilemma.

So how do "free grace" teachers solve these problems? Essentially, they state that the purpose of 1 John is not "tests of eternal life", but "tests of fellowship with God" (or whether one is in good standing with the Father as a child, or if the relationship is out of sync due to sin). Though being in or out of fellowship with God describes a Biblical concept (such as David's obvious rift in his relationship with God after sinning with Bathsheba), the question is: is this what John really means to present in his first epistle?

"Free grace" theologians refer to 1:3 ("that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" and 1:6 ("If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth") as John's purpose statement. In other words, John explains why he wrote his epistle at the beginning of the letter.

However, John's "purpose statement" actually appears at the end of his epistle (in 5:13, stating "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life"). In fact, it is significant to note that the purpose statement is put by John at the end of his first epistle, just as he put the purpose statement of his gospel at the end of that book as well (John 20:31—"but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"). In fact, the two purpose statements closely parallel one another, giving us further reason to believe that 1 John 5:13 is his purpose statement. Note the similarities in structure:

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John 20:31

but these are written

so that you may believe
that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God, and that
by believing you may have
life in his name.

1 John 5:13

I write these things to you who
believe in the name
of the Son of God

that you may know that you have
eternal life.

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Clearly, John's purpose for writing this epistle, then, is so that the readers may be assured of their eternal salvation, not their fellowship status with God.

Remember that the tests given by John are both behavioral and doctrinal. While "free grace" teachers insist the behavioral tests are indicators of our fellowship status with God (rather than tests of possession of eternal life), what about the doctrinal tests? Does John give these to determine our fellowship status? Is believing that Jesus has come in the flesh (1 John 4:2) only a sign of a mature Christian who is in fellowship with God? Can a believer deny this truth and still be a believer—albeit "out of fellowship"? No; rather, John was refuting Gnostic heresy in 1 John; therefore, a doctrinal affirmation was critical if his readers were to know if they believed in Christ savingly or not.

Notice also that the term "born of God" is used to describe both those who pass the doctrinal test ("Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ"—1 John 5:1) as well as those who pass the behavioral test ("whoever loves"—1 John 4:7). Clearly, John is describing the same person; and since all believers must pass the doctrinal test of 5:1, he must have all believers in view in 4:7 as well. Being "born of God" is another term for being a believer.

Another problem with the "free grace" interpretation of 1 John is the absoluteness of the statements made by John. One critic of the "free grace" movement (found on the website <http://www.bcbsr.com/>) has raised the following argument:

If (1 John is) about a relative experience of fellowship among those born of God or between God and his children, then why does it use absolute either/or contrasts rather than using relative terms? It's about light versus darkness and not about shades of gray. There are tons of examples throughout 1 John. In fact seldom does

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he ever speak in relative terms. (1John 1:6,7; 2:19,23,29; 3:7-10,14,15; 4:6-8; 5:4,10,12,18).

In other words, there are varying degrees of sanctification and fellowship with God, but whether one is a Christian or not is an absolute; there are no "half-saved" people. Therefore, John's choice of terminology seems to lend itself more to a description of how one knows whether he is saved, rather than whether he is in fellowship with God.

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Another key to understanding John's epistle is to define these contrasting terms he uses. John lays out many contrasting terms in his epistle; he compares a negative state with a positive one. Listed below are some of these contrasting terms. Everyone agrees that the first column is good, and the second one bad. The question is this: to whom do the terms in the second column apply? Do they describe Christians out of fellowship with God, or do they describe non-Christians?

