

Does Free Grace Promote Easy-believism?

Free Grace teaches that salvation is absolutely free. Those who simply believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, being convinced that He died on the cross for their sins and rose again, have eternal life. But this is a problem for some who derogatorily call this “easy-believism.”

How easy-believism is characterized

According to detractors, the Free Grace position allows people to identify as a Christian . . .

- . . . by just repeating a prayer or saying “the sinner’s prayer.”
- . . . without surrendering to Jesus Christ as Lord and Master.
- . . . without turning from sin (as they define repentance).
- . . . without showing any fruit or good works.
- . . . by responding to a gospel invitation with a public display such as raising one’s hand or going forward in a church.
- . . . if they simply confess, “I believe in Jesus” or “I believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose again.”
- . . . if they profess faith in Christ as Savior and get baptized and/or join a church.
- . . . If they profess faith in Christ as Savior but do not follow Christ faithfully.

These critics accuse Free Grace adherents of preaching a shallow, watered-down gospel that gives people a false assurance of salvation. They often point to Matthew 7:21-23 noting that many who think they are saved are rejected by Jesus (See GraceNotes no. 52 “Lordship and False Followers”). As made clear in the introduction, Free Grace does not teach that any of these things save a person. Salvation has nothing to do with what one says or does, but what one believes. Indeed, there are people who think they are Christians, but in reality, they have not believed in the biblical message of salvation.

Easy Versus Simple

To be precise, Free Grace does not teach that salvation is *easy*, but that it is *simple*. The two words seem similar but are they are different. According to the *Meriam-Webster Dictionary*:

- The meaning of *easy* is causing or involving little difficulty or discomfort, requiring or indicating little effort, thought, or reflection.
- The meaning of *simple* is sheer, unmixed, free of secondary complications.

Based on these definitions alone, the gospel of Free Grace does not eliminate difficulty, discomfort, effort, thought, or reflection because these things can be experienced by those confronted with the gospel. However, Free Grace maintains that the condition for salvation is faith alone, which is unmixed with any other conditions or secondary complications. So, it is important to distinguish between the meanings of *easy* and *simple*. The condition for becoming a Christian may not be easy, but it is simple: only believe.

Why Some Oppose What They Perceive as Easy-believism

- They see shallow professing Christians who are not living for the Lord.
- They think many professing Christians have a false assurance of salvation based on false faith.
- They think salvation requires repentance in the sense of turning from sins. (See GraceNotes no. 22, “Repentance: What’s in a Word?”)

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- They hold to a deterministic theology (such as Calvinism) in which God elects those who will be saved and gives them a persevering faith that works and cannot fail. (See GraceNotes no. 49, "Perseverance Versus Preservation")
- They confuse the costly conditions for discipleship, which are many, with the simple condition for salvation, which is faith alone. (See GraceNotes no. 23, "Are Disciples Born or Made?")
- They misunderstand the relationship of Christ's Lordship to salvation.

Why Some Maintain that the Condition for Salvation Is Simple

- The plain sense of the Bible. Many verses show that the condition for salvation is simply faith. (e.g., John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8-9)
- The loving and gracious nature of God. It would be contrary to God's desire for all people to be saved if He made salvation difficult. God did the hard work by sacrificing His Son so that the way to salvation could be simple for all. (1 Tim. 2:4; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2)
- No one can make Jesus Lord. Jesus is Lord always in the objective sense, which is why He can be the Savior for everyone in the world. Those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior may also recognize Jesus' Lordship and commit to Him as Master, but that is not a condition for salvation. Unbelievers or new believers may not understand what that entails. It would also add personal merit and commitment to faith alone. (See *GraceNotes* no. 41, "The Lordship of Jesus Christ").
- The conditions for becoming a disciple are different from the condition for becoming a Christian. When we distinguish Bible passages about the cost of discipleship (e.g., Matt. 16:24; Luke 14:26; John 8:31) from the simple and free offer of salvation, the simplicity of faith is clear. (e.g., John 3:16; John 4:10; 6:47; Acts 16:31)
- To believe is always simple, but not always easy. For example, it may not be easy to believe
 - ... that our sinfulness deserves eternal separation from God.
 - ... that God loves us despite our many and sometimes serious sins.
 - ... that God would send His Son to die in our place and forgive us all our sins.
 - ... that Jesus' payment for all our sins over 2000 years ago can be relevant today.
 - ... that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and now lives.
 - ... that Jesus Christ would offer us, as undeserving sinners, eternal life as a free gift.
- God gave His precious Son for us. In view of this costly sacrifice, it would not make sense if God made the experience of knowing Jesus and His salvation difficult or complicated (See Rom. 8:32).
- Christians grow and mature at different rates. It is impossible to judge the reality of their faith based on works or fruitfulness, which are relative and subjective.

Conclusion

From the thief on the cross (Luke 23:42-43) to the testimony of the apostles (Acts 10:43; 13:39; 15:7-9), the Bible affirms that the only requirement for salvation is simply believing in Jesus Christ as Savior. As Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us, "*For by grace (the free gift of God) you have been saved through faith (simple faith without secondary complications), and that not of yourselves (no personal cost, commitment, or turning from sins); it (salvation by grace) is the gift of God (absolutely free, no strings attached), not of works (no self-effort, performance, or merit), lest anyone should boast (in what they did instead of what Christ did for the them).*" Free Grace teaches that salvation is a gift not a bargain, a gift that simply needs to be received.

