

Answering Common Objections to Free Grace, Part 2

The fullness of God's grace seems hard to grasp for some. Especially when it is taught in relation to salvation, some raise objections. In "GraceNotes no. 90: Answering Objections to Free Grace, Part 1," we discussed six common objections to the Free Grace view. Below we discuss six more.

Objection 7: Free Grace theology cheapens grace by not requiring commitment and good works.

- Grace cannot be cheap—or costly—because it is absolutely and unconditionally free (Rom. 3:24; 11:6).
- Requiring commitment and good works at the front end or at the back end of the gospel is contrary to grace, which makes no demands.
- Though grace does not demand commitment and good works, grace motivates and teaches us to live godly lives (Romans 12:1-2; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-13).
- The gospel of grace is about eternal salvation provided by Jesus Christ's work; discipleship and the Christian life is about our commitment and good works.
- Free Grace distinguishes sanctification from justification (or salvation from discipleship).

Objection #8: Free Grace teaches that faith is merely mental assent.

- Though some Free Grace proponents teach this, not all do.
- Obviously, if someone believes a propositional truth, there has to be mental agreement to it.
- Sometimes the offer of salvation emphasizes mental assent while at other times it appeals to the will also (John 4:10; 8:24; 1 John 3:23; 5:1).
- It is questionable whether we can psychologize how and why a person appropriates the offer of salvation.

Objection #9: Free Grace is antinomian.

- Since *antinomian* means *no law* or *without law*, we have to define what law is in view. If the Mosaic Law, then yes, Free Grace teaches that Christians are not under that Law (Rom. 6:14; 7:4; 10:4). That does not mean that Free Grace teaches license because the New Testament says believers are under the Royal Law (James 2:8), the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), and a new commandment (John 13:34; 1 John 3:18), which are commands to love one another. This fulfills the essence of the Mosaic Law (Gal. 5:14).
- Contrary to teaching lawlessness, Free Grace teaches responsibility and accountability with consequences of divine discipline (Heb. 12:5-11).

Objection #10: Free Grace believes a person can apostatize (fall away from the Christian faith) and still be saved.

- We should first try to determine whether the person understood and believed the biblical gospel. It is possible that the assumed or professed Christian was never saved.
- The Bible has ample examples of believers who fell away from the faith with no evidence that they were never saved or lost their salvation (see *GraceNotes* no. 55 on "The Christian and Apostasy").
- The book of Hebrews warns of severe consequences for believers who fall away from the faith (see *GraceNotes* no. 15 on "Interpreting Hebrews: Beginning with the Readers").
- The grace of God covers every sin. Salvation that cannot be earned by what one does cannot be lost by what one does. Even if one no longer believes, God is faithful to His promise to save (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

Objection # 11: Free Grace is a recent historical and theological aberration.

- Salvation by God's free grace has always been taught by the timeless Scriptures. No one has ever been saved apart from God's free grace (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3-4; Gal. 3:5-9).
- Grace as a free unconditional gift of God has been controversial since the beginning of the church as seen in the legalists' opposition to the Apostle Paul.
- The Reformers of the 16th century did not end the discussion about the gospel but began the discussion of justification through faith and the grounds for assurance that continues to this day.
- The role of works in salvation and assurance has been a perpetual controversy, though not always under the nomenclature of Free Grace theology. In the 1630's there was a trial in Massachusetts, called *The Free Grace Controversy* in which the issue of works in salvation and assurance were debated and tried in court (see *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641*, by Michael P. Winship, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
- Though historical theological trends are informative, the final verdict of truth is the Scriptures.

Objection #12: The Free Grace Movement is an irrelevant minority movement.

- It may well be a minority movement, but isn't that always part and parcel of most movements?
- If it is so irrelevant, why are some prominent theologians beginning to attack it and think it necessary to even claim that it is irrelevant? Doesn't this attest to the growing influence of the Free Grace message?
- There is much evidence that the Free Grace movement is having great influence around the world.

Conclusion

The final verdict on any theological system must be an accurate interpretation of Scripture. Many objections to the gospel of God's free grace come from poor interpretations of the Bible, misunderstandings of Free Grace teaching, or rhetorical canards. Free Grace exalts the God of all grace, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the total sufficiency of Christ's work on behalf of all people. Only a proper understanding of God's grace and salvation can give people full assurance of salvation and free them to love, grow in that grace, and share it with others.