Positive Terms

Negative Terms

walk in the light (1:7)

walk in darkness (1:6)

we know that we have come to know him (2:3)

a liar, and the truth is not in him (2:4)

we are in him (2:5)

abides in the light (2:10)

in darkness (2:9, 11); walks in the darkness (2:11)

the love of the Father is not in him (2:15)

has been born of him (2:29); born of God (3:9); God's seed abides in him (3:9)

of the devil (3:8)

the children of God (3:10)

children of the devil; not of God (3:10)

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have passed out of death into life
(3:14)

abides in death (3:14)

Murderer; (does not have) eternal life
abiding in him (3:15)

we are of the truth (3:19)

from God... knows God (4:6)

Not from God (4:6)

born of God and knows God (4:7)

does not know God (4:8)

abides in God, and God abides in him
(4:16)

born of God (5:1,4,18)

from God (5:19)

in him who is true (5:20)

It should seem obvious that such terms as "the truth is not in him", being "in darkness", "of the devil", "children of the devil", "not of God", not having "eternal life abiding in him", "not from God", and "does not know God" all refer to the state of unbelievers. Think how confusing it would have been for John's original readers—would they automatically have known John is referring to carnal, non-inheriting believers when he used such terms? Further, consider and compare how John used some of these same terms in his gospel to refer to unbelievers:

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<i>The Gospel of John</i>	<i>1 John</i>
you do not have the love of God in you (5:42)	the love of the Father is not in him (2:15)
You are of your father the devil (8:44)	of the devil (3:8)
You know neither Me nor my Father (8:19)	does not know God (4:8)

A problem passage for "free grace" scholars is 1 John 3:14 ("We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers."). It is a basic hermeneutical principle that, when defining New Testament terms, one may see how an author uses the same term in his other writings to gain the clearest definition. This passage shows just how far "free grace" teachers are willing to look past such rules to preserve their position. This phrase, "have passed out of death into life", may be compared with John 5:24, where it refers to passing out of spiritual death into eternal life: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." In the Greek, the passages compare this way (notice the similarities between the boldened portions):

John 5:24

αμην αμην λεγω υμιν οτι ο τον λογον μου ακουων και πιστευων τω πεμψαντι με εχει ζωην αιωνιον και ει? κρισιν ουκ ερχεται αλλα **μεταβεβηκεν εκ του θανατου ει?** την ζωην

1 John 3:14

ημει? οιδαμεν οτι **μεταβεβηκαμεν εκ του θανατου ει?** την ζωην οτι αγαπωμεν του? αδελφου? ο μη αγαπων τον αδελφον μενει εν τω θανατω

So how can "free grace" teachers get around the clear meaning of this passage (namely, that there are behavioral tests which can confirm our status as saved individuals)? By stating that the context determines the meaning. The context, of course, for the "free grace" teacher, is fellowship with God, not assurance of salvation. So, though we have a clearly understandable phrase such as "passing from death to life", and though the same phrase is used by the same author elsewhere to clearly refer to the salvation experience,

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yet we are told "it can't mean that" because of the context (the context being supplied by the "free grace" teachers!). Bob Wilken, in an article for the "Grace in Focus" newsletter (<http://www.faithalone.org/news/y1994/94nov2.html>) makes that very argument. To resolve the dilemma as to what this passage actually teaches, he has to radically rephrase it as follows: "We know that we have moved in our experience from the realm of death to the realm of life". But John does not speak of moving in our experience from the realm of death to the realm of life, but of actually passing from death to life!

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In summary, John's first epistle is best interpreted by holding to the historic understanding of it: It is a book largely given to help the readers gain assurance of their salvation. This is why John states he wrote the book, and it is the way the book plainly reads.

The Carnal Christian

Some say there are two categories of Christians, carnal and spiritual (see 1Corinthians 3:1-4); however, it was not Paul's intention to categorize believers this way; he was merely saying to the Corinthians that, when they were behaving enviously and divisively, they were behaving in a carnal manner (i.e., like "mere men"). Besides, the ones he accused of behaving carnally did evidence some spiritual fruit—they were meeting regularly (1 Corinthians 11 and 14), and were using their spiritual gifts (though there were abuses of this present). They were not those who made a decision for Christ, and then never continued on with Christ or in fellowship with His people:

1 Cor 1:4-7—"I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ"

1 Cor 3:1-4—"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?"

(Notice the absence of a third category for Christians who walk according to the flesh {"carnal Christians"} in Romans 8:4-9; only "those who live according to the flesh" and "those who live according to the Spirit" —and therefore belong to Him, v. 9).

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Romans 8:4-9—in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Perseverance of the Saints

All believers will continue in the faith. This does not mean they will not sin, or even end their lives in sin (see Acts 5). It does mean they will not utterly reject the faith. It does mean that God preserves the work He began in them. If they do not continue in the faith, it is evidence that they were never Christians to begin with (1 John 2:19; Col 1:21-23). It is God's Power which keeps a man in faith, and it is His ability that keeps us from falling (1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

Jeremiah 32:40—"And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me."

Matthew 10:22—"And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved."

1 Corinthians 1:7-8—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:1,2—"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain."

Philippians 1:6—"being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ"

Colossians 1:21-23—"And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you

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continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel"

Hebrews 3:6—"but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end."

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Hebrews 3:14—"For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end."

Hebrews 10:36-39—For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

"For yet a little while,
And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.
Now the just shall live by faith;
But if anyone draws back,
My soul has no pleasure in him."

But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

1 Peter 1:3-5—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

1 John 2:19—"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us."

2 John 9—Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

Jude 24—"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy"

Assurance of Salvation

Not everyone who would like to claim assurance of salvation has the right to it, because

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there are many who are self-deceived (just as the man at the wedding feast in Matthew 21:11-13 thought he belonged in the banquet hall, but was wearing his own garment rather than the one provided for him by the host). For this reason, we are urged to "make (our) calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10).

Assurance of one's salvation is possible, according to texts such as 1 John 5:13. And we may certainly rest our confidence in God's promises to save those who are His. His plan of salvation is perfect and complete, and cannot fail. So the hope of our salvation rests on His promise to save those who believe (John 3:16). But there is such a thing as dead (or spurious) faith (James 2:14-26). So how may you know whether or not you really have believed? You are to "examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

But what exactly is to be examined? One legitimate test is the presence of some measure of spiritual fruit (or "works"). Jesus said, in Matthew 12:33, "a tree is known by its fruit". Contrary to what is taught by the "free grace" teachers, all true believers will show some evidence of this spiritual fruit (see the section above entitled, "The Inevitability of Spiritual Fruit in the Christian's Life"). It logically follows that someone who lacks any evidence of the new birth therefore forfeits his right to assurance of salvation. To encourage such a person to trust in a past decision or experience and be assured that they are indeed saved, though lacking any evidence of new life, may actually lead one who stands condemned to rest in their condition, never being forced to come to grips with their true standing before God.

Though our assurance is *grounded* in God's promise to save us because we have believed in His Son, works have a secondary, *confirming* value (that is, they confirm that we are new creatures in Christ—that we have indeed believed). Another consideration is the Holy Spirit's role in confirming our standing with God.

Romans 8:16—The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

2 Corinthians 13:5—Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

Hebrews 6:11-12—And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

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2 Peter 1:10—Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

1 John 3:24—And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

1 John 5:13—These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life

The Ultimate Test: Love for Christ

"Free grace" teachers insist that "some believers don't love the Lord" (*Love the Lord—Or Else!*, Bob Wilkin, *Grace in Focus*, July-August 1995). However, Scripture teaches that all true believers will evidence some measure of love for God.

I can certainly understand where the "free grace" teachers are coming from on this point. My own life evidences that I sometimes choose to love sin more than the Savior; and if John 14:21 teaches that love for the Lord Jesus Christ will be manifest in obedience, then it is obvious that when I am disobedient to Him, I am not loving Him at that time. We all know that none of us obeys constantly, perfectly, or with the purest motives.

However, I believe there is scriptural warrant to say that all believers have at least some fundamental, basic measure of love for God. The only way I can see the dilemma resolved is if the basic love for God which characterizes all believers is not the same degree of love referred to by Jesus in John 14:21 (rather than to assume that some believers never love Jesus at all, as the "free grace" teachers say).

This is not hard to understand, because we see this in human relationships. I have a fundamental, ever-present measure of love for my family; however, I do not always manifest this love to the degree that I ought, nor are my emotions toward them always constant. To ask, "Do you always love your wife?" and, "Does your behavior always demonstrate that you love her?" are two different questions. I always love her, but I don't always have the same degree of affection for her. Sometimes I show grand romantic gestures or loving acts of service to demonstrate my love for her; sometimes I argue with her, especially when I want my own way. Sometimes my emotions for her overflow, and sometimes they only trickle; however, I never cease loving her.

I believe that all believers do love the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not always love Him with the same degree of consistency or fervency. Sometimes we manifest our love with heartfelt obedience, and sometimes we choose to delight in sin for a season more than in

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the Savior. But some measure of love is never absent; even in sin, the Spirit produces sorrow for having displeased Him. It must be stressed, however, that loving the Lord does not make us fit for heaven; our love is not meritorious, but is resultant from and evidential of the new birth. Consider the following verses:

Luke 7:47-48—"Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

John 5:40-43—But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. "I do not receive honor from men. "But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me."

John 8:42—"If God were your Father, you would love Me."

John 16:27—"the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God."

Romans 5:5—" and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Romans 8:28-30—"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.." (Note that the "called" are the same as "the justified", and that Paul calls this group of people "those who love God". Therefore, another term for a justified person is one who loves God.)

1 Corinthians 2:9-10—But as it is written:

" 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'
But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit."

(Note: 'those who love Him' must refer to all believers, not just the "victorious" believers, since Paul includes the recipients of these words along with himself, saying that "God has revealed them to us"; these were the Corinthians, whom Paul later accused of behaving carnally.)

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1 Corinthians 8:3—"But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him."

1 Corinthians 16:22—"If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed."

2 Thessalonians 2:10—and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Hebrews 9:28—"so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

James 2:5—"Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?"

1 Peter 2:7—"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious"

1 Peter 1:7,8—"Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love"

1 John 4:19—"We love Him because He first loved us."

A definition of a non-Christian is one who hates God and is at enmity toward Him:

John 3:19-20—"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

Romans 5:10—"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Romans 8:7-9—"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

Colossians 1:21-23—"And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled"

Definition of Overcomers

It is argued by "free grace" teachers that the "overcomers" mentioned in Revelation 2 and

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3 are "victorious Christians" who will get to reign with Christ during the millennium. But John, the same man who authored Revelation, makes it clear who he means by an "overcomer":

1 John 4:4—Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

1 John 5:4,5—"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

All Believers are Heirs, and Will Inherit the Kingdom of God

All believers are heirs, and will inherit the kingdom of God—not just "overcoming" believers, as "free grace" proponents teach. Study each of these verses in context, and it will be discovered that inheritance is often linked with sonship, and salvation is the context of our inheritance:

Matthew 5:5—"Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth."

Matthew 25:34—"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (Note: there is no "third group" of non-inheriting believers in this passage—only sheep and goats, those on His right hand and those on His left hand)

Acts 20:32—"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

Romans 4:14—For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect. (*Note the implication: Faith, not the law, makes one an heir.*)

Notice **Romans 8:17**: "and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." Paul's purpose here is to describe what kind of heirs the children are. Many "free grace" teachers say that Paul is describing two separate categories of Christians in this verse: "heirs of God", which includes all believers, and "joint heirs with Christ", who are victorious, faithful Christians who alone inherit the kingdom of God. However, to say he introduces the inheritance of only victorious believers in this verse would be for him to insert an unnecessary idea out of context, for he could have simply stopped after saying, "heirs of God". Further, it is

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obvious that both categories are describing believers in general: "heirs of God" are the same as the "children", and "joint heirs with Christ" are those who, at the end of the verse, are said to be "glorified together" with Him.

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1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Note the similarities between the description of "the unrighteous" in verses 9-10 with the lists of similar sins in Revelation 21:6-8 and 22:14-15, which clearly refer to non-Christians who will be punished eternally for their sinful manner of living. Also, v. 11 is clear that the Corinthians may have been characterized by this behavior in their former lives, but that it is no longer characteristic of them: they have been washed, sanctified, and justified. Finally, the context is clear who "the unrighteous" are. In v.1, Paul scolds the Corinthians for daring to "go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints". These "unrighteous" people are called "the world" in verse 2, and "unbelievers" in v. 6. This is the whole reason Paul mentions that "the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God": to instruct the Corinthians that this makes them unfit to judge matters between believers. Surprisingly, "free grace" teachers ignore the plain teaching of this verse to preserve their doctrine. For instance, Bob Wilkin says in reference to this verse and several others, "the phrase 'inheriting the kingdom' refers to rulership and rewards" (Has This Passage Ever Bothered You? Matthew 25:31-46 - Works Salvation?, Grace in Focus, March, 1998).

1 Corinthians 15:50—"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (Note that the context in which he mentions inheriting the kingdom of God is the resurrection.)

Galatians 3:29—"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Galatians 4:1,7—"Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all...Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

Galatians 4:30—Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. 31So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

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Galatians 5:19-21—Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (*Again, compare this list with similar lists in Revelation 21:6-8 and 22:14-15, which refer definitively to unbelievers*).

Ephesians 1:11—In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

Ephesians 3:6—that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel

Colossians 1:12—giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Titus 3:7—that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

James 2:5—"Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?"

1 Peter 1:3-5—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

1 Peter 3:7—Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

Revelation 21:7-8—"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (*Note the definition of "overcomers" in 1 John 5:4,5. Note also that inheriting is contrasted with those who have their part in the lake of fire and the second death.*)

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All Believers Will Reign With Christ

Another teaching advocated by the "free grace" movement is the belief that only the victorious, overcoming, faithful believers will actually get to reign with Christ during the millennial kingdom (and, according to some, reigning with Christ in eternity as well). As Earl Radmacher puts it, "reigning with Christ is conditioned on faithful service" (*Salvation*, Word Publishing, 2000, p. 226).

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1 Corinthians 6:2,3—"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?"

2 Timothy 2:12—If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

Revelation 5:9,10—And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth."

(Notice that those who have been redeemed by His blood, those who are kings and priests {see 1 Peter 2:9 regarding the priesthood of all believers} are the ones who shall reign on earth.)

Revelation 20:4-6— And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. *(Again, it is those who have part in the first resurrection, over whom the second death has no power, who will reign with Christ).*

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Rewards

Rewards are often emphasized in this doctrine, because these men care about sanctification, and feel that the mention of rewards in the Bible is a primary, if not the primary, motivation for holy living. However, rewards are simply, as Augustine has stated, "God crowning His own achievements". If all our righteous acts are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), even our best deeds are tainted with impure motives and sinful desires. Rewards should motivate us only to the extent that we recognize that God will be glorified in the thing that earned the reward, because He ordained and enabled it. We will, like the elders in Revelation 4:10, cast our crowns at His feet as we acknowledge Him to Whom alone credit is due (Psalm 115:1).

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It is true that the Bible does mention rewards, and the prospect of rewards should impact our behavior as is exhorted in the New Testament. But I believe the primary motivation for holiness comes when we ponder the glory of God as reflected in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18 - 4:6). After 11 chapters of presenting and describing the gospel of the cross of Christ, Paul, in the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, begins verse 1 by saying, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:1,2). And in his other epistles, the pattern is quite the same: theology first, followed by the practical application which springs from the theology. Earl Radmacher, a "free grace" advocate, states in his book "The Disciplemaker" that Reformation-minded believers often are too focused on the cross. He states that they are reminiscent of Roman Catholics because of their emphasis on the cross of Christ rather than future rewards. What a contrast from the apostle Paul, who stated, "for I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2)!

Grace AND Faith are Gifts Granted by God

We are not saved by making a mere human decision; rather, God in His mercy opens our eyes and hearts (Acts 16:14; Acts 26:17,18) and grants faith to us as His free gift. "Free grace" teachers deny that faith is a gift from God. At stake in this issue are the following:

- 1) The nature of faith: is it a temporary, frail, human faith, or is it a divinely- bestowed and preserved faith?
- 2) The glory of God: If salvation is, from beginning to end, of the Lord, even my own faith, then he gets 100 percent of the glory. However, if it is a faith which has its origin

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in my good decision-making ability, or my wisdom, or my moral judgment, then I have reason to boast. God may get 99 percent of the glory, but my pride will feed on that 1 percent.

Consider the following passages:

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John 3:27—John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven."

John 6:65—And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

Acts 16:14—And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Acts 18:27—And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace"

Ephesians 2:8,9— "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Philippians 1:29—"For to you it has been **granted** on behalf of Christ, not only to **believe** in Him, but also to suffer for His sake"

2 Timothy 1:8-9—"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and **grace** which was **given** to us in Christ Jesus before time began"

Additionally, since faith and repentance are used interchangeably, though not synonymously, in the New Testament, verses such as the ones listed in the above section on repentance which describe repentance as a gift also make the point: it is God who grants faith and repentance to the believer.

Faith is Not "Intellectual Assent"

Both the "free grace" teachers and those holding to the teaching of the Protestant

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Reformation hold to the view that salvation comes by faith alone ("sola fide"). However, the definition of saving faith differs significantly between the two camps.

According to Bob Wilkin, one important step in avoiding confusion over the meaning of faith is to "realize that faith really is intellectual assent" (*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Spring 2005, Vol. 18:34, "Beware of Confusion About Faith"). But is faith really "intellectual assent"? Joseph Dillow adds that "faith is located in the mind" (*The Reign of the Servant Kings*, 1992, p. 276).

But Scripture indicates that, while information must be mentally received and understood by the mind, the heart must be involved as well. Note the following passages:

Romans 10:9,10—because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Acts 26:14—One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. (*Note: it is said that the Lord opened her heart, not her mind. This is an important distinction. If faith is mere assent to facts, then only her mind would have needed changed. However, the text is clear that it was her heart that was made receptive to Paul's teaching.*)

Faith is not simply, as Wilkin states, "being convinced or persuaded...of the truth of something" (*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Autumn 1998—Volume 11:21), but also placing our trust in God to do what He has said He will do. As Benjamin B. Warfield has said, "We cannot be said to believe that which we distrust too much to commit ourselves to it" (Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, Baker, 1968, pp. 402-403.) Though Bob Wilkin makes the point in the 2006 Grace Conference that "trusting in Christ is not quite the same as believing in Him" (the title of his presentation), Scripture makes faith and trust synonymous. "And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Objections to the View that "Outer Darkness" and "Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth" in Christ's Parables May Refer to the Punishment of Disobedient Believers

Many "free grace" teachers have taught that the use of the terms "outer darkness" and "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in Christ's Parables refer, in some cases, to the profound regret that disobedient believers will experience when they get into the kingdom; Christ will then shut them out of the banquet hall, where they are excluded from the Marriage

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Supper of the Lamb (Matthew 22:1-14), where they will be forced to remain in "outer darkness" for a time. Incredibly, Joseph Dillow, in his book *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, states on p. 351, "The phrase 'wailing and gnashing of teeth' is found seven times in the New Testament. Even though it is used on three occasions of the experience of the unregenerate in hell (Matthew 13:42, 50; Luke 13:28), it is also used on four occasions of the regenerate in the kingdom (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30)." There are at least ten reasons why I believe this interpretation of these parables to be unacceptable:

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1. This interpretation violates a basic hermeneutical principle, i.e., that if an author uses a distinct phrase in multiple contexts, then that phrase carries the same meaning each time it is used. How confusing it would have been for the disciples, if Jesus used these terms, but only meant hell in half of the occasions in which He used them. It would have been very unclear as to whether he was speaking of hell or millennial "discipline" for unfaithful believers.
2. This view interprets parables such a Matthew 22 in a woodenly literal way. The purpose of a parable is to teach one, or maybe two, basic truths. To teach that each item in a parable has a meaning is to turn the parable into an allegory. If parables are to be interpreted allegorically, then we must figure out what the "pig food" stands for in the parable of the prodigal son, and who his "fair weather" friends are! The wedding banquet parable in Matthew 22:1-14 is not designed to teach about the wedding supper of the Lamb, but about the kingdom of heaven. The man found without a garment was wearing his own clothes, not those supplied by the host, as was the cultural norm for that time. Likewise, those Jews who rejected Christ were replaced by Gentiles, but those who still seek to enter by terms other than those specified by the host will not be allowed in. To interpret this parable literally would mean it is possible for an unfaithful believer to actually sneak into the banquet hall during the millennium, only to be kicked out.
3. This view, and the view of "free grace" eschatology in general, is problematic in that it states that, at the end of the age, God will sort believers into two groups: Non-reigners and reigners, non-heirs and heirs, non-partakers and partakers, non-overcomers and overcomers. However, no such dichotomy is taught in Scripture. This elitist view of eschatology more closely resembles Mormon or Jehovah's Witness teaching (i.e., that while many may be "saved," only the faithful adherents to their sects will enter the "celestial heaven," in the case of the Mormons, or will earn the title "Jonadab," in the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses). If there was such a drastic division of believers in the millennium (or in eternity, as some seem to teach), then Scripture would be full of admonitions to work, so that you may reign or inherit. A careful

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study of the Scriptures in this paper will, I believe, demonstrate clearly that those who do not reign or inherit simply are not believers.

4. This interpretation ignores the way these verses have historically been interpreted. Although this is the weakest argument, since truth is not determined by the number of people who believe it, the question remains: Is it possible that so many godly, Spirit-filled men through all the ages have gotten the meaning of these passages wrong? If so, does that mean Jesus was an inefficient communicator because he didn't make His meaning more plain?
5. This interpretation ignores the point of Jesus' parable in Matthew 22, which He gives plainly in verse 14: that "many are called, but few are chosen." To apply these words to unfaithful believers is to render them nonsense.
6. To take this interpretation of Matthew 22 is to state that a portion of the bride of Christ will not be invited to her own wedding banquet! If the wedding garment which the man did not wear were really the "righteous acts of the saints", as in Revelation 19 (as some "free grace" teachers teach), then it must be acknowledged that this passage teaches that "the Bride (not only a portion of the bride, but the bride) has made herself ready" (Rev 19:7-8).
7. "Free Grace" theologians like to trouble the "lordship salvation" proponents with numbers games: e.g., "how many works do I have to show before I'm saved?" However, they are left with the same problem here: how good do I have to be, and how many works do I have to do, to reign in and inherit the kingdom? Where's the cut-off point? If my heart is really deceitful above all else and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), then I must acknowledge that "all my righteous acts are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6) compared to the perfection required by my Father in heaven (Mt 5:48). Any rewarding God does is, as Augustine says, "God crowning his own achievements". To think that I have to work, work, work, or face a miserable millennium, is to have an over-inflated view of the worth of my works. Rather, the motivation for my works should be a clear view of the mercy of God as shown to me in Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1,2).
8. As hinted at briefly above, Scripture always associates our being in Christ's immediate presence with experiencing full joy. As the hymn says, "one glimpse at His dear face; all sorrow will erase". "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). We "desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Philippians

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1:23). "Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). All believers can look forward with joy, not dread, to finally seeing the object of their faith, their hope, and their love—the Lord Jesus Christ.

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9. This view teaches that some believers will be separated from Christ, at least for a time, in the millennial kingdom. By contrast, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 teaches us that "we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord." Christians have this hope firm, that they will all be with the Lord at His return, and will always, for eternity, enjoy His presence. This verse, therefore, excludes the possibility that some believers will be separated from Christ in the millennial kingdom during the marriage supper of the Lamb, having been cast into outer darkness outside of the banquet hall, while "victorious" believers alone enjoy His presence till the supper is over.
10. The biggest problem is the idea that unfaithful believers will have a miserable millennium. Is this punishment for their sins? Christ has already been punished for the sins of believers. Is this discipline? If so, what is the purpose? Was it to teach them, so that they may be further conformed to the image of Christ? 1 John 3:1-3 teaches us that sanctification will be full and complete when we get our first glimpse of Him face to face. Unfortunately, I believe the comparison of this "miserable millennium" view to purgatory is not an unfair comparison—believers being punished for their sins for a time.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to present fairly the position of "free grace" theology, and to demonstrate from Scripture the serious errors present within that system. It is hoped that those who are unsettled in this matter will take the above Scriptures, and with the spirit of the Bereans (Acts 17:10-11), examine these things for themselves to determine whether they are so.

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